

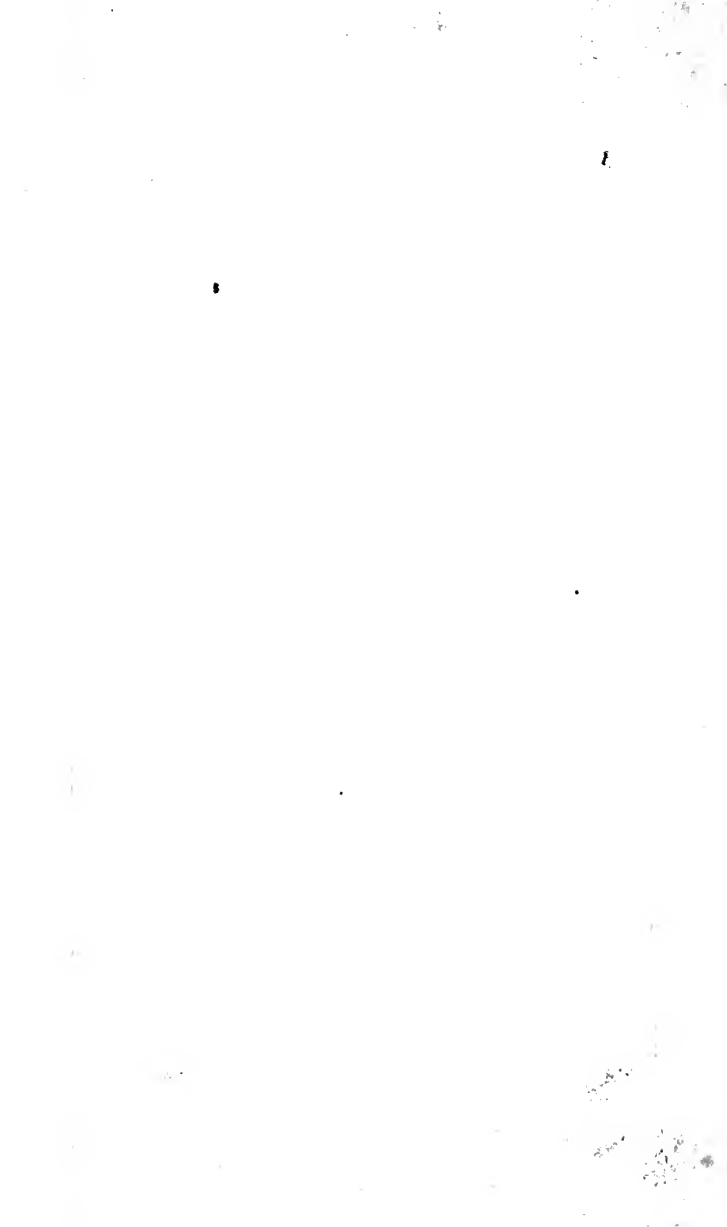
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THE

G O S P E L

Its own Witness.

BY ANDREW FULLER, D. D.

To which is annexed

A SUMMARY

OF THE

PRINCIPAL EVIDENCES

FOR THE

TRUTH, AND DIVINE ORIGIN,

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

BY BEILBY, LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
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1899.

ROY WAIN
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THE
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Its own Witness:

OR

THE HOLY NATURE, AND DIVINE HARMONY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

Contrasted with the

IMMORALITY AND ABSURDITY

OF

D E I S M.



BY ANDREW FULLER, D. D.

*Laying his hand on the Bible, he would say, "There is true philosophy.
This is the wisdom that speaks to the heart. A bad life is the only
grand objection to this Book."*

EARL OF ROCHESTER.

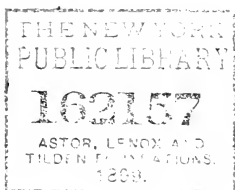
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1801.



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P R E F A C E.

THE struggle between religion and irreligion has existed in the world in all ages: and if there be two opposite interests which divide its inhabitants, the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, it is reasonable to expect that the contest will continue till one of them be exterminated. The peaceful nature of Christianity does not require that we should make peace with its adversaries, or cease to repel their attacks, or even that we should act merely on the defensive: On the contrary, we are required to make use of those weapons of the divine warfare with which we are furnished for the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The opposition of the present age has not been confined to the less important points of Christianity, nor even to its first principles: Christianity itself is treated as imposture. The same things it is true have been fre-

quently advanced, and as frequently repelled, in former ages : but the adversaries of the gospel of late, encouraged it should seem by the temper of the times, have renewed the attack with redoubled vigour. One of their most popular writers, hoping to avail himself of this circumstance, is pleased to entitle his performance *The Age of Reason*. This writer is aware that flattery is one of the most successful means of gaining admission to the human mind ; such a compliment therefore to the present Age was doubtless considered as a master-stroke of policy. Nor is Mr. Paine less obliging to himself than to his readers, but takes it for granted that the cause for which he pleads is that of reason and truth. The considerate reader, however, may remark, that those writers who are not ashamed to beg the question in the title-page, are seldom the most liberal or impartial in the execution of the work.

One thing which has contributed to the advantage of Infidelity is, the height to which political disputes have arisen, and the degree in which they have interested the passions and prejudices of mankind. Those who favour the sentiments of a set of men in one thing, will be in danger of thinking favourably of them in others ; at least they will not be apt to view them in so bad a light as if they had been advanced by persons of different sentiments in other things as well as in religion. It is true there may be nothing more friendly to infidelity in the nature of one political system than another, nothing

that can justify professing christians in accusing one another, merely on account of a difference of this kind, of favouring the interests of atheism and irreligion: nevertheless it becomes those who think favourably of the political principles of infidels, to take heed lest they be insensibly drawn away to think lightly of religion. All the nations of the earth, and all the disputes on the best or worst mode of government, compared with this, are less than nothing and vanity.

To this it may be added, that the eagerness with which men engage in political disputes, take which side they may, is unfavourable to a zealous adherence to the gospel. Any mere worldly object, if it become the principal thing which occupies our thoughts and affections, will weaken our attachment to religion: and if once we become cool and indifferent to this, we are in the high road to infidelity. There are cases no doubt relating to civil government, in which it is our duty to act, and that with firmness: but to make such things the chief object of our attention, or the principal topic of our conversation, is both sinful and injurious. Many a promising character in the religious world has by these things been utterly ruined.

The writer of the following pages is not induced to offer them to the public eye from an apprehension that the Church of Christ is in danger. Neither the downfall of popery, nor the triumph of infidels, as

though they had hereby overturned Christianity, have ever been to him the cause of a moment's uneasiness. If Christianity be of God, as he verily believes it to be, they cannot overthrow it. He must be possessed of but little faith who can tremble, though in a storm, for the safety of the vessel which contains his Lord and Master. There would be one argument less for the divinity of the Scriptures, if the same powers which gave existence to the Anti-Christian dominion had not been employed in taking it away. But though truth has nothing to fear, it does not follow that its friends should be inactive. The Lord confers an honour upon his servants in condescending to make use of their humble efforts in preserving and promoting his interest in the world. If the present attempt may be thus accepted and honoured by HