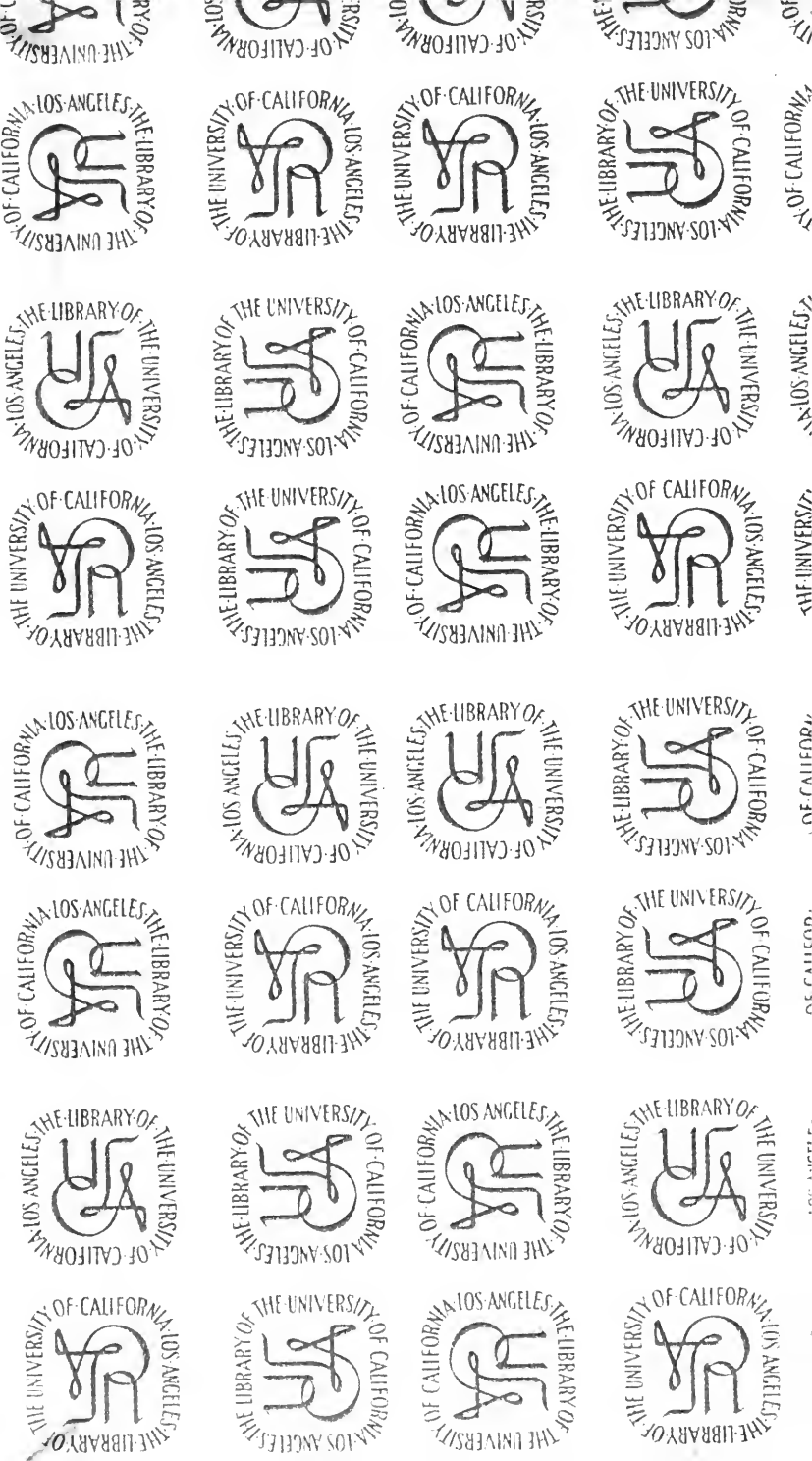
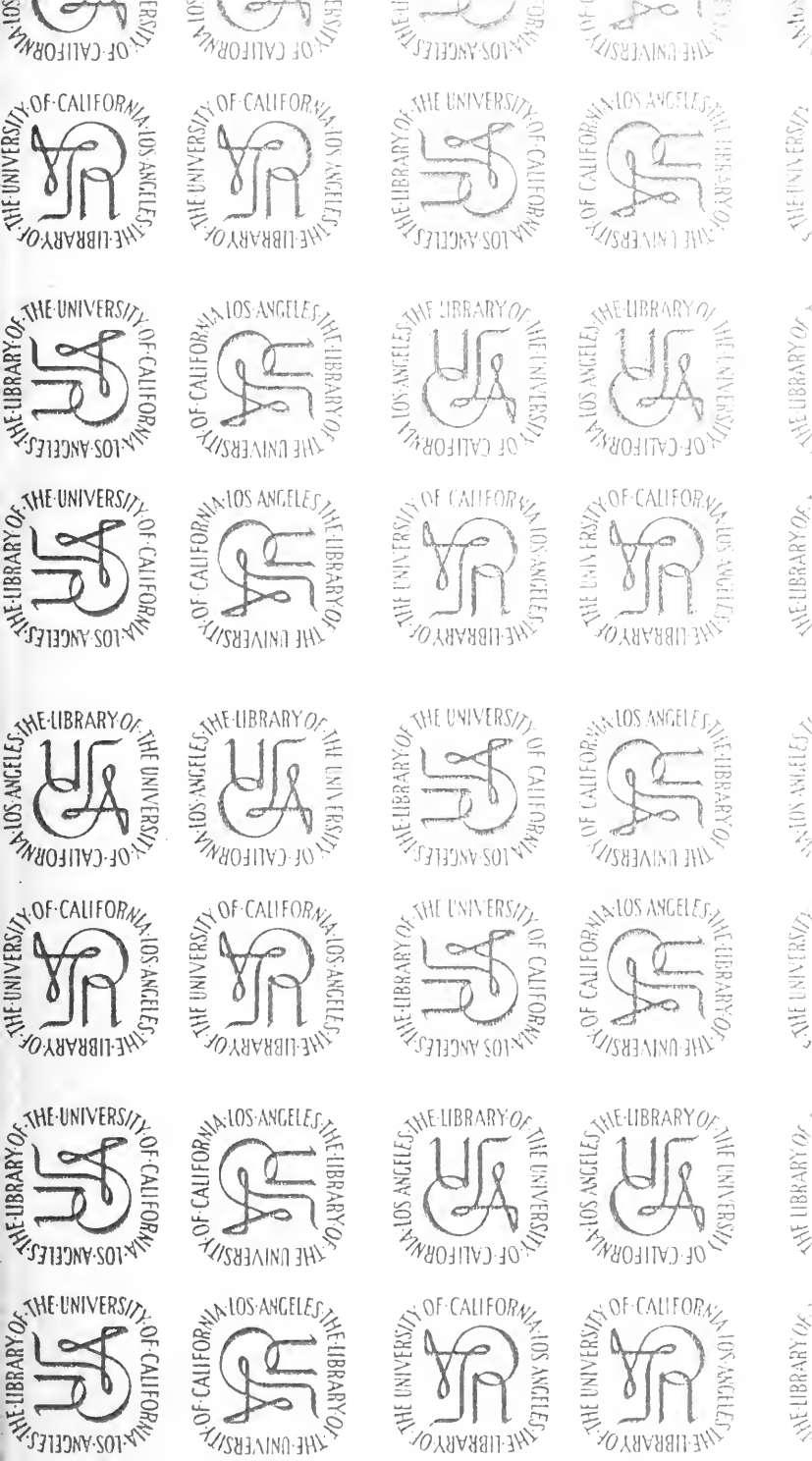


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*Nichols sc. 552. Strand.*

THE REV<sup>d</sup>. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.



CONVERSATIONS

ON THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT;

SHewing THAT

EVERY THING IS FROM GOD,

AND

FOR GOOD, TO ALL.

AND GOD SAW EVERY THING THAT HE HAD MADE,  
AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD.

GENESIS i. 31.

BY

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M. A.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

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1802.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT

BY

JOHN CALVIN

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SECOND VOLUME

OF THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

PRINTED BY BVE. AND LAW, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, CLERKENWELL.

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TO

MRS. SOPHIA AND MRS. FRANCES CHAMBERS,

IN GRATITUDE FOR UNWEARIED OFFICES OF THE MOST DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP, FOR NEAR THIRTY YEARS, TO HIMSELF AND MRS. LINDSEY, FROM THEM AND THEIR WORTHY BROTHER, NOW ALAS! INSENSIBLE OF ANY TRIBUTE, THOUGH EQUALLY DUE; AND IN TESTIMONY OF THEIR ENLIGHTENED ZEAL FOR THE WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD, AND A CONSTANT UNOSTENTATIOUS READINESS TO DO GOOD; THIS VOLUME OF CONVERSATIONS, THE RECOLLECTION AND THE FRUITS OF THE HAPPY REPOSE AND LEISURE, ENJOYED IN THEIR DELIGHTFUL SUMMER RECESS AT MORDON IN SURRY, IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR VERY AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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641793

RESERVE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 309

LECTURE 10

PROBLEMS

## P R E F A C E.

THE following work results from the study and experience of a long life, devoted principally to the service of the gospel. From diligent researches into the true meaning and spirit of the sacred writings, the author has been led to various deviations from the creed of the established church : his opinions have, at different times, been laid before the public ; and, if the discouragements attending the profession of his faith have been very considerable, he is happy and thankful to have lived in a country, where not only such appeals have been practicable, but he has been supported by several of his countrymen, who renouncing the errors of their  
A 3 education,

happiest state, - a full confidence and satisfaction in the never-ceasing love of their maker and God, the following remarks, imperfect as they are, are committed to the candour and serious attention of the benevolent reader.

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# CONVERSATIONS

ON THE

## DIVINE GOVERNMENT, &c.

VICTORIN TO VOLUSIAN.

I HAVE a singular satisfaction oftentimes in recollecting a conversation which took place some years since at \*\*\*\*\*, the country-seat of our respectable friend, in which you bore no inconsiderable part, and in my opinion came off with more honour than those that were crowned in the Olympic games; an honour that, however, not to be attained without much labour and self-denial. But you gained a victory over yourself, and many narrow and inveterate religious prejudices which you had the courage to renounce, and notwithstanding obloquy and various worldly disadvantages, have ever since remained firm in the profession and worship of the one true

God and father of the universe, as prescribed and practised by Jesus Christ.

In the account of the conversation to which I allude, it is stated, that the way of worship, which you, after much inquiry and deliberation embraced, was that held forth to the english nation and to the church of England in particular, in the

*Amendments humbly proposed to the consideration of those in authority, of the Book of Common Prayer ——— according to the use of the Church of England. By Samuel Clarke, D. D. Rector of St. James's, Westminster.*

Such is the modest style, in which this excellent person speaks of what had been the fruits of many years labour and thought to promote the honour and credit of the established church, and a purer worship of God in it.

What farther information may be desired concerning this valuable manuscript work of *Dr. Clarke*, which, after his decease was presented by his son *Mr. Clarke* to the British Museum,

Museum, and deposited there, may be found in a Tract, intitled, "Conversations on christian idolatry," from p. 131, to the end—printed in 1791, for Mr. *Johnson*, St. Paul's Church-yard.

And I cannot forbear adding that from some facts reported at the close of that Tract, it may appear probable, that the pure worship of the One true God, might silently and quietly, in a course of time, have then made its way \* in France, had the first happy revolution in that country proceeded and continued as it began, and not been followed by such dire and violent convulsions. It affords however a pleasing omen of what may hereafter take place there in more favourable times.

But I have run out to a much greater length than I intended, and almost lost sight of the principal purport of my letter, which is; that having just now come to the know-

\* See the French Constitution, pp. 371—375, the 2d edition, with corrections and additions, by Benjamin Flower.

lege, that you and our common friends, the last long vacation, had passed some weeks together, and during the time had fallen upon the discussion of a very curious and interesting question, and come to an unanimous resolution upon it, *viz.* that *there is nothing really and ultimately ill in the state of man, but every thing ordered for the best for all*: I cannot find words to express the satisfaction I should receive in being made acquainted with the steps by which you have been led to this conclusion, and with all that passed relating to it. I would not give you, I should be ashamed of giving you so much trouble merely to gratify curiosity; but it might perhaps contribute to free me from a host of anxious thoughts that beset me continually, and oftentimes make life a burden,

VOLUSIAN TO VICTORIN.

FOR one so much loved and valued as yourself, I can think no trouble too great, whereby I may give you pleasure or profit, nor can I have any reserves with you; and therefore



therefore without further preface I sit down to tell you, that the old party of your friends being met together, and lamenting not a little that you alone were prevented joining us; after talking over for a while the astonishing events of the times we lived in, we fell into consideration of the very low repute in which the religion of *Christ* was every where held, at home and abroad; being rejected by many as entirely fabulous; and little regarded by the greater part of those who would not be thought to give it up altogether.

One, who was present, mentioned, from his own knowlege, that a short time before the French Revolution, a person lately filling a very high station, of great worth and discernment, who lived very much at Paris, and in the first circles; and was sometimes in Holland, and other parts of the continent, where he conversed with the most eminent men of different ranks and professions, found it to be a general persuasion among them all, though it was not his own, that the christian religion would soon be at an end; being experienced, as exhibited and enforced by public authority in all states, to be so irrational

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a system,

a system, and hostile to the true interests and happiness of society, as to be incapable of maintaining its ground any longer. What followed soon after in France is well known.

Nor was this the case of those called catholic countries only, where the state-religion was so offensive to every mind in any degree enlightened. He would appeal to them all, as they were not ignorant of what passed among ourselves, whether they had not long observed, that our established articles of faith, and the worship grounded upon them, passing for the very gospel of *Christ*, had not caused many silently to withdraw themselves, and take refuge in the religion of nature's teaching: and this indisposition to Christianity had much prevailed within these last twenty years, and was rapidly increasing.

Here (*Photinus*,) interposing, replied; that he did not like to hear them descant in so desponding a strain on a subject, which seemed to him by no means to call for it; because the prostrate appearance of christianity in our own and the neighbouring countries, and the hostility of many to it, might be shewn to arise, not from any newly discovered weakness

ness or deficiency in its proofs, but from other causes which might be assigned; but principally, perhaps, from the interference of the civil power, in requiring this religion, exactly as modelled and taught by them, to be believed and practised by all, under the severest penalties and loss; thereby creating prejudices against it; and also hindering all free inquiry into it, by which alone it could maintain its preeminence in the world, if it were the truth; and thus turning it almost in all places into an engine of state, to keep mankind in slavery and darkness.

This it was, which so much excited the philosophers of France, as they called themselves, to oppose the Bible, and filled them with a most unreasonable antipathy to it; being prepossessed with an idea, that the religion built upon it, which they found professed in their own country, was a fanaticism so hurtful, and sanguinary, and adverse to every thing virtuous and friendly to mankind, that it was meritorious to destroy it by any means; so that they made no scruple of using the most unfair arts, and adopting known falsehoods, to effect their purpose.

Of this dishonest dealing, to give it its true name, you have continual examples in the writings of *Mons. de Voltaire*, where he touches on the subject; but his unworthy artifice, and disingenuousness in this respect are detailed at length in \* Letters said to be of several Portuguese, German, and Polish jews to M. de Voltaire, in 3 vols. 8vo.; but really written by a learned priest and doctor of the Sorbonne. *Mr. Findlay* also in 1770, now *Dr. Findlay*, the learned President of Glasgow-college, has well exposed these practices, by which this eminent writer has stained his great abilities, and lessened his character.

As the best things have ever been liable to be perverted, we must frankly acknowlege, for no one acquainted with history can deny, that great corruptions have arisen from the gospel, and abuses to the worst purposes have been made of it, and caused many to think ill of and condemn it. A fair inquirer however will confess that it has always been of considerable benefit to mankind, and that it

\* Lettres de quelques Juifs Portugais, Allemands et Polonois, à M. de Voltaire. A Paris. 1776.

is in itself most friendly to the peace and happiness of society, as was testified by a candid heathen \* historian of the fourth century, upon seeing the disturbances, to which it innocently gave occasion, and the murders, and cruelties towards each other, which the christians were guilty of at that early period. And notwithstanding the present indifference, and desertion of many, and the assaults made upon the gospel by its various adversaries all along from the first, (none more fierce and subtle than those of the present day,) we may not be afraid boldly to maintain, that it stands upon a rock, that cannot be shaken; viz. upon the truth of this single fact, of *Jesus*, its author, being a divinely authorized teacher, a prophet of God; which was evinced and confirmed by the miracles wrought by him, to which he appealed; and, principally, by his being raised from the dead in three days, in conformity to his own predictions.

The divine authority likewise of *Moses*, the Jewish lawgiver, his predecessor, was built on

\* Ammianus Marcellinus. Lib. xxii. c. 11.

Quæ nihil nisi justum suadet et lenè.

the like immoveable foundation of a divine interference, signified by mighty miracles, publicly wrought, and recognized by their *effects* at the time, in the reception of such a religion, at first, so burdensome and irksome, by the Israelites, not otherwise to be accounted for, but on the footing of real miracles; *effects*, which, if we may so speak, have continued to the present hour, in the rigorous adherence of that people and their descendants to their religion, under the temptations they have continually been to desert it; scattered, moreover, as they have been, and are, over the face of the whole earth, and most unworthily and unceasingly vilified and ill-treated as Jews, wherever they go; its truth also corroborated still farther by the actual fulfilment of ancient \* prophecies relating to the dispersion and other circumstances of this extraordinary people; not to mention the attestation given to their religion from the

\* See, to name no others, *Moses's* prophecy concerning the captivity of the Israelites, of a State not yet erected; and the exact fulfilment of *Christ's* prophecy, not to say of that of *Moses*, in so many exact particulars, and the long captivity that was to follow. Deut. xxviii. Luke xix. xxi.

gospel being a continuation of one and the same extraordinary plan of divine providence for the virtuous improvement and happiness of the whole human race.

To these revelations from heaven by *Moses* and by *Jesus Christ*, for the most beneficent purposes, to make mankind virtuous and happy; it is objected, that their foundations fail on being examined, because the proofs of the interposition of the divine Being in their favour are not to be depended upon, resting solely on the testimony of weak and fallible mortals, who have in all ages delighted in inventing, listening to, and propagating stories of wonderful things, of apparitions and communications with their false gods, to countenance their various superstitions and idolatrous practices, and such practices have been too much imitated and encouraged by Christians themselves.

The imputation must be allowed to have some foundation; and this credulous turn and weakness ought ever to put us on our guard, that we suffer not ourselves to be deceived by false pretences to a divine extraordinary power:

power: but it does not invalidate the testimony of mankind to those instances of it, which are accompanied with sufficient evidence, and not loaded with any unnatural contradictory circumstances.

It should be remembered, however, that it is a misrepresentation of these divine interpositions in behalf of the gospel, when it is alleged, that they are brought to prove the truth of its doctrines, of which, unquestionably, they are not proper proofs: those primary truths, for instance, of Christ's religion, and of all true religion; namely, that God is to be loved and obeyed before all things; that virtue, or the love of our fellowcreatures, so as to seek their happiness as our own, is to be cultivated by us: these and the like doctrines have their proper evidence, founded in the nature of man and the relation between him and his Maker, independent of miracles, which can add nothing to them in that respect.

The proper province and design of miracles is, to confirm the authority of a prophet or divine messenger in what he delivers concerning



cerning the will and government of God, and men's future destination, where their natural light and faculties fail them. And in this view, for this purpose, *Christ* constantly appealed to them; referring men to *the works*, which his father impowered him to perform, as the evidence of his coming from God; of which they were the direct proofs. Although they are calculated, and may also be designed to revive and powerfully to recall men's attention to important truths within their knowledge, but overlooked and neglected by them.

Some, indeed, would prejudice and set aside at once the whole of the extraordinary and divine communications recorded in the scriptures, as entirely fabulous, arguing it to be inconsistent with the character and attributes of the great first cause, the supreme, all-perfect Being; and therefore impossible for him to alter the course of nature established by himself, and to interrupt those laws of his own appointment, by which he governs and preserves the world,

We

We should here take care, that we are not imposed on by words, that signify nothing. For what do we mean by *nature*, but the art, if we may so speak, of the great Creator, his workmanship; the regular succession of causes and effects appointed by him; by which every thing is brought to pass? And who shall take upon him to say, that it is unbecoming him, or that his power is in any way limited and restrained so that he cannot interrupt the general order of things appointed by himself, to promote his wise and benevolent designs?

Perhaps this prejudice and difficulty, that has been started against all miraculous interpositions, as implicating a weakness of conduct in the supreme Being, we may, on a nearer inspection, perceive to take its rise purely from men's imperfect conceptions of the divine agency and government.

Here, we must ever profess ourselves in the dark, and most defective in our judgements, concerning the manner in which the deity acts; and therefore speak with reverence and diffidence.

But,

But, as we are persuaded, from what we see and know, that he made all things with most consummate wisdom, and for the best purposes of universal good, our highest thoughts of him lead us to conclude, that when he created the world, all future events were before him, known and foreseen in their causes; and every, the minutest circumstance relating to every creature, contrived and directed ultimately to answer the end designed; since without this, his wise and kind designs might be liable to be continually crossed and defeated.

In agreement with this idea, the apostle says, Acts xv. 18. *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* And we may humbly presume, that we do not err, in supposing, that the Almighty did at first, and originally, so devise and lay out his course of nature, as we term it, the whole train of causes and effects, all that was to befall his whole creation and each individual in it, throughout all future time, that those events, which we call supernatural, should be the result of established laws, and a more comprehensive plan of things, though unperceived

ceived by us; as much as the most ordinary events, our sustenance and support in life, and that of all other animals, is the effect of those laws, that we see to be established: So that in the eye of a being, who could take in the whole of the divine administration and operations, those called miraculous, are as much the result of general laws, as the most ordinary events.

The *course of nature*, of which we hear so much, and cannot hear too much, if properly viewed and considered by us; those most curious and exact laws, both in the natural and moral system, by which the universe is upheld and preserved, we cannot sufficiently extoll and admire. Those who have most minutely scanned and inquired into and best understood them, *Barrow, Boyle, Mac-laurin*, (to name a few only of our own countrymen) have not been able to contain themselves from breaking out into such holy raptures in contemplation of that wisdom and goodness, which formed and preserves the whole of things, as might kindle a flame of devotion in the coldest breast.

This may be a lesson to us, in our study of nature and its stupendous laws, not to lose sight of the great being, who framed it. For we find some so swallowed up in their disquisitions and researches into the wonderful contrivance with which all the parts of the vast machine are put together, and so doting on their discoveries of some of the secret powers and energies by which it is conducted, as to imagine, that these powers and energies are something, as it were, inherent in matter, distinct from, and independent of its maker. And as all things seem to go on of themselves, (for they *see not him* whose \* secret agency directs and supports the whole) they are blindly led on to speculate, whether all things did not also begin of themselves without him; and thus fall into the gulph of Atheism, which sees nothing superior to itself in the universe.

To guard against so fatal a delusion, I beg, my friends, you will excuse my urging it upon you, to hold fast the plain old argument for Deity, obvious to every understanding, and

\* Heb. xi. 27.

equally decisive to the highest as the lowest ; viz. that next to the conscioufness and conviction which we have of our own existence, there is nothing, of which we can be so absolutely certain, or which is so clearly demonstrable to us, as that there is a God, an intelligent first cause, and benevolent author of all things ; because, otherwise the world we live in, with all its furniture and inhabitants, constructed with the most consummate art, and abounding, at every view, the more it is sought into, with innumerable marks of wisdom and kind design ; connected also and mutually dependent throughout all its parts, as far as we can descry, must have come into being of itself, without any original designing mind : which is a supposition, not to be entertained by any one, whose intellectual powers are sound and unimpaired.

I remember *D'Alembert*, who was careful latterly not to concede too much upon this question, in his correspondence with the King of Prussia, is compelled to say, “ \* I think

\* Je pense en particulier, par rapport à l'existence d'une intelligence supreme, que ceux qui la nient avancent bien plus qu'ils ne peuvent prouver, et qu'il n'y a dans

think particularly, that with regard to the existence of a supreme intelligence, those who deny it go much farther than they can warrant, and that in all this business there is an unreasonable scepticism. Certainly no one can deny, that there is in the universe, and particularly in the structure of plants and animals, such a combination of parts, as manifests intelligence, and proves the existence of this intelligence, as a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker. This appears to be undeniable."

The same thought is taken up by *Voltaire*, p. 4, of his *Reply to the System of Nature* \*.

"Your

dans cette matiere que la scepticisme deraisonable. On ne peut nier sans doute, qu'il n'y a dans l'univers, et en particulier dans la structure des animaux et des plantes, de combinaisons de parties qui semblent deceler une intelligence; elles prouvent l'existence de cette intelligence, comme une montre prouve l'existence d'un horloger; cela parait incontestable.

\* Votre sauvage qui devine qu'une montre est faite par un horloger, parce qu'il a quelque idee de l'industrie humaine, est precisement la preuve de l'existence de Dieu. Je suis le sauvage: la montre est l'univers: l'horloger est le formateur de l'univers. J'ai quelque idee de l'industrie

“ Your savage, (says he, ch. v. p. 11, p. 159.) who guesses a watch to be the work of a watchmaker, because he has some idea of the effects of the industry of man, is precisely the proof I offer of the existence of God. I am that savage. The watch is the universe. I have some idea of industry in general. I behold the world, in which a wonderful industry displays itself on all sides, and I adore the author.”

*Mirabaud*, or whoever was the author of that work, must have been affected, when at the close of a similar argument, *Voltaire* turns to him\*, “ Why, my friend, why will you not let me adore that great intelligent being, who has bestowed life and thought upon me? Let me add, Take care of being found un-

en general : je vois le monde dans lequel une industrie merveilleuse eclate de toutes parts ; et j'adore l'auteur.

REPONSE au Systeme de la Nature, page 12.

\*. Pourquoi ne voulez vous pas que j'adore ce grand Etre intelligent et puissant qui m'a donné la vie et la pensée? J'ajouterai, craignez d'etre ingrat, vous á qui il a donné tant d'esprit ; ce n'est pas certainement vous qui vous l'etes donné.

Ibid. page 11.

grateful,



grateful, you, to whom he has given such talents and powers! It is certain, you have not given them to yourself."

It is not, however, entirely, mens doubts concerning the possibility or reality of miracles, or concerning the truth of the sacred history connected with them; nor any presumed discoveries of the hidden powers and energies of nature, that have put them on rejecting divine revelation, and led not a few of them to deny the being of a God, and take refuge in the gloomy idea of a fatherless world. It is a difficulty of a more serious kind, from which it sometimes originates; the perplexity that worthy thinking persons are often thrown into, how to reconcile appearances in the world of nature, and the imperfect and forlorn state of mankind with the supposition of a perfectly wise and good moral administration. "If there be a being perfectly wise and good at the head of the universe, why such a miserable world, so much natural evil, pain and suffering, and so much vice and wretchedness? Why are not all men virtuous and happy? And, why so

little apparent amendment for the better among christians, and so great a majority of them doomed to endless suffering hereafter, or to annihilation, with so great an expence of miracles and of a divine extraordinary power made to so little purpose?

Could we find a clue to lead us safe out of this labyrinth, and to teach us how to justify the dealings of God with mankind, consistently with that perfect goodness, which we must ever ascribe to him, if we believe him to be at all; we shall provide the best remedy against, and, in time, put an end to the prevailing scepticism.

Here the company rising up, *Marcellinus*, in the name of them all, declared their obligations to *Photinus*, for giving them cause not to despair of the fortunes and success of the gospel, notwithstanding its present low condition; and for so seasonably reminding them of the solid foundation, on which the belief of God, the infinitely wise creator and supreme governor of all things was immovably placed; as this must lead the way to all  
fatis-

fatisfactory enquiry concerning his dispositions towards us and our expectations from him.

He was also persuaded, that he should speak the sentiments of all present as well as his own, by suggesting, that if they could but engage the friend, to whom they already owed so much, to favour them with those farther thoughts which they knew he had well digested upon this very weighty subject, there would be nothing more for them to desire, and therefore he would take the liberty to be their spokesman and entreat his compliance.

To this *Photinus* frankly replied, that to take such a task upon him on so formal an invitation was quite formidable to a plain man, and implied too much expectation; but if they could be contented with knowing in what manner he had endeavoured to satisfy his own mind in a matter of so much importance, he should not be unwilling to gratify them. But as they all might well be wearied with such a long grave discourse, he should

propose their taking up the subject again at their next meeting. To this the company assented, and the result of our future conversation I shall take the first opportunity of communicating.

CON-

## CONVERSATION II.

## SECTION I.

ON the day fixed, the company being assembled, *Kolufian*, who during the former conversation, had been very attentive, expressed much satisfaction that all the party had been punctual to the appointment; and addressing his discourse particularly to *Photinus*, told him, that he had listened with much satisfaction to all that had fallen from him, but might probably have misunderstood what he had advanced concerning those who rejected all divine revelation, as being commonly induced to it from dark views of the present scene of things and of the ways of providence, which indisposed them towards the Deity, and all communications from him. This might be true in some instances, but there were many exceptions to it, and one of great note, the noble author of *the Characteristics*, who was well known to have admirably pleaded the cause of a God and a providence; that in the world we inhabit, the  
con-

constitution of things is perfectly moral, vice the road to misery, and the virtuous of mankind happy: although at times he was held too plainly to intimate his little value for the sacred volumes, especially that of the Old Testament.

*Photinus* thanked him for his observations, and for giving him an opportunity of further explaining his sentiments. He had no doubt himself of the character of unbelievers of the present day being pretty much as he had described it. But he was not insensible that there were some of a very different class, who acknowledged on all proper occasions, and shewed a profound reverence for the Deity, and gave reason to believe that they endeavoured in their actions to approve themselves to him. If the author of *the Characteristics* is to be reckoned in that class, few christians, it must be confessed, seemed impressed with so full and constant a sense of the divine presence and benignity, and those chearful expectations of favour hereafter, with which it might be gathered that he was penetrated, from innumerable passages in his writings,  
where

where it is evident he spoke from the heart, and from the most serious conviction.

One passage, which I hope never to forget, in his "Inquiry concerning virtue," p. 57, bespeaks this in a high degree; and I shall gratify you, I am persuaded, by repeating it: "Where the theistical belief," says he, "is entire and perfect, there must be a steady opinion of the superintendency of a supreme Being, a witness and spectator of human life, and conscious of whatever is felt or acted in the universe: so that in the perfectest recess, or deepest solitude there must be ONE still presumed remaining with us; whose presence singly must be of more moment than that of the most august assembly upon earth. In such a Presence 'tis evident, that as the shame of guilty actions must be the greatest of any, so must the honour be of well doing, even under the unjust censure of a world." Of one thing however I cannot doubt, that if he ever relinquished his belief of christianity, which is a thing by no means certain, he was much indebted to it for those lessons of the most pure and sublime morality, for which his writings are justly admired.

But

But now we are thrown upon the subject, as we are not limited in our time, it may not only be an amusement, but of some use, to endeavour to state, whether there be any grounds for christians to reckon this celebrated person one of their number.

It is to be collected from those very scanty memorials which are preserved of this third Earl of *Shaftsbury*, that from his infancy a very extraordinary care was taken to bring him acquainted with the learned languages of Greece and Rome, the key to all the knowledge of the antients, in which he afterwards excelled in an eminent degree; and we may be assured an especial attention would also be paid to form the mind to every thing that bore relation to piety and virtue, as Mr. *Locke* is known to have been particularly consulted in the care of his education.

His seriousness in the profession of the christian religion, into which he was early initiated, is recounted on several occasions in his youth, and seems to have grown up with him. But what principally shewed his firm and rational conviction of the truth of the  
gospèl,



gospel, his high value for it, and zeal and earnestness to bring others to the knowledge of it, and to imbibe its spirit, was a publication made by him, in 1698, when he was 27 years of age, of a volume of sermons by Dr. *Whichcot*, a Divine of the church of England, justly held in the highest reverence and esteem. These sermons this young man of quality was at the pains to search out and collect from persons, who had taken them down in short-hand as they were delivered from the pulpit, such being the modesty of this very celebrated preacher in his day both in the university of Cambridge and afterwards in this great city, as would never let him print any of his discourses. The noble editor appears to have been very accurate in preparing the volume for the press, which he published with a preface of his own of some length, but without his name.

In this preface, Lord *Ashley*, for his father was then living, speaks of christianity, as one that understood and loved it; as “a religion where love is chiefly enjoyed; where the heart is expressly called for; and the outward action without that is disregarded; and  
charity

charity (or kindness) is made all in all." And throughout the whole of the discourses, it is seen, what excellent creatures in all respects mankind would become, if influenced and governed by the principles of the gospel.

Several years afterwards, from February 1707. to July 1710, we have a series of Letters, written after he came to his estate and titles, to a young Student at the university of Oxford, who was there, at his expence and under his direction, preparing for the ministry in the church of England. These letters bespeak the writer's high value for christianity, and shew in a most edifying manner, those sentiments of true piety and genuine goodness by which he was constantly guided himself, and which he strove to instil into this young person\*.

Soon

\* A beautiful edition of Lord Shaftsbury's Letters to a student of the university, was republished a few years ago, and distributed by James Martin, Esq. the truly conscientious Member for Tewkesbury, as one way among many others in which he might enlighten and benefit mankind, ever his desire and delight.

I would beg leave here to bear my testimony to a truly laudable though rare custom, instituted by the above gentle-

Soon after this, in the year 1711, he went abroad on account of his health, which had long been very delicate and precarious, and died at Naples, in the beginning of the year 1713, having barely completed his 42d year.

A slight presumption, ought not, it would seem, to overfet the weight of this evidence for the author of *the Characteristicks* being a christian; and yet we shall meet with some things that will cause hesitation. We have his writings, which may be said to contain his real sentiments, as they were revised by

gentleman, of daily collecting his children and family before breakfast to hear a moral, or instructive discourse or a sermon, as it happens, and concluding by a short address to the Divine Being: thus beginning every day as a Christian ought; and which cannot enough be recommended and followed.

No company in the house interrupts this service, no business, either in town or country: And children thus inured to sit still and listen must learn something, and when older are called to read the prayer aloud, getting by such means a habit and impressions which can never wholly die away and be lost in their future intercourse with the world.

him for republication, during the leisure, which his long stay at Naples afforded him in the two last years of his life.

In them he appears to have contracted undue prejudices against some distinguished characters and transactions, which are spoken of with commendation in the sacred writings, betraying too great a willingness to see things in the most unfavourable point of view. This appears in his disposition to give credit to other historians rather than those who were most competent to the facts they treat of; in what he says concerning the rite of circumcision among the Hebrews; in his insinuations against *Abraham*, and imputing his readiness, at the known command of God, to have put his son to death, to a proneness for human sacrifices in those days, instead of extolling the pious and right dispositions he shewed on that occasion, which this noble author would not have failed to do, had he considered the history and all its circumstances without prejudice: in his seeking to depreciate and asperse the fair unspotted name of *Joseph*, governor of the country under *Pharaoh*, as combined with the priests  
of

of Egypt, to enslave the nation to the king, and put their whole property into his hands, from having married into the family of one of them. Equally uncandid and groundless were his accusations of *Moses* on similar suspicions and surmises: for had he met with such characters in Grecian story he would not have ceased to applaud and admire them; the hebrew youth, as a most amiable pattern of filial piety, generous fraternal affection, and purity of manners; and the hebrew legislator, for his consummate wisdom, and for devoting himself and all his powers, without any self-seeking, to the good of others.

Such hasty condemnation, in these and some other instances, he would not have suffered himself to pass, if, without undue bias, he had calmly considered; that men chosen of God for important purposes, and therefore extraordinarily favoured by him, were not, nor was it necessary they should be, faultless persons; that in the infancy of a commonwealth, of a nature so peculiar as that of the hebrews, a harsher discipline might at first be needed: as for instance, in adjudging the man (Numb. xv.) that gathered sticks on the sabbath

sabbath to be stoned to death, to restrain and deter others from the violation of its laws in future, and in things of greater moment.

And with regard to the extermination of the idolatrous nations of Canaan, and the severities and destruction accompanying it, which have been much exaggerated, and may hereafter be noted ; may it not deserve to be considered, whether in the instance of a general destruction enjoined of innocent children with persons grown up, such proceedings might not be authorized by the righteous moral governor of the world, in mercy to the unfortunate sufferers themselves ; whilst in putting an end to the lives of his creatures, he put an end to the most horrid vice, (in which the young would have been trained, and others grown worse) by continuing in which they would only have been more and more removed from, and with more difficulty recovered and brought back to virtue and to true happiness.

Add to this, a most important consideration, that such temporary severity tended immediately to deter and prevent the Israelites,

ites, and the nations around from becoming infected with and going on in such practices, for which these people were doomed to suffer; I mean, the practices of a bestiality not to be named; of the most defiling, promiscuous commerce between the sexes; and of that dreadful superstition which led them to make their children pass through the fire to be consumed in it, in honour of their false gods.

Had the pure, well-disposed mind of Lord *Shaftsbury*, been sufficiently unwarped to behold these things in their true light, he would have been far from imputing blame here; he who was penetrated with a full persuasion of the perfect unlimited goodness of the universal parent; and of the present, being only a beginning progressive state of his rational offspring, for their improvement in virtue and happiness for ever\*.

However he might sometimes affect to speak lightly of the argument from miracles,

\* See Lord Shaftsbury's Letters, p. 20. Mr. Martin's edition.

the only one that can fully prove to us a divine revelation, he sometimes shewed that he understood and valued it, and would by no means be thought to reject it. In the *Characteristicks*, Vol. II. p. 332, 333, 334, there is a fine passage to this purpose, the whole of which deserves perusal. The noble writer begins with establishing, as he styles it, “ a just and rational foundation for our faith, on which we may give credit to a divine revelation; namely, when it comes recommended to us by the testimony of those whose characters and lives might answer for them as to the truth of what they reported to us from God.” And he then very properly remarks, that miracles of themselves are proofs only of superior power; and that we must be persuaded that the power is under the direction of supreme wisdom and goodness; in short, that there is a God, who by his wise and good providence appoints and governs all things, before we can rely on any miraculous communications from him; and then concludes in these words; “ To whom therefore the Laws of this Universe and its Government appear just and uniform; to him they speak the Government of one JUST  
ONE;



ONE; to him they *reveal* and witness a God: and laying in him the foundation of this *first* Faith, they fit him for a *subsequent* one. He can then hearken to *Historical Revelation*: and is then fitted (and not till then) for the reception of any Message or miraculous *Notice* from above; where he knows beforehand all is just and true. But this no power of Miracles, nor any Power besides his *Reason*, can make him know or apprehend." He who writes in this sort cannot justly be pronounced a rejector of all miracles, or disbeliever of divine revelation.

It must not be omitted, that in the year 1710, Lord *Shaftsbury* having been informed by the young man whom he had educated for the ministry, at the university of Oxford, that he had been very lately ordained by Dr. *Burnet*, Bishop of Salisbury; on receiving this letter, his patron, thus, among other things, writes back to him. "July 10th, 1710. I hope whatever advice the great and good bishop gave you, will sink deeply into your mind; and that your receiving *orders* from the hands of so worthy a prelate will be one of the circumstances,

which may help to insure your steadiness in honesty, good principles, moderation and true Christianity.”—— —— “ As for my part of kindness and friendship to you, I shall be sufficiently recompensed, if you prove (as you have ever promised) a virtuous, pious, sober, and studious man, as becomes the solemn charge belonging to you.”—— —— “ The thorough knowlege you have had of me, and the direction of all my studies and life to the promotion of religion, virtue and the good of mankind, will (I hope) be of some good example to you: at least it will be a hindrance to your being seduced by *infamies* and *calumnies*; such as are thrown upon the men called *moderate*, and in their style indifferent in religion, heterodox, and heretical.”

“ I pray God to bless you in your new function, with all the true virtue, humility, moderation, and meekness, which becomes it,

I am your hearty friend,

S.”

It

It would now seem from these facts, and authorities laid together, that we must in all equity conclude, that this celebrated writer did not make the declarations we have seen in favour of christianity with a view to deceive; that he was not acting a part, but was a real believer of that religion for which he uniformly professed such a high regard.

We cannot certainly decide that his free notions and sarcastic raillery in which he indulged with respect some of the histories in the Old Testament, amounted to an intire rejection of its divine authority: but this we may conclude, that his scepticism in this respect, whatever it was, did not appear to him incompatible with a sincere belief and profession of christianity.

Nor are we to think otherwise of him, for the insinuations he sometimes throws out against the gospel-morality, as being deficient in teaching the duties of friendship, of the love of liberty and of our country; objections which serve only to expose his learned vanity and ignorance: but it appears, as far as can be judged from his sentiments and

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conduct,

conduct, that he was, and was desirous of passing for a christian; and also wished such a judgment to be formed of him by posterity.

We may then now perhaps be permitted to represent to ourselves the manner in which the author of the *Characteristicks*, would have been received by our divine master *Jesus*, if he had met with such a character in his walks through Judea. May we not imagine to ourselves, that after some heavy rebukes for his high self-conceit, and other grievous defects, bordering upon and springing from it, and after pointing out the necessity of the severe discipline to be exercised over his imagination which had sadly misled him, our Saviour would, in favour of his general disposition, and principles, have spoken kindly to him and encouraged him, with the words of hope and consolation, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God?*"

But it is high time to go on with our subject, though we have not wandered far, if at all, out of our way, in this long digression; for which we are much beholden to *Volusian*,

as

as it has brought before us a most amiable and accomplished person, who thought, and who contributed to make others think, well of the world, and its maker, and therein is no small encouragement to us.

It is then with great pleasure, my friends, that I begin with noting, that as there is nothing, which we can possibly be more concerned to know, than that the power that made us, is benevolently disposed to us, and to all his creatures, he has not been wanting in furnishing us with a knowledge so necessary to our peace. For although we do not behold him with our bodily eyes, we can see in his works, and dealings with us, and with every living *creature*, how great and good he is. It may, indeed, be called the verdict and sentiment of nature; because in all ages, where any believed in God, they believed him to be good; seeing the marks of kind design every where, and in every thing, they could frame no other idea of the sovereign Creator, than as intending the happiness of the things he had made; not to receive any benefit himself, for he wanted not any thing; but to impart and communicate from his boundless

boundless ocean of goodness to all. And it is a fact of great notoriety, that what put men at first upon the thought of there being a powerful independent evil principle, was, their not being able otherwise satisfactorily to account to themselves for the evil and misery, which was in the world, and because they were persuaded, that nothing but good could come from God.

But this universal sentiment and impression concerning the deity being found among all his rational offspring, that he is of the most perfect goodness, though highly deserving attention, as the genuine testimony which his works bear to the character of their author, does not prove him to be such to the anxious inquiring mind, whilst so many things seem to wear a contrary aspect. That can only be made to appear by such a research and particular examination as will convince us, that all creatures are intended for happiness, and put into the way of enjoying it.

Now wherever we turn our eyes, to the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the watery tribes, or the numberless insect race,

we see them chearful and happy, and their happiness secured to them in a manner suited to their nature and conditions. It is most obvious, and mankind have very early noticed it, with regard to themselves, as a mark of kind design in their maker, that the organs of their body; which are of chief moment for comfort and well-being, and of most constant use, are most studiously guarded from injury, and advantageously placed; the eye elevated on high for the better discovery of objects; the ear likewise for the greater advantage of hearing; so likewise the organ of smelling near the mouth, for a guide in the choice of food. And the same kind attention and disposition of these principal organs is observable in the infinite variety of the different species of the animal creation, accommodated to their form and way of life,

And as the world is God's House, and all the living creatures in it, part of his family, carrying on their different works and business in it, for a limited season; and as he intended a succession of its inhabitants to be continued, he has therefore made proper provision for their propagation; and also for their comfortable

fortable support; which is either put in their immediate possession, when brought into life, or so placed within their reach, that by the easy use of their powers, it may be secured.

The utmost care is taken of all animals when young, and unable to provide for themselves. This is generally done by their parents, especially the mothers, who acquit themselves therein with astonishing perseverance, fidelity and tenderness, which naturalists can never enough admire; encountering the greatest difficulties and dangers in the protection of them, and shewing the greatest self-denial in procuring them sustenance. And it is so ordered, that their natural affection and care cease, when there is no further call for them. Where this office is not performed by the parent, they are directed to lay their eggs, or produce their young, in places, where when born they instantly find their nourishment in the greatest abundance.

All the different tribes of animals are furnished with their proper food, so as not to interfere with each other; and all know what



is salutary for them by their several senses, their food being made pleasant and inviting to them. Innumerable are the benevolent contrivances of the author of nature for their accommodation in this respect. In those seasons of the year, when the food of some animals is not to be obtained in one country, they are found to traverse land and seas, exactly at the proper seasons, to procure it in another, and sail through the air by a more certain intuitive guidance, than the mariner's compass. Others are so formed, that in winter, for instance, when their food is not to be obtained, they subsist without it, and live concealed in their retiring places, till spring approaches. Those animals which are the most generally useful, are found in the greatest number, and almost in all countries. And the more uncommon ones are to be seen only in those climates and situations, where they are best provided for, and most useful and happy; as the Rhen-Deer in Lapland, and the Camel in the hot countries, bordering on the sandy deserts.

Nor is it any exception to the goodness of the creator, that many animals are made to  
prey

prey and feed upon one another. Ravenous beasts, tigers, wolves, &c. are not numerous, are soon destroyed where the earth is inhabited and cultivated; and, in the mean time, they call forth men's active powers, are of use to prevent other animals from multiplying too fast. Also, in general, they are only hurtful, when provoked by some injury, or stimulated by hunger. How often would the labour of the husbandman be entirely frustrated in his expectations from sowing his grain and feeds, if birds of prey did not live upon the maggots and worms, that infest the tender blade and bud? To prevent the like mischievous effects, the wild boar and timid hare are destined to be hunted down and destroyed by other animals. The minute flies and insects furnish food to the smaller birds, that enliven our atmosphere by their notes and by their dexterity in their flights; and was not the vast multitude of these in some countries to be the nourishment of the feathered race, the astonishing swarms of them would, at times, darken the atmosphere, and render life uncomfortable.

But

But by this kind contrivance, and multiplication of living creatures an infinitely greater number enjoy existence and are made happy by it, than would otherwise have taken place. And though it be very short, they enjoy their little day of life, without any regret at parting with it, and make room thereby for others to succeed, and be happy in their turn. And with respect to those tamer domestic animals, which mankind kill for their food, they become happier thereby from the extraordinary care taken of their health and nourishment. It is necessary, moreover, to destroy them, as, otherwise, the earth would be overrun and so filled by them, as not to yield sufficient food for mankind. It is a strict duty, however, for which all will be responsible, to put an end to their being in the easiest and shortest way. And, as they have no presentiment of what is to happen to them, the abridging of their lives is no injury, as they suffer less by this premature death, than by dying of disease and old age.

The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,  
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?

Pleas'd

Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,  
 And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.  
 Oh! blindness to the future, kindly given,  
 That each may fill the circle, mark'd by heav'n!

*Essay on Man. Ep. i.*

We, also, as partakers of the same nature with our fellow-animals around us, have our full share, as such, in the kindness and care of the common Creator. His goodness meets us at our birth, and provides for us in our first helpless state. He has contrived all the objects of our several senses to be pleasing to us, indicating thereby that he intends us to be gratified by them.

Pleasure is, indeed, our natural feeling, accompanying the application and exercise of all our powers, and discovering itself most remarkably, as has been observed, in the playful disposition of young children; which, when there is no reason against it, ought ever to be indulged.

Nor is it any mark of unkindness or indifference towards us, in our Creator, that

we are subject also to painful feelings, but the contrary; as they frequently arise from what would be hurtful to us, and put us upon avoiding it. The pains of hunger and thirst, which are among the first we experience, and which continue through life, are not only constant sources of delight to us, but are necessary to excite us to the care of our health and to labour, without which we should be in danger of becoming torpid, useless, and miserable.

Some of the acutest pains, to which we are exposed, are evidently the accidental, not the natural effects of our frame. Diseases, in general are an effort of the constitution, to relieve from something, that would be prejudicial to us; for which providence, by the means of human industry and ingenuity, hath furnished us with many effectual remedies, and by the same industry and ingenuity of men more are daily discovered. And epidemical diseases; by alarming men's fears, put them on more minute investigation, in diligently studying their causes, so as to prevent them in future, and more lives are preserved.

Nor can we complain of a want of benevolence, in there being so many causes at hand continually of the destruction of us, as of other animals. For we and all animals were born to die. This is the condition of the present life. The manner of dying is in itself of little moment.

It is necessary to make room for others of our fellow-creatures after us, to act their parts, whatever be the design of placing us on the stage of this world; that as we have had our day and time of life, and finished our parts, others may succeed and finish their's. And when, as sometimes happens, in vastly greater numbers, the different actors are swept off the stage by earth-quakes, by war, pestilence, and the like, the sufferers themselves have the least reason of complaint, as the easiest way of going out of the world is to be called out on the sudden.

If this were to be the whole of our existence, as it may be, for aught we know, of our fellow-animals, there would be no reason to murmur; but to be thankful, for having lived in this fair world, and enjoyed an over-

balance of happiness in it. For that happiness abounds, is plain from this, that mankind are universally fond of life, and cling to it with avidity to the last, to its very dregs: which would not be, were it not pleasant to them. The very few who make away with themselves, are not hurried on to it by any comparative view or feeling of the miseries of life above its pleasures or enjoyments; but, where the motive can be perceived, it is generally found to be some pressing anxiety of the moment, which they have not the courage to resist, whence they cowardly give way and fall under it.

It is most consolatory, that we can thus attain full satisfaction concerning the happiness of mankind and of all sentient beings in the present state, as we have thereby full evidence of the goodness, of the Power, that gave us our being, by its effects: for it might have left some suspicion, that all was not fair and kind above, if we had been referred to an unknown, untried future state for proof of the divine benevolence; as it might have suggested itself that we cannot but judge from what we feel and experience, and that if the

Deity had shewn himself less favourably disposed to his creatures here; they could have little ground to expect it hereafter.

BUT, though so kindly dealt with in our animal capacity, in what relates only to our present life, thanks ever due be given to our great creator for that most important distinction, and mark of favour, which his kindness has farther bestowed upon us; that we can contemplate ourselves also as his creatures of an higher form; as rational and moral; capable of attaining the knowlege of him, the benevolent author of our being, and of recommending ourselves to his favour by pious grateful acknowledgements and by obedience to his will, in doing good to others, as he does good to us and to all; which is the highest perfection and blifs.

In this view of ourselves, although we come out of his hands more helpless and destitute at first, than other animals, this is amply supplied by the appointed instruments of our birth.

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The mind, our distinguishing excellency, is at first a perfect blank, fitted and ready to receive whatever impressions may be made upon it; for which we are entirely dependent on those about us, and the circumstances, in which we are placed: which accounts for the infinite diversity of characters that are in the world. Ever in action, which is the source of all our improvement, from our first coming into life, and in every stage of it, we are delighted in gaining continually new ideas, and powers, and knowlege of all kinds.

The several parts of our make, our appetites, passions, and affections, spring up gradually in us, as they are called forth, and their objects present themselves; all of them in themselves good and right, and necessary for our well-being and perfection, yet without due restraint and regulation, capable of being perverted, and of misleading us; for which, Reason, the ruling faculty is given, to guide us to private and public good.

Wholly the creatures of association and habit, our characters are insensibly formed by the instruction, conversation, and example of

of those we first mix with, and the things and scenes and persons, to which we are accustomed, and among whom our lot is cast.

And thus being from the first, and all along, the subjects of perpetual care and kindness and attention of parents and those about us, our good affections are generated and excited: we are induced, we are prompted, we desire, we feel it right, to be kind to others, as others have been kind to us, and take pleasure in adding to their happiness.

As we grow up our wants constrain us still more to seek the aid and assistance of others, and our social make inclining us not to live in solitude; prompted also by nature to unite ourselves with a tender companion for life, a way is opened from the construction of one family to the union of many families together, and the formation of larger communities for security, comfort, and advantageous intercourse; and thence to the establishment of government and laws; which when built up and upheld by principles of equal liberty and  
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the general good, are fruitful of the greatest blessings.

In the morning of life, at reason's earliest dawn, we are transported with the sight of verdant fields, and lawns, and their various peaceful inhabitants grazing on them, with those combinations of different objects, of hill and dale and groves, that present themselves in beautiful landscapes; heightened at the same time with the harmony and music furnished by the choristers of the woods and sky, rejoicing in their being, and calling upon us to join their song: the whole scenery together forcing upon the beholder, the joyous, venerable idea of a parent almighty Mind; a Power unseen, of wisdom and goodness without bounds, which framed, adjusted, and preserves the whole, worthy to be loved and adored by all; as *Blomefield*, in his artless numbers, happily describes it,

There his first thoughts to Nature's charms inclin'd,  
Which stamps devotion on th' inquiring mind.

And indeed by the use of reason, the light within us, every attentive mind may, from the view of his works, as well know that there

is a God, who made and governs the world ; as he may know, by the use of his eyes and senses, that there is a Sun, which enlightens the earth, and by its warmth cherishes the growth of vegetables, and ripens the corn and fruits.

This natural light moreover teaches us, that as we owe our existence and all its blessings to our Maker's unmerited kindness and bounty, we should be odious monsters were we ever to fail in the gratitude, reverence and obedience, ever due to one so much above us, who shews himself so interested for us and desirous of our happiness. And as the frame and constitution, which he, who giveth every thing to all, has bestowed upon us, is also such, that we cannot be happy ourselves, without promoting to our power the happiness of our fellow-creatures : these plain intimations within, and interwoven in our very frame, of gratitude and love to God, and affection to our fellow creatures, can be considered as none other than the voice of God within us ; his *secret voice*, by which he calls to the sons and daughters of men in all ages and countries, and teaches them their duty  
and

and the road to their happiness; as once, by an *audible voice* at Mount Sinai, he delivered his solemn commands to one people.

Thus are those primary duties of piety and benevolence engrafted in us, and provision is made for our happiness as rational beings. This is the law written in the hearts of those who have no written law to guide them. And thus has the cause of religion and virtue been kept up in the world, amongst all the rational creatures of God, and the means of virtue and holiness, of their present and future happiness, afforded to all: not the same means and advantages to all, but sufficient for every one who can attain to no other. For no more will be required of any, than the honest and faithful use and improvement of the talents and advantages given, be they more or fewer.

*Photinus* having ended, the company paused a while, absorbed in involuntary silence and reflection on what he had brought together, on the support and happiness of all sentient beings that we are acquainted with, from man down to the lowest worm,

*Marcellinus*

*Marcellinus* standing up, thanked him for furnishing them with such an exquisite moral treat; “How natural,” exclaimed he, “on such a prospect of the world we inhabit, for the pious mind to adopt those strains in which the Hebrew poets first led the way, inspired by the sublime subject, and called upon all nature to assist them in hymning and celebrating in their songs the common creator and benefactor:

“Not only the young and old, and those of every age and class of the human race; but all the irrational tribes of those who fill the air, and walk the earth, and creep on the ground, or that glide along the watery element; the different families of living creatures, who in their different ways shew themselves, busy and chearful and happy;

“And, not satisfied with this tribute, still in bolder strains they invoke the mountains and hills and plains, and every tree and shrub that grows, to contribute their share of praise, for being made to afford shelter and delight to so many living beings, and for other numberless uses;

Nay,

“ Nay, they invite even summer and winter to join the general chorus of praise ; the changing seasons so necessary to the health of man and beast, the growth and preservation of each herb and fruit-bearing tree, and to the ripening of the fruits of the earth, by which the whole is sustained and filled with gladness.”

And though these holy men were not such deep philosophers as we boast ourselves to be, they hereby shewed that they had attained to the chief end of all true philosophy, in having learned to read and trace out in his works the hand and kindness of the One Supreme, the benevolent creator, and divine artist.

From these few instances produced by you out of the inexhaustible store that remains behind, we are able with satisfaction to see that the creator loveth all his creatures, and has brought them all into life to bestow upon them a happiness suited to them.

But what still more concerns us : You have pointed out, and enabled us to discern from  
what

what simple principles, and by what easy natural processes, the rational, moral character is formed, and from primeval dust and clay, whence we were first taken, becomes capable of rising to some faint, though infinitely distant resemblance of the all good, and all perfect being.

Yet I fear that this will be regarded merely as beautiful theory; and these fine capacities of the rational nature thought to be bestowed in vain, and never likely to be brought to maturity, when we take a survey of the world at large, and scan what mankind have been in all ages, and still are, in a moral view. And I should be led almost to despair, if you, *Photinus*, were not to continue to give us your kind help to explore what the momentous subject will produce.



At their next meeting, after talking for some time together upon indifferent matters, *Marcellinus* turned the discourse, observing, that as *Photinus* had shewn to their intire satisfaction, that the animal creation below us, in all their infinite variety and gradations, most usefully filled the places assigned them, and were happy therein as far as we could perceive and judge; and was going on to investigate and ascertain how far the same could be said of the human race, he thought that to do full justice to the subject, it would be necessary to take in the history of the origin of mankind as delivered in our sacred books; and as there were different opinions entertained about it, to have it in some measure settled among them, what credit was to be given to that most antient history of all others, how it is to be understood, and what is to be gathered from it. Concerning these points, that the adjusting of them might not divert *Photinus* from pursuing his main subject, he should take the liberty to submit his own sentiments to them, which he had reason to believe were not much different from their own, as it was a matter that had often fallen in their way.

Now

Now it seemed to be generally allowed, by those who had searched into, and were best qualified to form a right judgment concerning the cosmogony recorded in the entrance of the book of Genesis, that the account of things therein given had been handed down to *Moses* from the first parents of mankind, through the channel of *Noah* and his descendants; which, from the longevity of mankind at that period would not need to pass through many hands; and their high importance would secure diligence and fidelity in the conveyance.

In the first three chapters of the book, we have the most momentous documents and information concerning the one true God, and sole creator of all things, his character, and that of his creature, man. We there learn, what we might presume to be the fact, that mankind were not left to themselves, to the investigations of reason, to spell out and acquire the knowledge of the Being that made them, and of their duty to him; which, though attainable by their natural powers, would have been a matter of very slow operation and accomplishment; but that they re-  
ceived

ceived this knowlege directly from God himself; deriving from the same source at the same time, the knowlege of language necessary for their intercourse with each other and with their Maker. From the facts, and circumstances of the narrative we have the most probable grounds on which to build these conclusions. But how this knowlege of a primitive language was instilled or acquired, it is needless to ask, as it seems impossible to find out.

And although men have differed, and will continue to differ, in their interpretations of the language and dress, in which these important truths are clothed and conveyed; namely, what is called the tree of the knowlege of good and evil; the tree of life: the serpent's temptation, and his conversation with *Eve*; her eating of the forbidden fruit at his instigation, and giving it to *Adam* to eat, and the sentence passed upon the several offenders by their creator and judge: much of it undoubtedly couched in allegory and figurative expression; as also literally to be taken in other parts, which are at the foundation; (see the reference to it, Mark x. 5, 6.)

yet

yet the moral instruction intended to be conveyed by the whole is not difficult to be understood, and, in this there has been a very general harmony and concurrence. That, for instance, there is one God, the maker of all things, and father of mankind, who formed them in his own image, their moral governor, and judge; who is desirous of their happiness, which can only be attained by their observance of the laws he has made known to them as a rule for their conduct, annexing rewards to their obedience, and threatening with punishment their transgressions.

I shall only add, that, not far from the entrance of Mr. *Locke's* "Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures," is a specimen of the manner in which that judicious person was wont to interpret for himself the history of the fall of our first parents, which, I have no doubt, you think with me worthy of attention.

When *Marcellinus* had finished, *Photinus* immediately rising up, remarked, that he had not any doubt of their being all much satisfied

fied with what had been now suggested concerning this most interesting narrative of the remotest antiquity. For his part, he could not but declare and acknowledge, that it would relieve him much in the task their partiality had imposed on him, to have such a foundation to proceed upon. With their leave then, he would begin, and remind them; that having already shewn, that man had a moral nature, in distinction from the animals around him, by which he was fitted for the supreme happiness, arising from the knowledge and worship of God, the sovereign all-perfect Being, and from a resemblance to him in goodness; they were now to inquire whether man attains that happiness? and what his history teaches us in this respect?

In the Bible, the oldest and most authentic history of the world and of the human race, as far as it goes, we find our first parents placed originally in a most happy station, where obedience to their kind creator, in observing his laws, enjoined only for their good, was their easy duty. But they ungratefully failed in it; and as they were forewarned,

paid the penalty of their transgression; and, though not particularly informed of it, we may not doubt of their punishment having its intended effect, in producing repentance and future obedience.

The marks of human frailty did not alas! stop with them. Dire selfish passions soon crept into their small family, and prompted their eldest son, the monster *Cain*, through envy, to take away the life of his more pious, virtuous brother. But fell remorse and misery speedily overtook him for the atrocious act. And the shock it would give to all that heard of it; and the lessons upon it which our first parents would not fail to read, of the fatal effects of headstrong ungoverned passion, would contribute to contain others in their duty, and be remembered for good.

Of *Enoch*, one of the descendants of *Adam* before the flood, it is recorded, Gen. v. 24. that he *walked with God*, i. e. was one highly approved by him; and *was not*; for *God took him*. The phrase, *was not*, in itself implies, that *he died*, ceased to exist: but as explained by what follows, *for God took him*, it

it here denotes, that he was removed out of the world without dying. For so the word is rendered, Gen. v. 24. by the greek translators : where also, in the original hebrew, the same term is used, which is afterwards in 2 Kings ii. 3. in speaking of Elijah being taken up alive into heaven. And this sense is confirmed by the apostle, *Hebrews xi. v.* *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.*

This striking event was an absolute assurance to the antediluvians of a life after this, which could not fail of making the deepest impressions upon them; and its taking place at this early period would be of infinite service in teaching them, that the virtuous and good, living and dying, were the peculiar care of heaven.

Very little is preserved to us concerning the generations of mankind before the flood. But we may presume from the circumstances of trial and difficulty in which human crea-

tures are all placed, and their general behaviour under them, that there would always be a mixture of characters, good and bad, more or less at different times. For a while, the good would prevail, till by degrees they fell away, and others less virtuous and regular succeeded, and at length wickedness and violence, we learn, rose to such a height, that the almighty and merciful Being judged it expedient to destroy the whole race of men from off the earth, all, except one righteous man and his family.

This most awful judicial act however of his moral government was not executed without giving them warning of his design, and trying to reclaim and amend them. For we are informed in our sacred books, that for very many years *Noah* had a divine commission to warn that evil generation of the just judgements impending over them, and to labour to bring them off from their pernicious courses. Some, we may not doubt, would be wrought upon so as to have their evil dispositions changed and turned to God and goodness, whether by the pious remonstrances of *Noah* alone, or of others joined with him; although



although it was not possible to stem the torrent of wickedness, which by the decrees of heaven brought on the destruction of that incorrigible race. Yet we cannot refrain from remarking, how in the midst of judgement the Almighty remembered mercy, in sweeping them away at once by a death the most easy of all others.

Thus did they suffer for their extreme wickedness, and violation of the divine commands; and became the means of exalting the virtue of those, who affectionately and earnestly strove, though in vain, to bring them to virtue and an obedience to the divine will.

It has not pleased the Divine Wisdom to gratify us with many things that we might have wished to know concerning *Noah*, the second father of our race: He that had seen the whole species cut off for their sins, and his family alone spared. How powerful and affecting so long as he lived must have been his testimony of the one true God and Maker

of all things; of his goodness in bringing creatures into life to make them happy by an obedience to his laws; his just abhorrence of all sin and wickedness. This knowlege he would be careful to inculcate on his children and his children's children in a long succession. And that there was such important knowlege derived from this source and circulated through all nations, is manifest from the accounts of the state of the world which are preserved to us.

After the flood, the re-peopling of the earth would be promoted by different families originating from Noah and his sons, which carried with them in their dispersions, these great truths.

It is a noble attestation to the truth of the Mosaic history which is given by *Sir Isaac Newton*, in his "Chronology of antient Kingdoms amended," by shewing its agreement with the actual state of the world and condition of its inhabitants, as exhibited in the imperfect accounts of them handed down to us. He thence observes, p. 188, "that the worship of the true God continued to the  
time

time of *Abraham* and *Melchizedek*, and that it was not till their days, that men fell away to the worship of false gods, which were probably the heavenly host, the sun, moon and stars; and that it was to avoid this, which then began in Chaldea, and spread from thence, but had not yet reached the land of Canaan, that *Abraham* left *Ur* of the Chaldeans, to go by *Haran* into the land of Canaan, being called out by divine providence from among his kindred, who were beginning to be infected with it; and this great author concludes the first chapter of his diligent and exact search into the Scriptures and antiquity, with this general deduction, p. 190. “ So then, *the believing that the world was framed by one supreme God, and is governed by him; and the loving and worshipping him, and honouring our parents, and loving our neighbours as ourselves, and being merciful even to brute beasts,* is the oldest of all religions. He had just before called this, *the primitive religion of jews and christians; which,* adds he, *ought to be the standing religion of all nations, it being for the honour of God and the good of mankind.*

Hardly throughout all antiquity shall we find a more dignified and accomplished person than *Abraham*; of great wisdom and integrity; of a generous independent spirit, and true fortitude; famed over all the East for his virtues, and distinguished as a worshipper of the one true God, in which he carefully instructed his family and dependents; and in those days his known and avowed principles and example must have been of service in discouraging and restraining men from the worship of false gods, which was then beginning to be set up; and the more, as his travelling into different countries would cause him to be much inquired after and known.

Much to be noted is the account given by the sacred historian of *Abraham's* intercession with the Divine Being in behalf of the sinful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. This most probably passed in vision, whilst he was praying; (the like to which is recorded, in later times, of the devout roman centurion, and of the apostle *Peter*, Acts x.) for just before it happened, Gen. xviii. 22. it is said, *Abraham* stood before God, i. e. was praying  
to

to him, as the phrase is understood by the best interpreters.

How edifying this first representation that is handed down to us, in the annals of the world, of a creature admitted to converse by prayer with his creator! and what a pattern of devotion to us even in these enlightened times! *Abraham* requests nothing for himself, but with profound humility, moved by a benevolent concern for the most horrible crimes of his fellow creatures, he, by various arguments in their behalf, pleads for their being saved from impending destruction, that they might have space to repent. Whilst on the other hand, with infinite condescension and kindness, the Almighty listens and replies to his pleas, convincing him, that had not their dispositions been turned to evil beyond a possibility of being changed by any ordinary means, his prayer would have been granted and they would have been spared.

With regard to the particular sin of the inhabitants of those cities, for which the  
divine

divine judgments were ready to fall on them, and which this pious good man prayed might be averted; it is a crime which bespeaks the highest depravity, if not a total moral insensibility and alienation of mind from God and goodness. And it is probable that such an early declaration from heaven against it, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha by fire, the traces of which remain unto this day, displayed in so tremendous a manner before *Abraham* and his family; with the severe stigma and condemnation passed upon all such crimes afterwards, in the law of *Moses*: these circumstances, all together, fixed and left such a deep indelible impression and horror upon the minds of his chosen race, as have been the means of preserving them at all times from such unnatural debasing vice. For we never find their prophets, in the long catalogue of their crimes, laying this particularly to their charge. And in their dispersion into other countries, foretold by their prophets, whilst the heathens among whom they sojourned were many of them, infamous for it, the greeks and romans in their most polished and improved state by

no means excepted; and the followers of *Mahomet* horribly guilty, the nation of the jews has in general been unpolluted with it.

Of *Lot*, the nephew of *Abraham*, it is recorded, 2 Peter ii. 6, 7, 8. that he was filled with deep concern for the extreme wickedness of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, a mark of a truly virtuous mind, to be concerned for God and his holy laws, and the happiness of his fellow-creatures in their obedience to them. But concerning these distinguished persons, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and some other worthy characters among the ancestors of the Israelites in those early ages, there are unquestionably some things recorded which are by no means to their credit, or to be imitated by us: a circumstance which does honour to the sacred historian, shewing him to be actuated by a regard to truth only in what he related, and resolved to tell things as they really happened, however it might make against some of the most favourite characters of his nation.

Of *Moses* the divine lawgiver of the Israelites, and his early preference of virtue and obedience to God to the highest worldly dignities and enjoyment, we have an important testimony, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26, confirmed by every thing we know concerning him. From the time that he had a divine call to deliver his countrymen out of bondage in Egypt, and to settle them in the land of Canaan, he led a life of incessant toil, and anxiety, and contradiction, in having to struggle with their low base minds, and obstinate untractable tempers, which their long slavery had generated and rivetted in them; by which his patience and magnanimity were called forth and exercised; devoting himself and all his powers to bring them off from this slavery of vice and evil passions, the worst of all others: for which he had no reward to look for in this world, but the satisfaction of doing them good and approving himself to God.

His wisdom and virtues we find were known and revered far and near among the gentiles; and the excellent laws which he laid down for his people, taught and excited  
many



many in different countries to honour the true God, and to be serviceable to their fellow creatures in bringing them from a rude and savage and immoral life to a subjection to laws for the public good.

No one can rise up from perusing the history of his life and times, as given us by himself; the admirable laws and institutions he prescribed, to teach the Israelites the knowlege and worship of Jehovan, the one true God, and of him alone; the laws for their living together in society, and promoting their mutual happiness, with the mighty works he was enabled to do in Egypt for the establishment of his divine mission, and for the emancipation of his countrymen, and to preserve them afterwards in their duty and obedience; without seeing throughout the extraordinary hand and leading of God.

And it is against all credibility, that one, governed by such excellent principles; exhibiting in all his actions such an example of true piety and goodness; suggesting continually to his countrymen the great things God had done for them, appealing to them frequently

quently at the time, and upon the very spot, and exhorting them to gratitude and obedience on that account; should be under a delusion himself, or should in all this be acting a part and deceiving them. The mind revolts at the supposition: An unperverted understanding can need no other proof that *Moses* had a commission and authority from God to teach and to act as he did.

And in the same way of argument, it was not in the nature of things, if human beings were the same then as now, that the Israelites should be persuaded of their being delivered out of Egypt by a miraculous interposition from heaven in their favour, and of their being supported afterwards by the divine power in the wilderness; should continue to be assisted in the same extraordinary way in overcoming their enemies, by walls of defence (*Joshua vi. 20, 21.*) falling down before them; by rivers dividing (*Joshua iii. 5, to the end*) to make way for their passing them; that these and the like miraculous events in their favour should be the theme of their sacred songs and public hymns of thanksgiving to God their almighty deliverer at  
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the time and ever after to this hour, and yet never to have really taken place, but to have been a mass of priestly and political contrivance; in which the whole nation combined or were imposed on, till in these later ages the imposition was discovered.

Affuredly those persons are true objects of pity, who through some unfortunate bias on their minds, are led to reject an history of facts so well authenticated as those which have *Moses* for their author; which, besides this most cogent internal proof now produced, is supported by all the external evidence which can reasonably be required; for which *Grotius*, and others may be consulted by all who are competent to make the research.

One is the more concerned for this incredulity, because the rejection of the important truths conveyed in these books, most commonly springs from a fixed determination not to admit any accounts, however well attested, of divine extraordinary communications and revelations to mankind; by which they deprive themselves of the unspeakable

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satisfaction thereby afforded, that the world and all things in it, especially the moral world, have been from the first and are under the special government and direction of its creator; who appoints the different and successive advantages of light and knowledge, and means of virtuous improvement.

Indeed where any one, for instance, is persuaded, that *Moses* in his history ascribes to the Almighty what is inconsistent with his attributes of justice and goodness; or introduces him as injoining or giving encouragement to any thing vicious or immoral, or that is injurious to their fellow-creatures; so long as he remains under this persuasion, and cannot be brought to see his error by the arguments laid before him, you can only be sorry for him, and wish him a mind more teachable and better informed.

With regard to the extermination of the Canaanitish nations, the great stumbling-block of the day, and objection to the reception of *Moses* as a divine prophet and law-giver; and the particular command given by him not to spare infant children where a general destruction

struction was to take place; it seems not to be needed to screen and justify it by a reference to the same thing taking place in the divine natural government, where whole districts, infants and grown persons are promiscuously destroyed by earthquakes and the like; as this is a defence, which some are dissatisfied with, not holding the cases to be parallel. It was a sufficient justification for the thing, that there was the divine command for it; sufficient for all, who believe in a God of all perfection and goodness, the moral governor of his creatures, and we can have no dispute with any others: for he can command nothing but what is beneficial and good to all, even to those who at present suffer by it. It is only necessary to be satisfied that it is his command, and we are to obey.

Now we have seen above, that there can be no ground to question the veracity of *Moses*, in what he so frequently declares, that it was the command of God to the Israelites by him, to exterminate those nations and take possession of their land, for that most important reason so often assigned, *lest they make thee sin against me.*

The Israelites also, besides the command of God given them by *Moses*, were further assured, from the divine extraordinary assistance vouchsafed to them in overcoming the Canaanites, that they acted by a divine command in invading and taking possession of the country; in which, without express encouragement from the Almighty, they would have been no better than robbers and murderers.

The Canaanites themselves also had notice and warning given them of what was coming upon them, and for what cause; which is plain from what *Rahab* the hostess related to the spies whom she had concealed, *Joshua* ii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. and what the Gibeonites afterwards declare to *Joshua*, ix. 3, &c. so that the body of the people were persuaded that the Israelites came against them by a commission from the supreme God and possessor of heaven and earth; who in acting by his authority, violated no law of nature, nor did any injury to the Canaanites in dispossessing them.

The severity however of these awful judgments upon these nations, for their extreme wickedness, of which the Israelites were made the instruments, was not in that degree, or to that extent which has been supposed. This has been maintained with great strength of argument, by learned and impartial judges; *Maimonides* and others of the first account among the jews; and by very many christians of our own and other countries, in particular by *Grotius*, who, on Deut. xx. 10, maintains that the law Exod. xxiii. 31, 32, 33, and Deut. vii. 1, 2, was to be extended only to such of these people as did not surrender themselves on being summoned; as is evident from Joshua xi. 19, 20. Their being commanded to save alive nothing that breatheth, Deut. xx. 16, is to be understood only in case they did not surrender when summoned, but rejected the conditions of peace offered to them.

But perhaps with regard to that extreme inhumanity and barbarity which is imputed to the Israelites, and supposed to be enjoined by Almighty God to be exercised upon the Canaanites to their utter extermination, the

best refutation, is the fact itself, that they were by no means all destroyed or exterminated: but were left and continued to dwell among the Israelites under their judges and their kings, even *David* himself; who certainly would not have permitted what was directly forbidden by God.

It is ever to be remembered, that it was not merely for their idolatry, though that alone be often named; but as it was connected with most abominable impure as well as inhuman rites, which made a part of it, and with which it was always accompanied, that these nations of Canaan were to be exterminated. For it is not for his own sake that the Almighty requires or declares himself to have pleasure in our religious worship and homage of himself alone and of no other besides him; but because it is necessary for our own perfection and happiness, and to keep us from falling into the grossest ignorance, bigotry and superstition, and most cruel malignant dispositions to our fellow-creatures\*.

\* See, in many parts of it, that last and most invaluable work, his *Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos*, of my most beloved friend,



The expedience and need of this great severity against the idolatry of the Canaanites, to check and prevent its spreading, appeared from the proneness of the Israelites, and their continual relapsing into it under their judges and their kings, till their captivity in Babylon. And the honest, unflattering account which their historians throughout give of their criminality in this respect, is a proof of the genuineness of their narratives, which must be agreeable to all lovers of truth, though they will lament the horrid degeneracy which they describe. But in the midst of it, in the worst times, there were many thousands who did not bow the knee to Baal; and even some of their princes had the virtue and the courage to attempt a reformation; and not a few among their prophets fell a sacrifice to their boldness and efforts to bring their countrymen off from their abominable vice and worship of their false Gods, Heb. xi. 36—38.

Dr. Priestley. Although now far separated during this transitory life, on the verge of which we both stand, there is humble hope of meeting again when the sleep of death is over. His numerous works will continue to enlighten the world, till the only true God be more universally known; and the pure gospel of Jesus, his messenger, have its natural influence.

During the many ages, whilst the Israelites were acting, some worthily, others much the contrary, under their greater light and advantages; among the rest of the nations, those especially who dwelt nearest and had intercourse with them, enjoyed the means of becoming acquainted with the knowledge of the one true God; and must have benefited much by it, and also by observing the punishments which this people of God drew on themselves, by falling off to the impure rites and worship of false gods: and under their dispensation, and with their lesser light, many wise and excellent characters were formed; who laboured to do good and improve others.

Among these heathens there might be, and certainly there were, many distinguished patterns of excellence, who were blessings to mankind, although they met with no historian to hand down their merits and example to those that came after them. But we have undoubted records of one person, who shewed by his moral and intellectual acquirements, how far the light of nature could go, and what philosophy was able to effect. And it may serve to humble, and to shame us into a better

a better conduct, to reflect how far we fall short of his attainments, and creep below him in moral excellence, many of us, in the midst of our blaze of light and advantages from divine revelation.

This was *Socrates*, the son of *Sophroneiscus*, an Athenian statuary, bred to his father's profession, in which he practised for a while and excelled; but very soon applied himself wholly to the study of philosophy, principally that branch hitherto little cultivated, which related to the knowlege of nature and its author, and the duties men owed to him and to one another: He thus stood forth at once the most extraordinary example the world had ever yet seen, of devoting himself, his time and talents to instruct his fellow-citizens, and reform their lives and manners; with great simplicity addressing himself to all he met with to do them good; seeking no benefit for himself, nor ever taking money of the numerous scholars who attended him, as did other philosophers; contented to live in poor circumstances the better to promote his virtuous purposes, when, had he not refused them, he might have enjoyed great riches.

In the midst of all, he discharged the duties of a good citizen; in time of war with singular courage and humanity in defence of his country; and at other times filling the different offices he was called to in his turn, in the commonwealth, with fidelity to his trust, and the most perfect disinterestedness.

His general manner was, with cheerfulness and pleasantry to join in conversation with those that fell in his way, when by apt and easy questions, without ostentation or pretences to superior wisdom he sought to draw them forth, and lead them by degrees to the point he aimed at; which was to find out their own ignorance, and defects, and to correct them.

In this work, for which he believed himself to have a divine call, he was unwearied; and going on in the same virtuous train, through the course of a long life, in the midst of obloquy and contradiction from many, but most highly revered and esteemed by others, he was at last put to death most unjustly, on the accusation of two of his fellow-citizens, whom he had exaf-

exasperated by the severity of his rebukes. This however would not have taken place, had not envy of his superior virtue, which they were afraid of, wrought upon his fellow-citizens and the people at large, to connive at such vile and iniquitous proceedings.

It is a very humiliating consideration, that in these most polished times of Greece, when science and philosophy were at their highest summit, nothing effectual was done to diminish or put an end to the grossest public idolatry, in the worship of gods, who had been men and women of infamous characters; but grave magistrates and philosophers, even *Socrates* among the rest, were seen promiscuously frequenting their temples, and joining the common herd of their worshippers. The indictment however, under which he suffered, may seem to imply the contrary. It was in this form. “*Socrates* violates the law in not believing the gods which the state believes, but introduces other new gods. He violates likewise the law in corrupting the youth. The punishment death.” And he certainly was not guiltless of this charge. For in his  
public

public lectures, and general intercourse with his fellow-citizens, he frequently took occasion to shew the absurdity of the popular belief, in pointing to the scandalous histories of their gods and goddeffes, endeavouring to instil juster sentiments of the deity into their minds; to which his prosecutors, in their accusation of him, plainly alluded: so that he unquestionably died a martyr to his zeal for virtue, and against the worship of false gods.

Here *Volufian* interposing, begged leave to say, that he believed few venerated that incomparable person more than himself; but he was apprehensive that so high a testimony of him as that just now given, would not easily pass, unless some farther apology was made for him, for his appearing to dissemble his better knowlege, and giving countenance, by frequenting it, to the worship of their gods, whose characters and examples he must have detested. It is a very severe sentence, which a learned and worthy man\* has

\* *A Defence of a Discourse on the Impossibility of proving a future State by the Light of Nature*; p. 100, 101. By Joseph Hallet, junior. London, printed for Noon. 1731.

passed upon him in this respect, where he observes, “ It has been pleaded in behalf of *Socrates*, and other philosophers, that though they have attended on the idolatrous worship in the heathen temples, they still retained the knowledge and belief of the one true God, and perhaps worshipped him in their closets and in their thoughts. If this be fact, proceeds the same author, then it must be supposed, that these are the very men whom the apostle speaks of as *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, i. e. imprisoning, suppressing and concealing in their own minds, in an unrighteous manner, that knowledge of the true God, to which they had attained by the contemplation of his works. *Against such, the apostle saith, the wrath of God is revealed.* Rom. i. 18.”

This was advanced in the heat of controversy, which seldom allows us to judge with calmness and equity. It may be alleged however, in defence of the conduct of *Socrates*; that the worship of the one God and of none other besides him, might not appear of that consequence to him, which it most justly does to us christians, and to the jews, who  
have

have the benefit of divine Revelation. He might also think it better for his countrymen to have some religion, however corrupt, than to be wholly without any; and might hope, that his unceasing labours to combat their errors and prejudices, and throw light into their minds, especially those of the rising generation, and to guard them against superstition; would in time lead to purer sentiments of God and religion; and that the seed he had taken such pains to sow, would come up and bear fruit.

But his principal defence must be rested on this; that he did not use any compliances in the worship of the gods of the country, out of any mean views to his own interest, or safety, or from any other unworthy motive; but purely for the good of his fellow-citizens, the better to bring them to truth and virtue; which appeared by his calm fortitude and noble manner of voluntarily giving up his life at last, when he might easily have retained it: than which nothing equally edifying is to be found in all heathen antiquity.



In the interval that followed, during the bright days of Greece and Rome for the space of 400 years, trial was made what was the utmost effect of that light which had been lent to mankind, whether as derived by tradition from our first parents; or when that grew faint and dim, what was farther struck out by their natural powers and the improvements of science to meliorate the condition and reform the manners of the human race, and lead them to virtue and the true knowledge of God.

What progress was made in these respects is to be gathered from the historians and writers that have come down to us, *Cicero* more especially, who flourished towards the close of this period, and was the best man of those trying times in which he lived, and the finest moral writer, as well as the most enlightened, before the world was illumined by the gospel.

By him, and by all that had gone before him, who filled the first stations in their different commonwealths, and who wished well to mankind, the character of *Socrates* was held

in the highest veneration and invariably commended; but no one had the courage to follow his example. The utmost reformation aimed at was the introduction of wiser plans of government, for the preservation of good order and the peace of society. Nothing was done to put men upon attending to the inward principle of their actions, and amending their dispositions, in which all true virtue consists. Nothing could even be expected to be attempted of a public nature to recover men to the knowledge of the true God and their obedience to him, whilst the public religion, every where, in all countries, consisted in the adoration of gods, who had been mortal men, guilty of great crimes and immoralities; and whose worship was carried on by rites and ceremonies of the most profligate nature, which decency forbids to name; and to which the bulk of the people in all countries were immoderately attached.

The season now approached, when as *Paul* tells the Athenians, the maker and governor of all things, who had at no time failed to cherish

cherish and support all his rational offspring, of which he was the common parent; having hitherto left the heathen world to themselves and to the guidance of their natural powers and faculties, which ought in all reason to have led them to God and their duty to him, and to each other; did now in the councils of his sovereign wisdom, judge proper not to suffer them to go on any longer in their own ways, without warning them of their departure from their allegiance to him, and from their true happiness. *The times of this ignorance, says the apostle, standing in the midst of the court, where cognizance was taken of such matters, God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath fixed a day in the which he will judge the world according to justice, by a man whom he hath appointed; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Acts xvii. 30, 31.

A new æra was now to commence among the rational creatures of God, to all of whom, every where, this his solemn decree and command was to be made known by the preaching of the gospel.

Men were not now to rest in any lesser attainments in virtue; but to aim at the highest excellency, a resemblance in goodness to the Divine Being himself. For this is what the great teacher lays down, and which he exemplified in all his actions; a finished pattern of piety and goodness in a creature, beyond which our highest ideas cannot go. Matth. v. 44, 45. *I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.* When he immediately adds; *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye to expect? Do not even the publicans the same? and if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so?* as though he had said; The most selfish will take pains to do good, and to serve others, whilst they find their present account and advantage in it. But a different conduct was required, a more sublime morality was prescribed to his followers. Whatever suffering or injurious usage they might meet with

with from others, they were not to be hindered thereby from doing them all the good in their power; and they were to make it their business to promote the virtue, the present and future happiness of their fellow-creature, at the risk of their own ease and comfort, and even, when duty called them, of life itself.

Efforts like these, according to their different situations, opportunities, and abilities, are indispensably bound upon all christians, without exception. This was the new doctrine promulged from heaven, holding forth the supreme love of God the common creator and benefactor, manifesting itself in the love of their fellow-creatures, and seeking their good as their own, as the sum and substance of all human duty and of all true religion, and leading to the highest perfection and happiness.

Most conspicuous were the happy effects of the gospel at first, in reforming the lives of those in every country who received it: And if mankind had been contented with it, as delivered by its first great teacher, it is not

too much to say, that long before this day, the whole world would have been won over to embrace it. But when it became perverted from its genuine simplicity; and to profelyte men to the belief of certain opinions was held the chief point, and not to convert them from vice to virtue and a good life, it soon began to lose its salutary efficacy upon the minds of men; and though multitudes continued to be added to the number of its professors, they did not become better men in practice.

Endless disputes and quarrels about their several superstitious notions, and inventions in religion, grafted on the gospel, soon filled them with rancour and implacable animosities against each other, which often proceeded to bloodshed; and they lost what was most valuable in religion, their charity towards each other, whilst contending for shadows. And in the course of a few centuries, and at the beginning of the seventh, christians were become not only most horridly depraved in moral practice, and sunk into the most abject superstition; but had multiplied to themselves so many different objects of worship, the

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mother

mother of Christ and other dead persons, called Saints, male and female; a trinity of three persons in God, instead of the single person of the God and father of the universe, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all mankind; that to preserve this most important doctrine from being overwhelmed and lost in *christian* idolatry, and also to punish christians for their neglect and abuse of the superior light they enjoyed, the divine providence seems to have permitted the Arabian impostor *Mohammed* to succeed in his ambitious designs, and in spreading his new religion over a great part of the globe. This new religion he professed to build upon the foundation of the Divine Unity, as taught by *Moses*, and by *Jesus Christ*, which was, as he too justly maintained, intirely corrupted and abandoned by the followers of the latter. And some respectable historians, who are disposed to be candid towards this extraordinary person, relate; that he at first set out under serious impressions, and sincere concern of mind at the prevalence of idolatry among his countrymen the Arabians, as well as the christians universally.

That he should afterwards take such a horrible way to put down idolatry, and to propagate the knowlege and worship of one God only, by the sword and utter destruction, where any refused or hesitated to embrace his new religion when proposed to them, was to proclaim immediately the falsehood of his own pretensions to be a prophet from God, to all who had any right discernment what God is. For it is impossible that a Being, in whom dwelleth the most perfect truth and goodness, can be pleased with, or approve the compelling of his mistaken and misjudging creatures to abandon their errors concerning himself by outward force and intimidation; for these can only produce a feigned assent, and not real conviction which can alone be brought about by argument and persuasion.

Most unhappy have been the effects of this violence against their fellow creatures on account of differences in religion, this intolerant and anathematizing spirit against christians as idolaters, taught and enjoined by this false prophet to his followers. Thus planted and rooted in them, as a principal

part



part of their religion, it has from the first, inspired them every where, who are computed to make one third at least of the habitable world, with the most bitter hatred and enmity to all that bear the name of *christian*, considering them as idolaters, and hated of God; so as in general even to refuse them the common offices of humanity on that account, and to afford them no better appellation than that of *dogs*, and treat them with all manner of indignity, where they have no further power to hurt them. Of which temper, at this very day, Mr. *Mungo Park* has lately given us some curious facts.

For many long ages after *Mohammed*, his successors, by the furiousness of their zeal to propagate his religion and put down idolatry, were the instruments of providence in inflicting the most dreadful calamities upon christians, which were observed to fall on those countries, where the grossest corruptions of religion had prevailed; in Greece and in the Eastern parts of the roman empire; and in the progress of their arms and success, they seized and possessed themselves of many of the countries they conquered. So that in

the councils of heaven, and according to the methods of the divine government, by which nations as well as individuals, are often observed to be deprived of the light and advantages which they slight and misuse; these fierce invaders were permitted nearly to extinguish the light of the gospel, in many places where it had been successfully preached and planted by the apostles of Christ; and strove to establish by force the doctrine of their false prophet in its room; where among those of them who unhappily embraced it, it remains to this day, in all the darkness, imbecility, narrowness and cruelty, which such intolerance in religion naturally engenders, and in which it must ever terminate.

*Photinus* here pausing a little, *Volusian*, with some emotion started up, crying out; what shall we say, *Photinus*, to the system of religion, which you have been exhibiting, pretending to come from God, when it's first article is a direct violation of the laws of nature and of God, in compelling by force to acknowledge and worship him.

Assuredly

Affuredly these horrible effects shew the pretended prophet who teaches such a doctrine, not to be of God, but *the angel of the bottomless pit*, of the infernal regions, as *Mohammed* and his successors are described, Revelation ix. 11.

Behold here the fatal consequences of forcing the consciences of men. So far from being of service in bringing them to piety and virtue and a due reverence for and obedience to that Almighty Being, the one only God, for whose honour *Mohammed* and his followers profess to be particularly zealous and concerned, we may appeal to the experience and testimony of twelve hundred years (for so long this religion has been widely spread and established) whether it's numerous converts, instead of becoming wiser, and better, and happier thereby in any degree, have not been made far worse in all these respects, and at some times, and in some places, more abominably vicious and addicted to the vilest passions, and lying heavier upon the peace and happiness of their fellow creatures, and more hostile and cruel towards them, than if they had been without any religion, or belief of God at all.

Yet it becomes not christians to condemn *Mohammedans* for their intolerance and cruelty, in forcing the consciences of other men, or to fling the first stone at them on that account. For the spirit of domination over the minds and consciences of others; of dictating to them what they were to believe to obtain the favour of God, and of punishing them in various ways, by loss of fame and of worldly substance, by bodily tortures, imprisonment, loss of liberty and life at last, if they did not comply and submit to them, began early amongst christians, as soon as they were permitted to assume a temporal authority over their brethren; and has continued to this hour.

To what a degree it took place in the great churches of the East and West, and their numerous dependencies, needeth not to be named: All ecclesiastical history is full of it. At the Reformation, those countries which separated themselves from the church of Rome, and relinquished some of it's errors, retained this the greatest of all, a tyranny over the consciences of their fellow christians. It is to be lamented, that the different congregations

gregations of Protestants among ourselves, whether those endowed by the State, or dissenters from the establishment, have not yet learned, that other christians are equally entitled to the favour of God with themselves, though they should apprehend differently of the Divine Being and of the person and character of Christ, and of many other points of his religion, whilst they endeavour to the best of their power, to understand and practice what *Christ* taught.

How desirable to find a cure for this disgrace of the christian name, the narrowness, contempt, and hatred and jealousies of christians of different sentiments towards one another! The allowance of no power, emolument, credit, or advantage whatsoever, to persons for being of one opinion in religion more than another, would do much towards healing these selfish base passions; when it would be of no worldly benefit to them, to be of one church, or of one religious opinion, more than another.

But it would go farther to remove the root of the evil, if we could but prevail with  
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and induce men to see and consider, that there is no foundation in scripture, or reason, though it is ignorantly taken for granted; that *christians only can be saved*; that *they alone will obtain the favour of God and eternal life*. For this doctrine, wherever embraced, leads christians to extravagant and over-high opinions of themselves, and uncharitable conclusions concerning others. It tends to make them put an undue importance upon the mere belief of christianity; to conceit that they are the favourites of heaven solely for embracing it; and that it is meritorious to bring men over to their religious opinions, though they become not more virtuous by it. . And what is worst of all; this appropriating of salvation to themselves, to their own church or sect or party, makes them of course uncharitable towards all those who do not hold with them in opinion, or who oppose their sentiments; and in the end leads them to persecute others and to do them all manner of harm, as enemies and opposers of God and his truth. . This is what we see every day exemplified.

The real state of the matter is this. It is an inestimable privilege and happiness to be born within the sound of the gospel; where we have the means and opportunities of informing ourselves of it's truth, and of enjoying and profiting by those powerful motives and assistances which it affords.

But those who are not so happy as to enjoy these advantages; who live where the gospel is not known; or where it is so perverted and corrupted, that instead of inviting men, it alienates their minds from it, their ignorance, or aversion even to christianity under such circumstances, will not be imputed to them; and they will only have to give account of the right use of the light, and talents and advantages they shall have received. And in this conclusion I am persuaded you will all agree with me; that in teaching Christ's religion, we should never teach young persons in particular, nor indeed teach any persons, that christians only can be saved; much less, christians only of this or that particular church or sect; but that all persons will be saved, who are made pious and good by their religion; and none else.

You

You have gratified us all, when *Volufian* had ended, immediately replied *Photinus*; in giving such an exact though frightful picture of that religion, which the Almighty seems to have permitted for the trial and punishment of corrupt christians; and in pointing out the unhappy resemblance which christianity bears to some of its worst features. It remains now however to go on with our subject, and to remark, that on the taking of Constantinople in the year 1453, and putting an end to the empire of the East, by this destructive power, of which we have been largely speaking, a new and better prospect of things opened on these western parts, through the dispersion of many learned Greeks, and the revival of literature by their means; and a spirit of free enquiry with it, cherished and brought forward by the providential discovery of the art of printing about that period.

Noble efforts were made by many excellent persons among christians, at the hazard, and sometimes with the loss of life, to revive and restore the knowlege and worship of the one true God, and vindicate the unalienable  
right



right of all men to judge for themselves of the things of God, of the duty they owed him, and the worship they were to pay him, without any dictatorial authority or interference of the priest or magistrate. And by the continuance of these efforts and the immortal writings of many for these last 300 years, in different countries, much has been done: the rights of conscience and of private judgment have been clearly demonstrated and generally acknowledged; but never, never fairly and really admitted and allowed by any of the great civil and ecclesiastical powers, who have been universally combined against them.

The subjects of a mighty neighbouring State, did indeed some few years since, on principles at first approved by the liberal and good, set up their just claim to those natural rights of which for ages they had been deprived: and happy would it have been for them and for many, if they had adhered to and not stepped beyond their first righteous demands. In their deviation from them, and the dreadful scenes which have ensued, they have brought an undeserved stain and disgrace

grace on the cause of liberty, and of the just rights of man, in which they first stood up and were engaged. And as is the wayward disposition of mankind, and frequent course of human affairs, they have been the cause of alarming many out of their calm and equal judgment, and of throwing them into the unhappy extreme of a dread of all just reform, and have thus become the means, for a time, of extinguishing light and truth.

Yet most justly as these sad excesses and many of their atrocious consequences are to be deplored, we can see great good resulting from the evil; in the abolishing of no small portion of baneful superstition, through the whole vast dominions of the French and their dependencies; especially in the prohibition of carrying about in procession, in the streets and on the highways, and requiring every passenger to bow down to and adore, the wafer God, or breaden God, *Deumpanarium*, as honest old Whitby scrupled not in derision to call it, in James IId's days; that most gross *debasement* of the Divine being, which, with other things of the sort and kin to it in the popish worship, was the legitimate parent  
of

of that Atheism, with which the french nation hath been branded, and which some of its noble emigrants are said to have imported into the British dominions.

But the most desirable blessing which divine providence hath brought out of these dreadful evils, has been the putting an utter end to all temporal power whatsoever in religious men, leaving them no authority whatever over others to promote religion, but that which alone belongs to it, of argument and persuasion.

From this short glance (for it can be called nothing better) of man, and of his moral state and condition from the beginning, which this present sitting hath afforded us, some idea may be collected of the progress and moral attainments, for which he was principally made. And though the little effect of genuine virtuous principle, and the defective knowlege of God; have shewn themselves, and still too much appear, in the wars almost continually waging between nation and nation; and in the hatred and animosities on account of difference of religious sentiments;

yet

yet it would be unfair and unjust, in the most sceptical, not to admit that knowlege and virtue have been upon the whole progressive, and that very many eminent examples of both, have been formed, and are forming, in every age and country.

*PHOTINUS* here pausing a little to make some apology for his discourse running out to so unavoidable a length, expressed his apprehensions that the account that had been given of the moral state of the world from the beginning might be thought to exhibit too humiliating a picture of man placed at the head of the creator's works here below, by those who looked for perfection all at once in every thing that comes from him. But as we are convinced, that a Being of all goodness has in fact appointed otherwise; and as we certainly do not love our fellow-creatures, or desire their improvement and happiness more earnestly than he that made them, and his wisdom can best judge and direct how to attain that happiness, we may probably, on a more particular examination,  
find

find the methods he has actually chosen fully suited to and likely to answer this end, though we may not so immediately see it.

For it is ever to be attended to, that as far as we know or can judge, rational creatures could not become permanently happy as their maker intends them to be, without the exertion of their own voluntary powers, by learning virtue and obedience to his will, ever their truest happiness, in the midst of temptations and difficulties to thwart and oppose, and even at times to mislead them. This may account for our coming out of his hands at first, weak and frail creatures, wholly unformed; the good or evil of our characters not born with us, but acquired afterwards, by a proper use or the contrary, of the powers, faculties, capacities, and means of improvement bestowed upon us. And all are brought into life in situations and circumstances, in which, in different degrees, they are taught what makes for their true happiness.

We are also, all of us, under the divine moral government, whether we attend to it or not. If we indulge ourselves to excess in

the gratification of our appetites, disease and suffering are in general the consequence; and these tend to correct and restrain us in future. The selfish and ambitious lose all that bliss and calm enjoyment which arise from virtue and a sense of the divine favour, and are seen sometimes to fall the victims, even in this life, to those excruciating tortures, which sooner or later overtake all those who have accustomed themselves to make light of human misery, and to slight and neglect the various ways and means in their power of doing good to others.

And we are so formed, that the more we lay ourselves out to relieve the bodily wants and miseries of others, or to throw light into their dark minds, and bring them to God and goodness, the more desirous we are of being so employed, and delighted with it; so as to think the day lost in which we have not had an opportunity of thus serving and being useful to our fellow-creatures.

It has also been noted as a mark of the care and attention of heaven for the virtuous improvement of mankind, that in all times, the

the general sentiment has been in favour of the highest instances of virtue and goodness, and gross impiety and immorality, excite horror, and have been ever stigmatized with infamy: these sentiments being universal, can only have proceeded from the dispositions imbibed by all from the circumstances in which they are brought into the world, and which are all of divine appointment. Hence from the most antient times of which we have any record, it has been held a duty for men to sacrifice their lives for the good of others; to save their country, for instance, from imminent danger, and particularly to deliver it from slavery, which is worse than death, as it takes away and extinguishes all excitement to whatever is excellent. Such examples have ever been applauded; and to have regarded life, when by hazarding it they could have been of such eminent service to others would have been held the utmost disgrace.

It is to be deplored, that the practice of mankind has not kept pace with their better principles; and that they have not had the fortitude to resist the various temptations to evil, which by degrees have drawn many on

to the commission of crimes, by which human life has sometimes been rendered a scene of misery and confusion. Yet in the midst of all, it must give infinite satisfaction, that the balance has been always greatly on the side of virtue and goodness. We are shocked with indeed, and know not how to reconcile, the horrid scenes which present themselves before our eyes, at particular junctures, especially in times of war and civil commotions. But we can as little form a true judgment of the moral state of men from what passes at such seasons, as we can decide of the health and salubrity of a country in the time of a raging infectious fever. In the ordinary course of things, in quiet times, the less frequent instances of cruelty, fraud and oppression, and other evils, (which will in some degree always be going on, and cannot entirely be prevented) will be counterbalanced by a general friendliness and probity, and mutual kind endearments and services. And in all places, it must be confessed, the bulk of mankind are and have ever been employed in useful labours for their families, and in doing good offices to others, their friends, neighbours and acquaintance, and in giving or procuring  
relief



relief and assistance where needed, and in a thousand beneficent actions.

As this however is very much a matter of experience and observation, whether there be a preponderance of moral good in the present state, or not; I shall beg leave to produce a testimony in favour of it, from an eminent person of great learning and knowledge of the world, who might be supposed to be biased to the other side of the argument by the prejudices of his profession, and shall read it to you as I find it published by *Dr. Law*, the late Bishop of Carlisle, with approbation. Thus then speaks *Dr. King*, Archbishop of Dublin, some time after the beginning of the last century, to an anonymous opponent, who had said “that the prevalence of wickedness, or moral evil, was a thing so certain, that he was confident, no one could have the least doubt of it; and he durst say, that the *Author* himself believed it.”

“The *Author* professes himself to be of a quite different opinion,” replies the Archbishop. “He firmly believes, and thinks he very well comprehends, that there is much

more moral good in the world than evil. He is sensible there may be more bad men than good, because there are none but do amiss sometimes, and one ill act is sufficient to denominate a man bad. But yet there are ten good acts done by those we call bad men for one ill one. Even persons of the very worst character may have gotten it by two or three flagrant enormities, which yet bear no proportion to the whole series of their lives. The author must profess, that among such as he is acquainted with, he believes that there are hundreds that would do him good for one that would do him hurt; and that he has received a thousand good offices for one ill one. He could never believe the doctrine of *Hobbs*, that all men are bears, wolves and tygers to one another; that they are born enemies to all others, and all others to them; that they are naturally false and perfidious; or that all the good they do, is out of fear, not virtue. Nay the very authors of that calumny, if their own characters were called in question, would take all possible pains to remove the suspicion from them; and declare that they were speaking of the vulgar, of the bulk of mankind, and not of themselves.

Nor

Nor in reality do they behave in this manner toward their friends and acquaintance; if they did, few would trust them. Observe some of those who exclaim against all mankind for treachery, dishonesty, deceit and cruelty; and you'll find them diligently cultivating friendship, and discharging the several offices due to friends, their relations and their country, with labour, pain, loss of goods, and hazard of life itself; even where there is no fear to drive them to it, nor inconvenience attending the neglect of it. This you'll say proceeds from custom and education. Be it so: However the world then has not so far degenerated from goodness, but the greater part of mankind exercise benevolence, nor is virtue so far exiled as not to be supported and approved, praised and practised, by common consent, and public suffrage, and vice is still disgraceful. Indeed we can scarce meet with one, unless pressed by necessity, or provoked by injuries, who is so barbarous and hard hearted, as not to be moved with compassion, and delighted with benevolence to others; who is not delighted to shew good-will and kindness to his friends, neighbours, children, relations; and diligence in the discharge

charge of civil duties to all; who does not profess some regard for virtue, and think himself affronted when he is charged with immorality. If any one take notice of his own or another's actions for a day together, he will perhaps find one or two blameable, the rest all innocent and inoffensive. Nay, it is doubtful whether a *Nero* or *Caligula*, a *Commodus* or *Caracalla*, (though monsters of mankind, and prone to every act of wickedness and fury) have done more ill than innocent actions through their whole lives \*."

These just observations on the general character and conduct of men, shew, that far from being altogether wicked and worthless, they are such as in their first state might be expected, from their frail and imperfect frame, and the good and evil influences to which they are subject; liable to fall by yielding to the various temptations to which they are exposed; and on the other hand, by nobly

\* Essay on the Origin of Evil, by *William King*, Archbishop of Dublin, translated from the Latin with notes by *Edmund*, Bishop of Carlisle (p. 388) The fifth edition revised. London, by Faulder. 1781.

resisting them, capable of being carried forwards to that which is most excellent.

And thus the wisdom and goodness of the creator are vindicated ; that he has not made mankind in vain ; that he was not disappointed in this the noblest work of his creation here below ; and that in the dangerous trials and difficulties to which it was necessary to expose his rational offspring, as they could not in any other way become virtuous and happy as he intended them to be, while many fell away for the present, many also cleaved to truth and goodness, and became purified, and confirmed therein ; and the world has been from the first and all along, a nursery for virtuous, noble and useful characters.

The company after some general conversation, and appointing a day for the farther discussion of these subjects, now separated.

## CONVERSATION IV.

WHEN the party was next assembled, *Marcellinus* desired to express his satisfaction in the progress made in the disquisition before them. It was most pleasing, he said, to see it so clearly made out, that mankind were far from being so miserable or wicked as they were commonly presumed to be, and that the contrary was rather the truth and the fact. But clouds and darkness still hung over the prospect, through which he should be glad to see some light appear. The road through life, which many of the human species were destined to tread, was so dismal and dreary, along such dreadful passages of pain and misery, as to make one shudder at the thought of it; and the dispositions and habits were so depraved, malignant, horridly selfish, cruel and vicious, which many were seen to carry out of the world with them, that some better solution than had yet appeared was earnestly to be wished for, how such a constitution of things

things could have its origin from, or be compatible with, a benevolent principle.

If these evils and disorders were to be attributed, as some philosophers have maintained, to the rugged untractable nature of matter, or of whatever it be, of which we are composed, and that it was through this or some other unavoidable impediment, and not from want of good-will in our creator, but of power to execute to the full his benevolent purposes, that we were made subject to such harsh conditions of existence, which was said to have been, for some time, the opinion of the late enlightened friend of his country and mankind, Mr. *Day* \*, though he afterwards relinquished it, and embraced juster sentiments of the divine power and goodness:

Or, if, as revelation has been thought to inculcate, it was owing to some powerful evil Being, whose interference in the affairs of mankind was unavoidable, that we were exposed to such a variety of sufferings and temptations, and oft-times misled to ruin by

\* Author of Sandford and Merton.

yielding to them: in either of these cases, we must submit and make the best of what we cannot avoid or amend.

But all gloom would vanish and day-light disclose its beautiful rays, if it could be shewn, with such evidence as might satisfy the rational mind, that the great whole of things is in such sort from God; that natural and moral evil, pain and suffering, sin and wickedness, are all of his appointment, and permitted for good; he could then cheerfully acquiesce and rest contented, whatever came to pass, secure that we were in the best hands; and that however sad and disastrous at times, and in some particular cases, appearances were, all was for the best, and would in the result turn out favorable and happy. This was the great difficulty; the Gordian knot, which he almost despaired of ever seeing untied.

*Photinus*, here, who had been observed to be more than ordinarily attentive and wrapt in thought, whilst *Marcellinus* was speaking, suddenly rose up, and with greater earnestness and solemnity than he was accustomed to; “ Be assured, my friends, says he, that



we do not any of us deem so highly of the boundless mercy and goodness of the sovereign creator and parent of all things, as his works, and dealings with us and with all his creatures call for and demand, or we should entertain more exalted thoughts of him, and live under his government, with a more uninterrupted joy and confidence than we seem to do, so as not to admit any, the least doubt or mistrust that his goodness will in the end bear down every opposition.

For what do we behold, every where and in all things, but marks and tokens of wise contrivance and intentions of kindness for the creatures he has made ; and also at the same time, plain indications, that if any comfort or satisfaction is denied or withdrawn from them, that might minister to their present happiness ; or pain and misery inflicted in the severest degree, it has been for good. These his kind intentions and beneficence to the whole sentient inferior creation, throughout the planet we inhabit, we have lately seen exemplified by a large induction of particular instances, which might be extended without bounds, and which posterity in their investigations

gations will take pleasure in enlarging throughout all future ages, and literally never be able to exhaust.

And with regard to his rational creation, formed in the image and likeness of their great creator and to be happy, may we presume to speak it, with his own happiness; always remembering, that such is the frame and constitution bestowed upon us, that our true happiness cannot be a thing infused into us, but must arise from our own voluntary exertions and labour, in surmounting difficulties in our way, and acquiring those tempers and dispositions, wherein it consists, and by which it is confirmed and must be perpetuated; namely, the dispositions of a supreme love to Him who gave us our being and all our powers, and an invincible affection to all our fellow-creatures and to all to whom our good offices can extend; which effects, the moral discipline we are put under however painful and severe, from our own passions and the world without us, is exactly calculated to produce:

These

These facts being established; and taking along with us, that this happiness, for which we were made, the highest of which we or any created nature are capable, is a happiness which alone is permanent and for ever increasing :

It seems a solid foundation of reasoning, on which we may safely rely; that as the universe and all things in it are the work of a being of infinite wisdom and power, and of the most perfect goodness, and calculated for the best purposes, the happiness of the things he has made; and as there was nothing to over-rule him in his operations, or to induce or compel him to adopt any measures for accomplishing his kind designs, but such as he judged the most proper and suitable :

Therefore, as he has placed us in a world, wherein, though happiness greatly preponderates, there is such a mixture of pain and suffering, of vice and misery, as fills us often with melancholy apprehensions and dismay; we may be fully persuaded, that such a discordant, revolting mixture would not have been admitted into his fair creation, but because  
cause

cause he saw it necessary for its perfection, and the fulfilment of his benevolent purposes; or rather, because those purposes could not be obtained without it: for most assuredly, he would not have chosen evil on its own account, the misery and defilement of his creatures, but for the good that he saw would be derived from and procured by it.

And what we thus argue from the character and perfections of the deity, manifested in his works; that evil, natural and moral, pain and suffering, vice and misery, were only admitted by him, on account of the superior good accruing from them, not otherwise to be attained; we also find to be true in fact and by experience.

For if there had been no moral evil or wickedness, mankind would have been destitute of those dispositions and affections, which are their highest perfection, and the source of their purest happiness. Where would have been patience and forgiveness of injuries; where the godlike disposition of returning  
good

good for evil, if there had been no fraud, or cruelties, or oppression exercised? "Had the good and virtuous of mankind been wholly prosperous in this world," says an excellent person; "had goodness never met with opposition, where had been the trial, the victory, and the crown of virtue?" It is by a resistance to the alluring enticements to unlawful gratification of the inferior appetites and passions, and resolutely turning away from fascinating pleasure, that habits of temperance, chastity, and a virtuous self-denial are acquired. If by stifling that kind, mutual affection, which is nature's dictate to all, we had not become eager to grasp every advantage to ourselves, seeking only our own indulgence by every means, ambitious, envious, unjust, trampling upon the rights and happiness of other men, impatient of rebuke and contradiction, revengeful, unawed by any fear of God, and his just awards; there would have been no dangers to encounter with; no hardships or miseries, no persecutions in the cause of truth and virtue to endure; no conflicts between an unswerving integrity and honesty on the one hand, and a compliance with the mean views of interest,

and worldly greatness on the other; and we should have wanted those noble examples of undissembled piety, of meekness, fortitude, magnanimity, disinterested zeal for and pursuit of the public good, not of one nation, but of all mankind, which have stimulated the good in all ages to the like virtuous exertions and attainments. So that as it has been justly said of natural evil, pain, diseases and the like, in vindication of the divine goodness, that there is no *useless* evil: So must we say of moral evil, sin and wickedness; that in the hands of God, every evil of every kind is made an instrument of greater good, and higher felicity, than would otherwise have been enjoyed.

*Photinus* was going on, as if he had something farther to produce, when *Volusian* starting up in a kind of extacy, uttering the words of our great poet,

Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to men;  
Unless there be who think not God at all:  
If any be, they walk obscure \*:

\* Sampson Agonistes.

You

You will pardon me, my friends, said he, this abrupt interference, and I hope *Photinus* will excuse me thus rudely breaking in upon him, to give vent to the happiness I feel this day in hearing from him so desirable a vindication of providence, in respect of the calamities and painful sufferings, the abounding vice and misery of this lower world; that the whole has its origin in, and will in the end be found to be a part of the divine goodness.

This is the clue so earnestly wished and sought for by us in the course of our argument and inquiry, to guide us through *the mighty maze*, and quiet the mind under the serious perplexities that arise from the view of these sad appendages of human life. In all ages, in seeking to account for such a state of things, consistently with the divine attributes, learned and thoughtful men, among other devices, have most commonly had recourse to the supposition, that it was in consequence of crimes committed in a former period of existence, that mankind were thrust into these dreary abodes of pain and misery, to expiate their previous guilt, and that this amply justified the divine Being in bringing

us into such a world. But this was always found to be a fairy-land of imagination merely, without any facts or reality to support it; no passenger of all the sons or daughters of men, ever having retained in memory the faintest trace of such a state; and the fond supposition served only to amuse and soothe the inventors and their followers.

In deed and in truth, this, with which *Photinus* hath furnished us, is the only key that effectually unlocks the intricate wards of the divine government, and solves the difficulties of man's lot and destiny in this first stage of his existence.

I hope he will excuse my repeating his argument in a few words, that he may see I have not mistaken him.

“ That a Being of infinite wisdom and power, and the most perfect goodness, desirous of the happiness of his creatures, has made, appoints and regulates all things :”

“ That according to certain laws, perceived and acknowledged by all who will be  
at



at the pains to consider his works, he governs the world of nature; feeds and preserves in life and happiness the whole sensitive inferior creation of birds and beasts, insects and fishes, &c. for their destined term of existence, longer or shorter; and renews and continues the species of each from age to age:"

"That he also takes care of and governs his rational creation, according to their different natures, leading them to their chief good, to piety and virtue; all their powers and all their good actions proceeding from him; and all that is bad and evil and irregular in them alike being from him, and under his controul, and permitted only to a certain degree and limit, so as to promote his designs of universal virtue and happiness."

For want of seeing the perfect benevolence of the Deity in the light in which this just representation places him, as connected with a righteous moral government, begun here,

and going on to its completion in another state, some great characters have sunk into most unhappy and baneful errors. The late king of Prussia, Frederick, the great, as he is called, here stumbled and fell, so as never to recover: And as I persuade myself it will not lead us out of the way of our present inquiries, I would crave your permission to dwell a little on his story, from the materials with which he himself has furnished us.

From the writings probably of *Leibnitz*, and others, and the penetrating researches of an ardent mind, this prince was led very early to embrace sentiments concerning the necessity of human actions, which in the end he appears to have carried much farther than his teachers would have approved. On his first acquaintance and correspondence with *M. de Voltaire*, begun in 1737, when only prince royal, we find him thus expressing himself at the close of his defence of these sentiments, in reply to the objections of that celebrated writer;

“ I will

“ I will add one remark \*,” says he, “ to what has gone before ; which is, that neither freewill nor necessity, exculpate the Deity from being a party to the crimes of his creatures. For whether he gives us a liberty to do evil, or directly prompts us to it, it is all the same ; it is still his doing. In going back to the origin of evil, you must ascribe it to God, unless you espouse the sentiment of the Manicheans concerning two principles, one of them the author of evil ; which however is loaded with the greatest difficulties.”

He could however never bring himself to a lasting satisfactory persuasion, that the pre-

\* Je n'ajouterai qu'une réflexion à celles que je viens de faire ; c'est que ni le franc arbitre, ni la fatalité absolue, ne disculpent pas la Divinité de sa participation au crime : car que Dieu nous donne la liberté de mal faire, ou qu'il nous pousse immédiatement au crime, cela revient à peu près au même ; il n'y a que du plus ou du moins. Remontez à l'origine du mal, vous ne pouvez que l'attribuer à Dieu, à moins que vous ne voulez embrasser l'opinion des Manichéens touchant les deux principes ; ce qui ne laisse pas d'être hérissé de difficultés. Le 17 Fevrier, 1738.

Correspondance de Frederic II. Roy de Prusse.

Tome Premier, 1789. p. 225.

sent constitution of things was for good; though he sometimes speaks most feelingly of it, and of its benevolent author. Nor could he relieve or remove the anxious thoughts on the subject, which at times would unavoidably obtrude themselves, by looking forward to a future state of being, where all evils and irregularities would be healed and corrected. For he appears to have been alienated in very early youth, to a most unreasonable degree, against the jewish and christian revelations, which might have given him light here, and been some ballast to his wavering mind. In consequence of these most unfortunate prejudices, he seems to have been without any, or at least to have got rid of all sentiments of the moral government of God, which may have contributed to make him more easy in the thought, with which at last he became unalterably impressed, that all was over with man, when he closed his eyes upon these present scenes; concerning which he \* and his friend D'Alembert speak at times

\* Du Roi, 9 Sept. 1775. Savez vous bien que je suis vieux, (63) et que si je ne vous revois dans ce monde-ci,

times with a gaiety and unconcern which is not natural, and indeed seems affected.

The same early prejudices hindered him from profiting by the wise lessons, and from all beneficial intercourse with the most liberal and eminently learned *M. de Beauſobre*, whom nevertheless he most highly esteemed to the last, whence it happened, that his conversation chiefly lay with *M. de Voltaire* and the french philosophers, who were darker, and if possible more steeled and set against all just and proper inquiry into the subject of religion than himself. So that this eminent person of course plunged deeper and deeper in scepticism and uncertainty, and was driven at length to take refuge in the forlorn system of the world being eternal; and that there-

je vous donnerai rendez-vous à pure perte dans la vallée de Josaphat.

De M. D'Alembert, 15 Sept. 1775.

Je lui envie bien sincèrement le bonheur qu'il a eu d'approcher de V. M. et je desirerai de jouir de ce bonheur au moins encore une fois, avant de rendre mon corps aux élémens qui ne tarderont pas à le redemander.

Ditto. Tome cinquieme.

fore,

fore, as there was no creation, it was in vain to seek to account for any thing: grounding and reposing himself on that aphorism of several of the antient philosophers, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, nothing can come from nothing: which must be acknowledged to be true, when spoken of beings of limited powers, but is not applicable to God, whose power is infinite. For although to produce things out of nothing argues a power wholly inconceivable by us, there is no contradiction in it.

*D'Alembert's*\* letter to the king from Paris, Nov. 30, 1770, on this very subject,

\* Enfin, en admettant cette intelligence, qui a présidé à la formation de l'univers, et qui préside à son entretien, on sera obligé de convenir au moins qu'elle n'est ni infiniment sage, ni infiniment puissante, puisqu' il s'en faut bien, pour le malheur de la pauvre humanité, que ce triste monde soit le meilleur de mondes possibles. Nous sommes donc réduits, avec la meilleure volonté du monde, à ne reconnaître et à n'admettre tout au plus dans l'univers qu'un Dieu matériel, borné, et dépendant; je ne fais pas si c'est là son compte, mais ce n'est sûrement pas celui de partisans zelés de l'existence de Dieu; ils nous aimeraient autant athées que spinosistes, comme nous le sommes. Pour les adoucir, faisons-nous sceptiques, et  
repetons

is full of much ill placed wit and indecent raillery, to speak in the softest terms, against those who believed in the existence of a creator and moral governor of the world, and shews how miserable he and his royal friend and patron were made by the principles they had embraced; and likewise what wretched reasoners and pitiable beings men of the brightest and most cultivated talents and abilities degenerate into, when they seek to extinguish the light that is in them, and turn away from God.

It would have been most happy for them both, if they had been possessed of and influenced by the like amiable views of the constitution of nature, and of its divine almighty author, with *Monf. Turgot*, Minister of state for some time to the unfortunate *Louis XVI*, their contemporary, and not unknown to them; in learning and abilities not inferior to either, in moral qualities far above them; which led him (though with preju-

repetons avec Montagne, *que fais je?* A Paris ce 26 Novembre 1770.

Ditto, Tome quatrieme, p. 176.

dices against revelation, in France, at that period scarce avoidable by a rational mind) to look forward to a future state of existence, in which all present evils, and disorders and obliquities would be remedied and rectified\*.

\* For the high character of this virtuous minister of the unfortunate Louis XVI, *Monf. Turgot*, see *Monf. Senac de Meilham (a)*: for which I am indebted, among many other favors for near thirty years, to one, whose liberal, benevolent and generous labors are constantly exerted in various ways to benefit mankind, and promote the cause of true religion and virtue (*b*).

To his suggestions jointly with those of another very able and most valuable christian character (*c*), (to whose friendship, virtues, and memory, my heart pays the most affectionate and grateful tribute) was owing the variation made in the last edition of the Reformed Liturgy in 1793 after the model of the excellent *Dr. Samuel Clarke*, by changing the threefold address retained in the Litany, into one solemn and appropriate one: They justly observing, that a threefold address would keep up the old impression of a threefold nature in the Deity, so contrary to the Scriptures.

(*a*) *Du Gouvernement, des Mœurs, et des conditions en France, avant la Revolution.*

(*b*) *Francis Maseres, Esq. Curfitor Baron of his Majesty's Court of Exchequer, and Author of the Moderate Reformer.*

(*c*) *John Lee, Esq. Solicitor General under Lord Rockingham's Administration.*

But



But I have done, says *Volufian*, and have now to hope *Photinus* will excuse my rudeness and impetuosity ——— Not merely excuse, replies *Photinus*, but thank you most heartily for it, and for the good fruits it has produced. Take care, however, you do not bring yourself into a dilemma you cannot easily get out of, by your too lavish commendations of us, and citation from our great poet in our favour; when others may retort upon you, that he most assuredly must have had us in his eye, as a set of well meaning, melancholy mortals attempting to account for what is beyond their reach; where he describes some of his inhabitants of Pandemonium, who

reason'd high

Of providence, foreknowlege, will and fate,

Fixt fate, freewill, foreknowlege absolute,

*And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.*

But the instances of the two memorable characters you have produced are much to our purpose, in so directly pointing out the fatal darkness and wretchedness that must ever ensue, when in an age so enlightened as that

that we live in, any can be so blinded as not to see a God, and a wise providential care exercised over all creatures for their good, especially all the rational part of them. You have fully shewn however that it was by their acquired moral ignorance that they were so fatally misled, and not by their opinion of the necessity of human actions, on which some would lay blame.

It is however matter of the highest exultation and joy, in which we may justly triumph, to be fully assured, that mere arbitrary will and sovereignty, from which we could never know what we were to expect, hath no sway in the divine government under which we are placed; and that original love and goodness, are the beginning and end, the spring and measure of all the actions of the Deity, and of all his dealings with us. Hence with the most perfect confidence, we conclude, that every evil of every kind is ordained for present or ultimate good: Not only sickness, and pain, and disease in all its shapes, desolating storms, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, wars, and the ordinary and  
the

the less common calamities of life; but the horrid cruelties, injustice, oppression, &c. with which individuals and sometimes whole countries have had to struggle for a longer or shorter space: All these natural and moral evils are from God and under his sovereign controul, so as to be permitted to spread no farther, and continue no longer than his purposes of good are served by them; dictating, in his supreme all-ruling providence, to wicked tyrants and oppressors of mankind, and to every instrument of evil, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further; here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* Job xxxviii.

In the solution we have offered, of the origin of the evil there is in the world, it is conceded, that the Almighty knowingly and designedly appointed it, for the superior good that he saw would be derived from it. We his frail and ignorant creatures however are on no account to transgress the plain rule of moral duty, to do evil that good may come: because our understandings are weak and limited;

limited; and we cannot be sure that the good we intend will happen. But our Maker, as we have seen at large, out of that limited quantity of evil, which he judges fitting to appoint and permit, continually produces virtue and every good.

This is pleasingly exhibited to us in the well known beautiful story of the Hermit, who being perplexed to account for the ways of providence, quitted his cell for a time, in quest of satisfaction to his anxious mind. The narrative is given us in “*Divine Dialogues concerning the attributes and providence of God, London printed, 1668;*” a work of the pious *Dr. Henry More* of Cambridge: but is better known in the poetical dress of *Dr. Parnell*.

We shall avoid some of the perplexity and difficulties, in which good minds are wont to be involved, from the idea of the evil actions of men being of divine appointment, as though God himself were the immediate author of sin and wickedness; if we consider, that the Almighty Being, if we may so speak,

acteth

acteth not immediately himself in directing the actions of men, and influencing them to good or evil: but it is by the intervention of instruments employed by him, of second causes, as we term it, in the natural course of things, and according to laws established by himself, that He the first great cause influences and governs all things, and bringeth them to pass. In other words, it is by the different motives that arise in our minds, from our situation and circumstances, which are all of divine appointment, that we are led to evil and to good. Thus are we to understand what is said, Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken of Paul*; i. e. her pious and virtuous mind, those good dispositions which she had imbibed from her situation and circumstances, all of them originally from God; inclined her to listen to Paul.

Thus also, *The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh*; Exod. xi. 10. i. e. being a man void of all just sense and knowledge of God, and totally indisposed to him, he became only the more alienated from obeying his commands by those miracles, which had a

natural tendency, and were wrought to produce obedience.

It is matter of constant observation, and verified in the sacred and in all history, that Divine providence oftentimes makes use of the evil passions and wickedness of men, to promote its good designs. That most horrid act of destroying the life of the holy and innocent Jesus was brought about by the treachery of one of his own disciples, and the mean temporizing spirit and conduct of Pontius Pilate, the roman governor of Judea. Acts iv. 25—28.

And the book of Genesis furnishes a remarkable example of the Almighty turning the wickedness of men to serve his own benevolent purposes, in the pleasing narrative of *Joseph* and his brethren.

*It was not ye that sent me into Egypt: for God did send me before you to preserve life; Gen. xlv. 5.* said *Joseph* to his brethren, to soothe them under their fears of being made to suffer for their cruel and unnatural behaviour. God was concerned in this act  
of

of theirs, by having brought them into life in such a situation, wherein he foresaw they would meanly give way to a vile envy against their younger brother on account of his being of a more sprightly and amiable disposition than themselves, and more beloved by their father, which stirred up their bad passions to seek his destruction, and sell him into Egypt.

On this history, an old writer thus remarks; "Such an ordering and overruling hand hath God in all the evil actions of men. When Joseph's brethren sell him into Egypt, God is said to *send* him. Human malice and divine providence may be together in the same act. Wherein men have an evil hand, God hath a good one; who brings light out of darkness and turns evil in the end to good." *Burthogge* on Divine Goodness, p. 44.

It is however to be remembered, that whatever we define concerning the divine agency and government over mankind and their affairs, and the manner of it, of which we must ever conceive and speak, like children, most imperfectly; and although we

cannot but be persuaded that all the actions of men are under the antecedent direction and appointment of God, for how could he otherwise govern the world? Yet mankind are not a mere piece of clock-work, a set of unconscious machines. They acquire voluntary powers, by which they do what they please; chuse for themselves and follow their choice; take blame to and condemn themselves for whatever they do that is impious, or wicked, or hurtful to others: and more than this, think themselves not unrighteously or inequitably dealt with in being made to suffer for their evil dispositions and actions in order to correct and amend them, under the divine government in the present world; nor, if they continue unreformed and unchanged, expect to escape punishment in a future state. So that if God be charged in any way with being the author of men's sins, it is not in any such sense as to acquit the perpetrators, or so as to excuse them even in their own estimate from being responsible at the tribunal of that Being, whose laws, calculated, for their own and the general good of all, they have violated.



In a word; we are conscious that we are not mere puppets acted upon; but agents, responsible for what we do. We are also fully persuaded, that all we do is beforehand known to God, and appointed by him. How this divine foreknowledge and appointment are to be reconciled with the freedom and responsibility of our actions, is beyond our comprehension. Nor need we to be at all concerned about it. And in this conclusion, Mr. *Locke*, may quiet our minds, and also read us an useful lesson of modesty and candour in our judgments concerning the word and the works of God; who, in his second answer to the Bishop of *Worcester*, that had accused him of advancing something concerning the nature of the soul, which implied that men were not free agents, thus replies to the charge;

“ It is not for me to judge how far your Lordship’s speculations reach; but finding in myself nothing to be truer than what the wise *Solomon* tells me, Eccles. xi. 5. *as thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not*

*the works of God who maketh all things: I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of revelation, which sets me at rest in many things, the manner of which my poor reason can by no means make out to me: omnipotence, I know, can do any thing that contains in it no contradiction; so that I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reason find difficulties in it, which it cannot master. As in the present case, God having revealed that there shall be a day of judgment, I think that foundation enough to conclude men are free enough to be answerable for their actions, and to receive according to what they have done; though how man is a free agent, surpasses my explication or comprehension."*

*Synefius* seemed now inclined to take part in the debate, but the rest of the company proposing that the farther discussion of the subject should be deferred to another opportunity, he acquiesced in their wishes.

## CONVERSATION V.

*SYNESIUS*\*, who was an old common friend, and of all their parties, though in many points he differed from them; and formerly in their Conversations on christian idolatry, had endeavoured on that account, to divert *Volusian* from quitting the worship of the established church, put himself forward at the next meeting, and pleasantly cried out, that he was quite tired of being such a cypher among them, but thought it became him first to make his confession, that they might admit him as a true penitent.

I must plainly tell you then, says he, I had been much hurt at the freedoms you used in calling in question what was established by authority in the church of England, as I thought it was unsettling people, and taking away the little foundation they had for their

\* See, for a character of this person, Conversations on Christian Idolatry, page 64.

demeanour as quiet and good subjects, setting them loose from all restraints, and leaving them in possession of nothing. For I had been wont to consider the christian religion principally as it concerned the state, and was useful to keep the people in order and subjection; and indeed, all the while I contended so earnestly for it, entertained not a few doubts about its doctrines, and even its foundations.

But I have been for some time convinced, that serious doubts and disputes about religion do by no means lead men away from moral practice, but the contrary; as they sober the mind, bring us acquainted with ourselves and our own characters, and the principles well founded or otherwise, on which we act, and thereby tend to fix us in a course of right conduct. Nor can any damage or disturbance ever result to the State, from disputes, or differences of opinion in religion, if the State will only do its duty, and act as becomes it, by holding an equal hand over all its subjects, and restrain them from injuring or hurting one another for their religious differences,

But

But that I have not been of late an indifferent hearer, though I have taken no part in your debates, you will believe, when I tell you, that I have found my mind as fully relieved by them from many doubts on important subjects with which I had been perplexed, as if I had laid them before you for the purpose.

1. I was wont to be much disturbed, that we were creatures so framed, that there was little pure happiness to be found, and so much pain and misery of one kind or other mixed in our cup, as if we had been the work of some envious Being, who had grudged us our enjoyments. But I am now persuaded, that it was the happiness of the unthinking brute animals that I coveted, and not of a rational being; which is not to be attained without labour and difficulty.

2. The first chapters of our sacred books seemed to be a most strange exhibition of the God and creator of all things, and of the first origin of our species, so enveloped in figure and allegory, that with difficulty can any tolerable sense be made of it; for I expected,

expected, that the proofs of his existence, and of his love and regard for his creatures, if he had really been possessed of these qualities, would have been pointed out to us in a brief energetick manner.

But I am now persuaded, that Divine Wisdom hath judged better for us in the methods which *Moses* has been directed to pursue. For that there is one God, and that he is good, his works of nature teach; and have been so understood by all who have considered them, a very few persons excepted, of pitiable mental or bodily infirmities, or both. But such an authoritative historical account, as is furnished us in the Bible, of a God, as I may say, really existing and acting, as our creator and moral governor, makes stronger impressions, gives fuller conviction, and is better calculated to operate upon the minds of human creatures, and carry down to all ages the momentous truth, than speculative arguments; which would be liable to perpetual dispute and quibble; as we find to have been the fact, in antient times, and in our own.

3. I had been much hurt in perusing, and strongly tempted to slight the whole account of the Deity given in the Bible, for his being represented from the first and throughout, not as a benevolent creator, and patron and encourager of virtue and goodness, but an arbitrary, capricious, malevolent Being \*; bringing into existence a race of creatures, and soon repenting of what he had done, and destroying them; and upon renewing their race afterwards, conducting himself towards them in the same unsteady partial manner, selecting as the objects of his special favour, characters by no means worthy of it.

But you have satisfied me, that I condemned what I did not understand: that it was not the plan and design of the Creator to bring creatures any how to happiness, but by degrees, and by suitable discipline to form them to piety and goodness, the true felicity of rational beings. This is plainly indicated

\* Upon this subject I would beg leave to recommend a serious perusal of the admirable and eloquent discourses on the Providence and Government of God, by a late excellent man and highly esteemed friend, the Rev. N. Cappe, of York,

in the account of the first creation of our species, and is the key, with which we may open and explain many things belonging to our present state.

4. I had stumbled, with many others, at the divine command to destroy the Canaanitish nations, being persuaded that it could not come from a benevolent creator, and that it was all the work and contrivance of priests and politicians, who had taken possession of the minds of the multitude, and presumed to represent as God's commands what was the dictate of their own implacable temper and ambition. But you have contributed to put me on farther inquiry and to convince me, that it was not unbecoming the moral governor and the lover of his creatures, to interpose in the way *Moses* has described, to prevent the horrid practices that prevailed throughout those nations, at least to give a check, if not intirely to eradicate them; and also to make his favoured nation the instruments of his judgments; favoured, not for their own sakes, for they, as he told them, were not better than others, but for the sake of their more deserving progenitors. And throughout the  
sacred



sacred history, from the beginning, I see no *omnipotent tyrant*, no *Moloch*, *furious king*, as he has been described, delighting himself with the miseries and destruction of his creatures; but a kind creator and moral governor, concerned for their best interests, and to bring them to true happiness.

5. I have also peculiar pleasure in noting throughout the books of *Moses* and the other sacred writers of the Old Testament, their vast care and attention to teach and to hold forth at all times, that there is *one God only, and no other besides him*; not a *God composed of many persons*, which is a thing of *anti-christian invention*, but a God in the single person of *Jehovah*, God of *Israel*, God of the universe.

I am the more induced to name this, not only because it is a truth that lies at the foundation; and is of the greatest concernment; but also through a desire to mention to you a late publication that may not have fallen in your way, of a respectable Swiss gentleman among us; *Mr. De Luc*, who enjoys the office of Reader to the Queen,

and has been made by the King Professor of philosophy and geology in the university of Gottingen, and who dedicates his tract, which is in the french language, to the king of Prussia. As I had been led to esteem the author, I was concerned and much disappointed, that he should at this day, upon such flight and imaginary grounds, set himself to deprive us of the one true God and father of the universe, and introduce in lieu of him, a *God* consisting of three persons, the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, in the *unity of his essence*; alluding in support of this to the text in 1 John v. 7, of the three heavenly witnesses; a text now almost unanimously given up as spurious, and not written by the apostle. Of which sentiment, the present bishop of Lincoln, to the credit of his judgment and integrity, hath lately declared himself in expressive terms. “ I purposely omit the contested passage in the first epistle of St. John: There are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the son and the holy ghost: and these three are one. In any case it would be improper to produce a doubtful text in support of so important a doctrine as that of the trinity; but  
I must

I must own, that after an attentive consideration of the controversy relative to that passage, I am convinced that it is spurious \*."

Mr. De Luc farther grounds this doctrine of his on the plural termination of one of the hebrew names of God; where his words are, referring his reader to the language of Moses in the beginning of Genesis †; "The denomination of the Divinity, says he, is plural; that is *Elohim*, the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit in the unity of his essence* †."

\* Elements of Christian Theology, vol. ii. p. 90.

† "MOÏSE commence la GENESE par la fixation de ces idées, qui ——— font la base du Christianisme. Des ce début, dis-je, la denomination de la Divinité est un *plurier*; c'est *ELOHIM*; le *Pere*, la *Parole* et l' *Esprit* dans l'unité de son *ESSENCE*."

Lettres sur l'éducation religieuse de l'enfance, précédées et suivies de détails historiques—dediées au Roi, par J. A. De Luc, Lecteur de sa majesté La Reine de la Grande Bretagne, Professeur de philosophie et géologie à Gottingue. A Berlin. 1800. pag. 138.

‡ See on this subject, Mr. Friend's excellent Animadversions on the Elements of Christian Theology, Letter XII. in which is a clear confutation of the vain supposition of a plurality of persons in God from the use of a plural termination in one of his names. Ridgway. 1800.

After

After this, *Mr. De Luc* proceeds to confirm these positions, by referring (I give his words) to *Mr. Thomas Maurice*, one of the keepers of the British Museum; who, in his *Indian Antiquities*, lately published, professes to find the doctrine of a *Trinity*, or † *plurality in the unity of God*, among those nations of antiquity, who, he thinks, must have received it from ancestors, that were in possession of it, anterior to the time of *Moses*; and thus furnish a fresh authority, as is supposed, for the doctrine of a *Trinity in unity in God*, independent of the sacred writings.

But both these arguments of these two learned gentlemen; the one, from the plural termination of *Elohim*, one of the hebrew names of God; the other from the high antiquity of the doctrine of a *Trinity in Unity* and *Plurality in God*; without going into any other confutation of them, are set aside by the simple and most obvious consideration furnished by *Moses* and the Prophets, and the whole hebrew scriptures; namely, that *whenever God is introduced in the sacred*

† Le même, p. 139.

*writings, as speaking of himself, or spoken of by others, or is himself addressed, the personal pronouns, I, thou, he, are invariably used; which demonstrates to every understanding, that it is one single person, and not more than one, who is the God of Moses and the prophets and of the people of Israel, and consequently the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all mankind.*

This plain argument, which has been a thousand times produced, it is to be hoped will at last have some little attention paid to it, being nothing less, to those who respect the Scriptures, than the authority of God himself deciding the matter. For my part, I see more reason every day of my life, to be thankful for those divine records, which have been preserved to us by *Moses* and the people of the Jews; as I fear, without them, what with the refinements of philosophy, on the one hand, and the idolatrous superstition of christians on the other, the one true God would have been overlooked and unknown. For these reasons, honouring that most antient nation of the Jews with that high honour which is due to it, and grieved when I see

them undeservedly scouted and despised and ill treated by Christians, I am almost tempted, whenever I meet a Jew, to move my hat to him, as one to whom I am under infinite obligations, as a martyr and confessor to the one true God.

6. It had given me much disturbance, that christianity, which was ushered into the world, as we read, with such a profusion and expence of miracles, and is most truly a scheme to conduct his creatures to virtue and true happiness, worthy of the benevolent parent of mankind, should not have better made its way, and should have done so little to reform the world, than it has hitherto been found to have done: I have been formerly often ready to reject it on this account.

But you have helped much to quiet my mind, and have cured my scepticism in this respect, by pointing out in what manner these powerful means of true piety and virtue have been blunted and impeded, and the salutary effects of this excellent doctrine counteracted by the corruptions that have been grafted upon and blended with it; and chiefly by its  
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being poisoned and perverted almost in its cradle as soon as the powers of the world began to give it their countenance, as an instrument of ambition and worldly designs and aggrandisement; a service which it disdains; by which it is sure to be polluted, and to have its true end and design of making men of all ranks and degrees virtuous and good, defeated; but a service, in which, unfortunately, it is forced, more or less, to drudge, to this very hour.

Your account and illustration of the history of mankind, as delivered by *Moses*, and of the divine government exercised over them from the beginning, and also of the useful moral purposes answered by the deluge, has at last removed all my difficulties. And I am now persuaded that for these events which had appeared to me out of nature and all credibility, there was a just foundation in fact, and the concurring testimony of antiquity to their truth, to which no unprejudiced person could refuse assent: and for this let me say, I was beholden to *Mr. Hume* himself; which shews how wise and prudent, as well as just and right in itself, it is to allow

the utmost latitude of discussion, and liberty of publishing their sentiments to ingenious men on all subjects, especially those of religion, however contrary they may be to what is publicly received and believed.

For, in the reply of an excellent person to that gentleman's "Essay on Miracles," (which unquestionably is calculated and was intended to overthrow all belief of the divine revelation contained in the Bible, and of the christian religion in particular, and has certainly influenced many unwary readers to turn away entirely from it,) there are given with much good temper and liberality, a solid confutation of his arguments against miracles, and a defence of the people of the jews, and of their sacred history, in opposition to the subtle objections and attacks of this shrewd and bold adversary, with much other important remark connected with it: all which the christian world would have been deprived of, to their great loss, had not *Mr. Hume* drawn it forth and given occasion to this work.

I would



I would here refer you to “ An Effay in answer to Mr. *Hume’s* Effay on Miracles,” by *William Adams*, M. A. Minister of St. Chad’s, Salop. The second edition, with additions. 1749.

Towards the close of the work, Mr. (since the very eminent Dr.) *Adams* remarks: “ The remainder of this Effay is little more than a rude insult on the Scriptures and the *Christian* religion. For fear his (Mr. *Hume’s*) readers should mistake his meaning, and not apply his argument where he intended; the author proceeds, with a smiling grimace, to tell us, ‘ *that our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure.*’ This he pretends to make evident by examining the miracles related in the Pentateuch.” ‘ Here’ says he, ‘ we are to consider a book presented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people; wrote in an age when they were still more barbarous, and, in all probability, long after the facts it relates, corroborated by no concurring testimony, and resembling those fabulous accounts which  
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every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading this book we find it full of prodigies and miracles: it gives an account of a state of the world and of human nature intirely different from the present; of our fall from that state; of the age of man extended to near a thousand years; of the destruction of the world by a deluge; of the arbitrary choice of one people as the favorites of heaven, and that people the countrymen of the author; of their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most astonishing imaginable: I desire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and, after serious consideration, declare, whether he thinks that the falshood of such a book, supported by such a testimony would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the miracles it relates; which is, however necessary to make it be received, according to the measures of probability above established.—*So far Mr. Hume's representation of the contents of the Bible.*

*Reply to the above by Dr. Adams.*

“ If the Jews were thus more than barbarous at the time when these books were written,

written, whence, without a miracle, could they learn all the great truths relating to the being and attributes of God, which the most learned part of the world were for many ages after in total ignorance about? Whence could the religion and laws of this people so far exceed those of the wisest Heathen, and come out at once, in their first infancy, thus perfect and intire; when all human systems are found to grow up by degrees, and to ripen after many improvements, into perfection? The Jews had but little commerce with other nations, and, therefore, did not excel in the literary and other arts of Greece: but the same scriptures, which prove that they were earlier in possession of the most useful and sublime parts of knowledge, secured them likewise from ever sinking into that barbarity which the author charges upon them. Let any one compare the book of *Genesis*, which he treats with so much freedom, and which is, by many centuries, the oldest book in the world, with any of the earliest heathen historians; let him compare the *Psalms of David* with the Hymns of *Callimachus* or *Orpheus*; let him read the history of *Josephus*, who was just contemporary with *Christ* and his

Apostles; and he will incline to judge more favorably of this people.

“ The great events recorded in this history have no connection with the argument of miracles, and, therefore, do not belong to this place. But these are corroborated by the strongest concurring testimony that can be desired to facts that are, most of them, older than the use of letters itself. The traditions of every country seem all to point to one and the same original. The late invention of arts and sciences, the foundation of cities and empires, the manner of peopling the world, and the number of its present inhabitants, seem all to prove that the world had its beginning no earlier than the period assigned by *Moses*, and agree perfectly with the account of the deluge. There are no monuments of antiquity which give room to suspect the world of earlier original. The first authors of Greece and Egypt speak of the chaos, of the abyss of waters that covered the earth, of man's being formed out of the ground, and of his first innocence. From these, one of the *Latin* poets has described the creation, the state of innocence, the gradual

gradual corruption of mankind, and the deluge, in a manner very nearly resembling that of *Moses*. The memory of a general flood, which destroyed the whole race of men and animals, except one family, seems to have been preserved for some ages among almost all nations. *Lucian* tells us, the tradition among both the *Greeks* and *Syrians* was, that this was a judgment from heaven on the wickedness of mankind: he describes the manner of the flood, the ark in which some of every kind were preserved, and many other particulars, just as we have them in the book of *Genesis*. *Plutarch*, alluding to the same tradition, mentions the ark, and even the dove that was sent forth to see if the waters were abated. A great number of antient authors, who mention the deluge, and give witness to the building of *Babel*, the burning of *Sodom*, and many other great events in the *Mosaic* history, are reckoned up by *Josephus*, *Grotius*, and others. The present surface of the earth, the shells of fish that are found in midland countries, and even on the tops of mountains, and the remains of land-animals at very great depths in the earth, are still surviving monuments

of

of the deluge. It is almost certain that the world began to be peopled about the plains of *Babylon*, and near where the ark is said to have rested. From the east, colonies of men were sent westward: and from thence we can trace pretty distinctly the progress of arts and sciences. The long lives of the first men are spoken of by all the Heathens. This fact is so far from discrediting the *Mosaic* history, that *Monfieur Pascal* reckons it a full proof of the fidelity of the author: ‘This historian,’ says he, ‘has brought the deluge, and even the creation, so near his own time, by means of the few generations which he counts between them, that the memory of them could not but be still fresh and lively in the minds of all the Jewish nation.’ In the line of tradition there are but five steps betwixt *Moses* and the first man. ‘Therefore, the creation and the deluge are indubitably true. This argument’ says he, ‘must be acknowledged for conclusive by those who apprehend its process.’ “The longevity of men in the first ages seems necessary for the better peopling the world, the invention and improvement of arts, and for propagating religious and all useful knowledge, when they depended

depended wholly on tradition. And I am persuaded that this author cannot even invent a more probable or rational account of peopling the world than this which he affects to deride."

You have not been deficient in bearing testimony to the character of *Abraham*, the friend of God, as he is termed by high authority; though without ascribing to him that perfection which belongs not to him. In taking a concubine, he did no more than conform to a custom which was very general in those early times, and not disreputable. Nor was there any thing wrong or unkind in his dismissal of *Hagar*, on the complaint of her mistress and for peace' sake; since there is every reason to believe, from the subsequent history of *Ishmael*, and particularly as we find him afterwards joined with *Isaac* in paying the last tribute of affection and duty to the remains of his father, that neither *Hagar* nor her son were thrown upon the world neglected and forlorn.

But you have not touched upon his obedience to the divine command to slay his only son;

son; which may give us pause; and is by some much condemned; and yet when duly examined and understood, we shall find that *Abraham* therein manifested the noblest principles of piety and virtue, worthy of the high commendations and reward with which he was honored by the almighty.

These principles were a trust in the power and goodness of God, in preference to every tender feeling of nature, and every worldly consideration that might shake his resolution of complying with what he was persuaded to be the divine command: although it was not a blind obedience that he paid; but grounded on the highest reason. This the Apostle tells us, Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. *By faith Abraham when he was tryed, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only son of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; i. e. though he had a promise from God, that his posterity was to be derived from Isaac, on receiving this divine command he hesitated not to make a sacrifice of him; accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure, or*  
rather,



rather, as from a like condition he had received him, as it is better rendered by Mr. Wakefield, referring, in these last words, to the miraculous birth of *Isaac*, when his parents were past child-bearing, as good as dead, as the apostle, Heb. xi. 12. expresses himself, in another place.

There is a sermon from these words by Archbishop *Tillotson*, preached at *Whitehall*, in 1686, before the princess *Ann*; entitled on the excellency of *Abraham's* faith and obedience, highly worthy of perusal; in which after shewing on what solid and good grounds *Abraham* acted, and conducted himself, in obeying the divine command, and what a pattern of piety and virtue he therein was; that great and good man, and eminent preacher and teacher, makes the following inferences from the whole: with which I promise myself you will be pleased as I have been, as they shew this excellent person's method of reasoning, and the sound and liberal principles he goes upon. And as they are of importance in weighing and examining this much controverted action of *Abraham*, and in vindicating the character of the father  
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of the Hebrew nation, I hope you will not be offended with their prolixity; he infers then,

“ *First*, Humane nature is capable of full and clear satisfaction concerning a divine revelation. For if *Abraham* had not been fully and past all doubt assured that this was a command from God, he would certainly have spared his son. And nothing is more reasonable than to believe that those, to whom God is pleased to make immediate revelations of his will, are some way or other assured that they are divine; otherwise they would be in vain, and to no purpose.

“ But how men are assured concerning divine revelations made to them, is not so easy to make out to others; only these two things we are sure of:

1. “ That God can work in the mind of man, a firm persuasion of the truth of what he reveals, and that such a revelation is from him. This no man can doubt of, that considers the great power and influence, which God who made us, and perfectly knows our frame,

frame, must needs have upon our minds and understandings.

2. “ That God never offers any thing to any man’s belief, that plainly contradicts the natural essential notions of his mind ; because this would be for God to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of man, which, whilst it remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit.

“ For instance, we cannot imagine, that God should reveal to any man any thing that plainly contradicts the essential perfections of the divine nature ; for such a revelation can no more be supposed to be from God, than a revelation from God that there is no God : which is a downright contradiction.

“ Now to apply this to the revelation which God made to *Abraham* concerning the sacrificing of his son : This was made to him by an audible voice, and he was fully satisfied by the evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

“ For

“ For this was not the first of many revelations that had been made to him, so that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and by this experience was grown to a great confidence in the truth and goodness of God. And it is very probable the first time that God appeared to *Abraham*, because it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future revelations, God did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his conviction.

“ And this *St. Stephen* does seem to insinuate, *Acts vii. 2.* *The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia.* Now by this glorious appearance to him at first, he was so prepared for the entertainment of after-revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the sacrificing of his own son, being both by the manner it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied that it was from God.

“ *Secondly.* I observe from hence the great and necessary use of reason in matters  
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of faith. For we see here that *Abraham's* reason was a mighty strengthening and help to his faith. Here were two revelations made to *Abraham*, which seemed to clash with one another; and if *Abraham's* reason could not have reconciled the repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural notion or principle, that *God cannot contradict himself*, every man does first, and more firmly believe, than any revelation whatsoever.

“ Now *Abraham's* reason relieved him in this strait. So the text expressly tells us, *he reasoned* with himself, that God was able to raise his son from the dead.

“ And this being admitted, the command of God, concerning the slaying of *Isaac*, was very well consistent with his former promise to *Abraham*, that *In Isaac his seed should be called.*”

*So far the good Archbishop.*

I shall be indulged, I know, in adding one or two things.

1. From the account of the divine command to *Abraham* to slay his son, of the design of it, and of the execution of it being prevented, as the whole of it lies in the sacred history, an unbiaſſed well diſpoſed mind would conclude that the Deity thereby intended to promote and encourage piety and virtue; nor could it naturally have any other tendency, or bear any other conſtruction.

2. Diſtreſſed as *Abraham* muſt have been on receiving ſuch a command, he had no doubts whatſoever of it being his duty to obey it; as he was perſuaded, and rightly perſuaded, that God could command nothing but what was right and good.

All that could be neceſſary to ſatiſfy his mind, was to be perfectly aſſured that the command came from God; and that of this he had the fullreſt conviction, we have juſt now ſeen.

3. It is not for his own information, that God, who knows before-hand what each perſon will do, makes trial of his creatures; or puts difficulties and embarraſſments before  
 4 them

them in the way of their duty; but to strengthen and confirm their virtuous principles, and make them examples, and an encouragement to each other.

4. No one can take upon him to deny that God might thus make trial of the piety and virtuous principles of *Abraham*, without denying at the same time his power and right to govern the world as seems good to him, and to fit its rational inhabitants by moral discipline for the several parts he destines them to act and fill in it; in short, without denying all miraculous interpositions whatsoever, all interference of the Deity in teaching and directing his creatures beyond what they can learn from observations on the present established course of things, and the laws by which the natural system is governed and preserved: A most vain assumption, assuredly, this, in mortal man, whose ignorance is so great, and judgment so weak and incompetent! which implies on the face of it, that he is wiser than God; which is the next step to denying that there is any God at all, and which has led not a few into that bewildered and desolate state of mind, of which, and I

thank you for it, at our last meeting, you gave us some wretched and melancholy examples.

You will bear with me going on, my friends, now I have begun, in suggesting to you, that you have left untouched a main difficulty, which christianity puts in the way of your attempt to vindicate the divine goodness, by its teaching the doctrine of endless punishments to the wicked, although you have prepared the way for removing the difficulty, by your manner of explaining the divine moral government under which we are. For you have well shewn that under this, all events, respecting all of us, are so directed and overruled, that piety and virtue, or obedience to the divine laws, is its own reward, and promotes our happiness, and vice, or disobedience, is its own punishment, and produces misery. And in agreement with this our moral constitution, we find, that grievous and exquisitely painful as are at times the sufferings both of mind and body to which we are made liable by our violation of the divine commands, these sufferings are nevertheless beneficial to us; we should have  
been



been worse characters, and less happy upon the whole, without such checks and reproofs. They tend to soften and subdue our pride and selfishness, which are the source of well nigh all our misery and wickedness, and force us to sober reflection, to see and correct our evil tempers and practices.

And as in our next state after death we continue under the same laws and divine moral government, we cannot but conclude that those most lasting punishments, which both reason and revelation conspire to teach us, will in that future state, await all evil doers, enemies of God and goodness; must in the progress of infinite ages produce a change and amendment in their dispositions and a return to virtue and goodness; unless their Maker, by a sovereign act of power hardens their hearts and prevents the natural effect of their sufferings.

But this is such an idea of God, that one would much sooner believe there was no such Being than suppose he could be capable of any thing of the kind, and therefore we may conclude without hesitation, that the suffer-

ings of the future state must have a beneficial effect on the sufferers.

I would also further submit to your consideration, that as the christian scriptures assure us that all the dead shall be raised to life to be judged according to their works, as they have done good or evil in the present life; and do thereby implicitly give us hope, may we not rather say, give us humble assurance that the gloomy sentence of annihilation will not pass on any of our species, for we cannot entertain the thought that our benevolent creator would bring back his creatures to life to put them on the rack as it were, and make them suffer for a time, and then consign them to their primitive nothing: We may therefore make this inference, that none of the human race, however multiplied and aggravated their crimes may have been, will be consigned to fruitless unavailing suffering and misery for ever, but in the long course of ages, and by the discipline to which they will be doomed, all will be brought to repentance, and be saved. I must however profess that those severe threatenings of the Gospel of eternal punishments, have

have long since ceased to make any impression on my mind, being counterbalanced by the contrary declarations so frequently occurring concerning the Almighty; that he loveth all his creatures, and is desirous that they should not perish, (John iii. 16.) but have everlasting life; that he would (1 Tim. ii. 4.) have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; to be saved, i. e. made happy, which must imply they will be so in the end: As it would otherwise argue that he has not the power to effect the good he desires, and so must be disappointed, which is not to be supposed of him, who is supremely perfect both in power and goodness.

I shall have reason to think myself happy, adds *Synesius*, here rising up, if I have not tired you all by taking up so much of your time, and if my remarks, all of them in some measure of your own growth, may not be judged foreign to your noble design of vindicating the ways of God to man.

Very far from it, declared *Photinus* with a countenance full of pleasure, in finding their

old associate come forward to take such an important share in their present debates; you have done us honour, and I will venture to say, have given great satisfaction to all of us, not merely in approving the progress we have made in our inquiry, but in corroborating and illustrating it with many new observations of great moment; especially in what you have done towards relieving the gospel from the imputation of holding forth the doctrine of everlasting torments of the wicked, a millstone which some mistaken christians had hung about it, and thereby alienated the minds of many.

I persuade myself, continued *Photinus*, that it would have been impossible for christians to put such a construction upon the words of their great Master, so repugnant to every idea we can form of the divine Being, that men would be condemned to endless sufferings for the crimes of this brief passing state, if their understandings had not been quite overawed and overpowered by taking for granted that the language and words used by *Christ* on the subject, *eternal, everlasting, for ever*, and the like, implied an endless duration so directly

rectly and absolutely, as to forbid all further inquiry or doubt about their meaning. Whereas, in fact, the terms generally signify periods of duration, more or less extended, and have at no time this signification, unless when determined to it by the subject to which they are applied; viz. God, his mercy or goodness; and the like.

So that our Saviour, in using this language, intended only to express, that the sufferings of the future state would be of an exceeding long duration; thereby to inculcate and enforce the necessity and vast importance of the attention of mankind to the divine laws, and the most dreadful danger of violating them; of going out of the world under the power of evil, malignant, ungodly dispositions and habits: And this from the most benevolent motive, that they might be powerfully excited to avoid those exquisite sufferings and miseries of the next state, which although they will have an end, as we have been shewing, yet it will be then only, when their evil dispositions shall be changed; and amended.

It

It is of importance here to be noted, that in that fine affecting description of the day of judgment, at the conclusion of Matt. xxv. the *everlasting punishment* expressly denounced against those who opposed the spread of the gospel, was necessary for their own good and that of all the world, this being the means appointed by the divine Being for the reformation, virtue, and final happiness of the human race for ever. Wherefore an opposition to it was of so heinous a nature, that no threatening could be too strong to deter men from it.

But we are not to conclude that *everlasting punishment* means punishment without end, but only such as was to remain till the evil was done away by repentance: for neither the language used, nor the reason of the thing admits of any other sense. The phrase everlasting fire, not literally such, but this most dreadful image adopted to keep men from that hardness of heart, and insensibility to the temporal and eternal good of others, which while it lasts, incapacitates for pure happiness both in this world and in the next.

And

And now in conclusion, what has frequently satisfied my own mind, on this momentous concluding point, the final happiness of all mankind, I cannot help proposing to your consideration, from the second volume, p. 424, of Dr. Hartley's works; a writer of such compass, of mental discernment, and true christian philosophy, as has no competitor, and shall in his words close our conversation.

“ Can it be supposed, that an infinitely merciful Father will cast off his Son entirely, and doom him to eternal misery, without farther trials than what this life affords? We see numberless instances of persons at present abandoned to vice, who yet according to all probable appearances, might be reformed by a proper mixture of correction, instruction, hope and fear. And what man is neither able nor willing to do, may and must, as should seem, be both possible to God, and actually effected by him. He must have future discipline of a severe kind for those whom the chastisements of this life did not bring to themselves. Yet still they will all be fatherly chastisements, intended to amend  
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and perfect, not to be final and vindictive. That the bulk of sinners are not utterly incorrigible, even common observation shews, but the History of Association makes it still more evident; and it seems very repugnant to analogy to suppose that any sinners, even the very worst that ever lived, should be hardened beyond the reach of all suffering, of all selfishness, hope, fear, goodwill, gratitude, &c. For we are all alike in kind, and do not differ greatly in degree here. We have each of us passions of all sorts, and lie open to influences of all sorts; so as that the persons A. and B. in whatever different proportions their intellectual affections now exist, may, by a suitable set of impressions, become hereafter alike.

“ These, and many such like reasonings, must occur to attentive persons upon this subject, so as to make it highly unsuitable to the benevolence of the Deity, or to the relation which he bears to us, according to the mere light of nature, that infinite irreversible misery, to commence at death, should be the punishment of the sins of this life. And by  
pursuing



purfuing this method of reaſoning, we ſhall be led firſt to exclude miſery upon the balance, and then to hope for the ultimate unlimited happineſs of all mankind."

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## CONVERSATION THE LAST.

THE subjects of the former conversations occupied the attention of the company for some time at the next meeting, when it was observed to *Marcellinus*, that in a former conversation \*, when he was pointing to the causes of the great misery and wickedness which are complained of in the world, he had named one with which Revelation alone acquaints us, viz. the baneful influence and interference of an Evil Being, called the Devil or Satan, in the affairs of men; but had since been wholly silent about it, as if it were a thing deserving no consideration.

It seems to me, observed here *Synefius*, that it is not to be thus slightly passed over. For although you, *Marcellinus*, have satisfactorily proved, that nature rightly understood holds forth only good; that the pains and sufferings, at which we murmur so

\* Page 123.

loudly,

loudly, are kindly intended and in general beneficial to us, and we should not be so happy as we are at present without them; and even sin and wickedness are by the divine wisdom and mercy converted to good; nevertheless, as revelation is generally understood to teach, and the gospel in particular by many asserted to be founded upon the reality of such an Evil Being, and such unquestionably has the appearance of being a principal agent throughout the New Testament; how much soever the thing may be made light of by some as utterly improbable and inconsistent with every idea we can form of the divine goodness, your vindication of that goodness will be lame and defective, unless you can shew the insufficiency of these presumed divine authorities to prove the existence of such a foul malignant fiend, which not a few christians with great earnestness maintain.

As therefore you have done me the favour to take in good part the remarks I presumed to offer in the discussion in which you are engaged, I shall be happy if the thoughts which I have with some diligence put together

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ther on the present subject, meet with your approbation.

The company expressed high satisfaction, and *Synefius* continued his address.

It is somewhat extraordinary that in the history of the transgression of the first parents of mankind, at the beginning of our sacred books, it should be so very generally current with the learned as well as the unlearned, that by the serpent, who is represented as misleading them to violate the command of their maker, we are to understand, a wicked spirit, the supposed enemy and opposer of God, and author of all evil; when at the same time, *Moses*, who gives us the account of the transaction, never intimates that it is so to be understood, in this, or in any other part of his writings.

Neither, it is observable, do the learned jewish writers, who were contemporary with the apostles of Christ, and whose writings happily remain, give into this interpretation; but generally supposed the serpent to signify men's depraved appetites and passions, or

whatever, in their situations, could move and entice our first parents to do evil and sin against God.

That *Moses* himself did not intend to describe the evil being called the devil, to have deceived *Eve* under the shape of a serpent, appears farther from his never making mention of such an evil being as having any existence at all then, or alluding to it afterwards in the five books ascribed to him. Whence we may reasonably conclude that he did not know or believe that there was any such powerful mischievous being, who had connexion with mankind; because, had he known it, he would not have failed to apprise his nation of it, and warn them of their danger from him.

We must own indeed, that there is mention made of *devils*, in Leviticus xvii. 7. where it is said, *They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils; after whom they have gone a whoring; and in Deuteronomy xxxii. 17. we read, They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers*

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*feared*

*feared nat.* This however, in either case, is not the language of *Moses*, but of his translators; who, knowing these to be the names of heathen gods, whom they took to be evil spirits, on that account gave them the name of *devils*, instead of preserving their true names, which they ought to have done.

The word used in the original, in the first instance, שְׂעִירִים, *soirm*, signifies goats, hairy beings, the sacred animals of Egypt, worshipped by them with the most obscene rites. The other name in Deuteronomy, שְׂדִים, *sdim*, is from a root that signifies to desolate, to lay waste, to destroy, a proper characteristic of the gods of Canaan, who were of later date, supposed to be deceased kings and mighty warriors, who were worshipped by human sacrifices, and with whom the Israelites had become more lately acquainted; and for their compliance in this horrid worship, they are here and elsewhere severely reprov'd. See particularly Psalm cvi. 37, 38. *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,* (שְׂדִים, *sdim*, demons, dead men deified;) *and shed innocent blood, even the blood*

of

*of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan* \*.

It is not to be passed over here, that *familiar spirits* are spoken of in the books of *Moses*, and other parts of the sacred history. And as this is presumed to have a reference to devils and witches, ignorant persons may thereby be imposed upon to think there is some reality in such things. But it should be told them, that the term *familiar spirit*, has nothing to answer it in the original, but was put in of their own heads by the learned men employed in the last translation of the Bible by authority, in the time of *James I.* soon after he came to the throne, to favour some notions of the king's about these matters; and in complaisance to him also in this respect, the laws of the country were made more severe against the superstitious practices of forcery and witchcraft. We are told that king *James* himself came

\* Levit. xix. 31. xx. 6.

Deut. xviii. 11. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, 7, 8, 9.

2 Kings xxi. 6. xxiii. 24.

1 Chron. x. 13. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.

Isaiah viii. 19. xxix. 4.

off very much from these notions in his elder years; yet as a wise and excellent person observes \*, from whom I have this account; “ when Laws and translations are fixed, it is a difficult thing to change them.”

It may be necessary here to obviate a common prejudice, that the Hebrew word Satan, to which corresponds the Greek word *διαβολος*, *diabolus*, by which it is generally rendered in the Greek version of the Old Testament; that these words stand for the supposed evil being, as his proper name; which is by no means the case. For in their first and proper sense, they signify an enemy, adversary, calumniator, or the like; and to this sense we shall always do well to adhere, unless the circumstances of the passage demand the contrary.

Thus Numb. xxii. 22. we read, *And God's anger was kindled because he (Balaam) went; and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary (Satan) against him.* 2 Sam. xix. 22. *And David said, What have I to*

† See Dr. Hutchinsoſon on Witchcraft, pages 178, 179, 180.



do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be adversaries (Satan) unto me. In these and any the like passages, every one will judge for himself, whether any thing more is to be understood than the plain construction of the words implies, without any farther reference.

1 Chron. xxi. 1. *And an adversary (Satan) stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*

2 Sam. xxiv. 1. *And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*

The parallel passages explain each other.

Satan, provoking David to number Israel, was the advice of an enemy; the suggestions of pride and vain confidence in the strength and power of his dominions, and of odious ingratitude to God in leaving him, to whom all was owing, out of his thoughts, and out of the account.

Zechariah iii. 1, 2. *And he shewed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the*

*angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan, even the LORD that hath chosen Israel rebuke thee.*

Joshua the high priest is in this passage stirred up to set about the building of the temple under the promise of divine assistance. The Samaritans (Prideaux, Vol. I.) who opposed the building, are styled Satan the adversary. Probably the prophet meant no more by the LORD, Jehovah, speaking to the adversary, than that Jehovah would rebuke and restrain him.

Archbishop Newcome, in his Translation of the Minor Prophets, shews, that in this passage, the term Satan signifies only *adversary*, without any reference to an evil spirit.

Job i. ii. Satan being never mentioned but in the introduction to this poem, would seem to be a fictitious personage; a kind of poetical embellishment of the piece. He is moreover not characterized as an evil being; not tempting or seducing to evil, only asking  
leave

leave to inflict pain and misfortune, thereby to make trial of Job's piety and virtuous principle. And Job and his friends throughout ascribe his calamities to God immediately; and seem to have had no thought of an evil being, Satan, whom they never name, nor drop any hint of his agency in human affairs.

I have now considered all those passages that seem needful to be produced, and are supposed to exhibit and hold forth the existence and agency of an evil Being in the Jewish scriptures, but have not found that they expressly teach, or that it is to be gathered from them, that there is any such being. And it is no small confirmation that these scriptures have been rightly interpreted by us, as we perceive not in them any religious exhortations or cautions to beware of the wiles and power of such an evil being, in their sacred history and prophetic writings, from first to last.

Now, as in the christian scriptures, in which so much is spoken of the devil, of satan, and the evil one, it is certain that we

have no new revelation of the reality of the evil being who is supposed to be described under these different names; and it has been shewn that the Jews could not take the opinion which they appear to hold of such a being in the time of Christ, from their own sacred books; it follows, that it must have come among them, during their dispersion and captivity in Babylon. And most probably they learned it of the Chaldeans, among whom they dwelt; whose early reception of this doctrine is testified by many antient authors.

And that this was an opinion of great antiquity in the east is confirmed by the prophet Isaiah xlv. xlvi. where he speaks of *Cyrus*, king of Persia, many years before he was born, as the future restorer of the Jewish temple, in terms of allusion to their eastern doctrine of Two principles of all things, a good and evil one; but in such a way as effectually to set aside and confute their error, by asserting that evil as well as good came from God alone.

Isaiah xlv. ver. 8. *I form the light and create darknes: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.*

The Israelites, ever prone to adopt the principles and practices of their heathen neighbours; sojourning among these Chaldeans, famous for science and natural knowledge, would most probably learn of them and adopt the notions of their conquerors; who might point out to them, or they might themselves imagine, that the serpent who is represented as acting such a principal part in their own sacred history, was the evil principle of the Chaldeans, and thence they would proceed to ascribe to it all the sin and misery that was in the world.

It may be presumed also that by their constant intercourse and communication with this learned people they imbibed their whole philosophy concerning demons, and good and evil spirits, as well as the existence of one chief evil spirit: So that at their return from their long captivity in Babylon, they had incorporated these doctrines into their theology, as being those of their own sacred writings, although these writings not only taught them nothing of the kind; but continually condemned them. And although by the time that Christ made his appearance,

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they were much come off from such a heathenish doctrine, yet their language, which had been framed and accommodated to it, would remain in common use, and to that our Saviour and his apostles would confirm themselves, though there be no good reason to think that either the one or the other gave credit to the reality of this evil being.

It being however thus the popular belief, that all sin and evil was from Satan, the devil, or the evil one, the apostles of Christ having to describe how and by what hard trials and temptations their great Master's piety and virtue were exercised and strengthened, to fit him for his arduous and important office of Saviour and Reformer, endowed with extraordinary divine powers to qualify him for it: According to the accounts of Matthew and Luke, who alone mention this singular transaction, it is Satan, the devil, in conformity to the general creed that all evil was from him, whom they describe as the agent in this Trial or Temptation of Christ: Who is represented as employed in endeavouring to corrupt his virtue and integrity, by drawing him from his trust and dependence  
upon

upon God alone, and prompting him to make use of his miraculous powers to gratify his own vanity and worldly views: Although no evil being whatsoever was concerned in the matter; which we are compelled to conclude from the utter improbability of the literal account, but which may otherwise be satisfactorily accounted for.

Let us then take into consideration our Lord's sentiments concerning Satan.

1. We may observe that Christ very commonly uses the words Satan, Devil, in their proper and primary sense, as signifying an enemy, adversary, traitor, or the like; and not an evil being.

Matth. xvi. 23. *But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan! thou adversary.* Archbp. Newcome.

Mark viii. 33. *He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan! thou adversary.* Archbp. Newcome.

John vi. 70. *Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil; and yet one of you is a false accuser.*

2. There is no ground to conclude from Christ sometimes using the terms, Satan, the Devil, the evil one, as signifying the supposed evil being, that he would thereby imply, or have others understand him to imply, that there was in reality such an evil being.

This we learn from himself, in very many passages of the gospel history.

Among others, I would mention his reply to his disciples on their return from a commission in which he had been employing them, to preach the gospel of repentance and remission of sins, in his life time. When, upon their telling him with exultation, that by the power they derived from him, they had been enabled to heal diseases, which in those times were ascribed to demons; Luke x. 17, 18. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name; He said unto



unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. In this answer, he foretels for their encouragement, the farther happy effects which would attend the preaching of his gospel.

To fall from heaven, (see that fine description of the king of Babylon, to which there is allusion, Isaiah xiv. 12.) is to be deprived of power and authority. How was Satan to lose or be deprived of his power and authority by the preaching of the gospel, which is calculated to change and to cure men's wicked and evil dispositions, but cannot have any effect on Satan an invifible, powerful, wicked being, fupposing there were any fuch? As this, then, is a thing impoffible, we are unavoidably led to understand our Lord as expreffing himfelf in the well known eastern ftile, to which his difciples and countrymen were accuftomed, and to fpeak of Satan, as a perfon, or living agent, when he thereby only meant thofe selfish worldly defires, that hatred of God and goodnefs, which are fupposed to characterize fuch a being. There is then, by Chrift's own interpretation, no fuch evil being as we call Satan or the Devil.

And

And Satan, or the Devil, is not a powerful evil being without us, but impious, malignant, cruel tempers and dispositions within us, which lead us to sin against God, and to hurt and destroy the peace, virtue and happiness of our fellow-creatures.

3. This our Lord's sentiment of the nullity of Satan or the devil, or the evil one, we find confirmed in other passages.

Luke viii. 12. *The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their hearts.*

Matth. xiii. 19. *The evil one cometh and snatcheth away that which was sown in their hearts.*

Matth. xiii. 39. *The enemy that soweth the tares is the devil.*

Mark iv. 15. *Straightway cometh Satan and taketh away the word which was sown in their hearts.*

Satan, the devil, the evil one that enters into men's hearts in these instances, can mean nothing

nothing but those evil passions and worldly desires, which extinguish the love of God, of truth and virtue in the hearts of men.

John xiii. 2.—the devil *having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray him.*

27. *And after the sop, then Satan entered into him.*

Luke xxii. 3. *Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot.*

Pride, malice, disappointment in those worldly views which had led *Judas* at first to become one of Christ's disciples, and mortification and revenge at finding the wickedness of his heart discovered; these were the Satan, the devil that entered into and rankled in the breast of this most unhappy man, and excited him to betray his best benefactor and friend, who anxiously sought to make him good, into the hands of his enemies. For this black ingratitude he very soon openly  
condemned

condemned himself with bitterest remorse, “ I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” - Matth. xxvii. 4. In this declaration he furnishes a standing, perpetual testimony to the unspotted excellency of our Lord’s private character; to the reality of the miracles ascribed to him, and to the truth of his religion, hardly to be resisted, which must please and affect every rational enquirer and lover of truth,

All the other instances in which our Lord uses the term Satan, &c. admit of an easy explanation.

John viii. 44. *The devil is your father, and ye willingly perform the lusts of your father. He was a man-slayer from the first, and continued not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.*

*A slayer of men]* in being the cause of the death of the first progenitors of the human race.

race. An allusion to the common opinion of the fall, *Gen. iii. 5.*

*Luke xiii. 16. And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

In the popular language of the Jews, diseases and infirmities were attributed to Satan. See also *Acts x. 38.*

*Luke xxii. 31. And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold! Satan hath obtained leave to sift you all like wheat.*

Our Lord warns his disciples of a great and dangerous trial being near; an allusion to the history of *Job, i. 9—12.*

*Matth. xxv. 41—46. Then will he also say to them on his left hand: Away from me ye cursed! into that everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Here is a reference to some fabulous story, and most probably of heathen origin; for there is no mention in the scriptures of any such beings, as a devil and his angels, except in this single passage; for which, had there been any just foundation, it would not have been named in this passage only, and in such an incidental way.

We find the prince of the powers of the air alluded to in *Ephes. ii. 1.* *According to the Prince of the powers of the air*, which Archbishop Newcome translates, *according to the powerful ruler of the air*; and then adds; St. Paul adopts this description as well known to Jews and Gentiles without asserting its truth; as much as to say, according to the head of evil spirits, whom you Ephesians speak of under this character. This points to the doctrine of evil spirits being a heathen doctrine, as we know from other sources, to which our Lord might allude in the passage before us.

It has also been ably shewn by a French writer, in *Bekker of Amsterdam's* works, that the translation of *Jude*; ver. 6, should be, not

the *angels*, but the *messengers*, who kept not their first estate, &c.

And also the parallel passage, 2 *Pet.* ii. 4. should be, not if God spared not the *angels*, but the *messengers* which sinned, cast them down to Hell, &c. And the same writer has clearly proved, that there is no reference here to fallen angels, but to the history of the persons sent out by *Moses* to spy out and make report of the land of *Canaan*; and to their false and wicked account, so as to discourage their countrymen from obeying the divine command.

The Apostles of Christ, like their great Master, seem not to have understood that there was any devil, or evil being without them, whom men need to be afraid of, but only evil passions and worldly desires, and the wickedness into which these lead them.

*Acts v. 3. Then said Peter: Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to deceive the holy spirit?*

Here Satan was the vile, fraudulent and avaricious desires that possessed him.

Acts xiii. 10. *O full of all guile, and of all craftiness! Son of the Devil! enemy of all righteousness.* i. e. resembling such a supposed being, not instigated by him.

Romans xvi. 20.—*and the God of peace will quickly trample Satan under your feet:* i. e. bad men, his instruments,] according to Dr. *Whitby*, the persecuting Jews.

1 Cor. v. 5.—*to deliver such an one to Satan.*

See *Luke* xiii. 16. *2 Cor.* xii. 7. *1 Tim.* i. 20. An allusion perhaps to *Job* being put into Satan's power to inflict suffering upon him to a certain degree. Some bodily disease was to be inflicted, to bring the offender to repentance. This mode of punishment however was confined to the age of miracles. See *Archbishop Newcome* upon the place.

*2 Cor.* xi. 14. *And no wonder; for Satan himself putteth on the appearance of an angel of light.* Perhaps *St. Paul* had in view, *Job* i. 6.



Eph. iv. 27.—*neither give place to the devil, or as it is in Mr. Wakefield's translation, nor give any room to the accuser.*

vi. 11.—*stand against the wiles of the devil, or, against the devices of the accuser.*

1 Theff. xi. 18. *Satan hindered us: i. e. wicked men, instruments of evil.*

2 Theff. xi. 9.—*according to the working of Satan; — the operations of evil, with fraud and delusion and false miracles.*

1 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

2 Tim. ii. 26.

In these two passages *the snare of the devil*, should be rendered, *the snare of the accuser.*

1 Tim. v. 15.—*for some have already turned aside after Satan*] that is, some women have behaved ill.

1 Peter v. 8. *Your adversary the devil walketh about seeking whom he may devour;*]

That is, spies and informers who accused them before the heathen magistrates.

1 John ii. 13. *Ye have overcome the wicked one,* by the power of christian principles.

Archbishop *Newcome* \* and Mr. *Wakefield*, the two last translators of the New Testament,

\* It is highly to the credit of Archbishop *Newcome*, that he leaves out of his translation of the New Testament, the spurious text, 1 John v. 7. of the three heavenly witnesses, the Father, the word, and the holy ghost, without any reserves or intimations, as if the doctrine generally held to be contained in that text, was supported by other passages of Scripture; and that, at the same time, he gives such a clear and intelligible explanation of the whole passage as shews that he himself made no such conclusions from it.

It is not to be doubted, that if it had pleased the divine providence to spare Mr. *Wakefield*'s most valuable life, he would have availed himself of the Archbishop's version in his own projected new edition, as the Archbishop had profited by his improvements. Indeed the pious and useful labours of this excellent prelate in illustrating the sacred

ment, in their just and rational interpretations of the sacred volume, have not found it necessary to bring in a supposed great evil spirit, or being, to solve the accounts that are given of the Devil or Satan which it contains, as the whole is more easily and naturally explained by considering these terms not as descriptive of any person or thing without us, but as referring to those wicked passions and tempers within us, whence all evil proceeds. And these being sufficient to account for the whole, it is wrong to seek or require any other cause.

So that the Devil or Satan is not any person or thing without us, but selfish, jealous, envious, malignant, cruel, impure, fraudulent,

sacred volume, deserve particular attention. And it is a great advantage in the present age, that from the versions now given of the scriptures by persons of great eminence in learning, every english reader may attain to a competent and satisfactory knowledge of divine truth. It may be recommended to all families, who use the vulgar translation made under the auspices of James the first, to correct the prejudices which they have been led into from its various perversions of the text, by comparing together this translation with some other of our more valuable modern versions.

ambitious, desires and tempers indulged in us, and which tempted our first parents to sin and disobey the divine commands, and have unhappily induced their posterity in all ages to follow the same evil courses.

As to the interference of any evil being or spirit of a nature and powers superior to mankind, we may not scruple to assert, from the declarations in our sacred books, that there are no such evil beings or spirits who have any concern with human affairs. All such beings, who are recorded at any time to have had influence over mankind, have been of heathen device and invention, as has before been pointed out; such, for instance, as St. Paul speaks of in his epistle to the christians of Ephesus, by the phrase *the Prince of the powers of the air*, one of their objects of worship.

In all times, the more ignorant mankind have been of the one great author of nature, and of his works, and of those holy writings which make farther revelation of him, the more have they been found to be addicted to such blind and baneful superstition.

The

The sum of what has been said, is to vindicate the Scriptures from the imputation of teaching the existence of a wicked Spirit, called the Devil or Satan, by shewing there is no such being, but that the evil that is in the world is produced from men's evil passions and dispositions, which are therefore called his works.

There is therefore no evil in the world but what takes its rise from men themselves:

Nor any devils but so far as men extremely wicked and abandoned may deserve the name.

And to uphold such evil beings is to engraft heathenism upon christianity \*.

To

\* The Rev. Thomas Belsham, my honored and much esteemed friend, has in an able general way, in his Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, p. 34, shewn the falsity of the opinion vulgarly entertained on evil spirits, and in his convincing manner, proved it to be contrary to the principles of philosophy and the uniform tenor of the scriptures. The whole work is admirably calculated to remove various other errors.

The world is also indebted to the same author for a late publication intitled "Elements of the Philosophy of the

To these conclusions the whole company gave their hearty concurrence, and after some conversation, repeated their thanks to Synesius for the clearness with which he had summed up this supposed intricate question.

These repeated friendly conferences here ended, and the party then separated to return to their respective homes, and duties, more fully impressed with their obligation as Christians, to study the word, and works of God, to add practice to knowledge, and to communicate to others that light and truth, which lead to eternal life.

the mind," where candor to his opponents, and a clear exposition of his own system, evince his superior talents, and the deep piety of his own mind; both of which, with a most exact critical knowledge of the scriptures, qualify him as a most eminent public teacher.

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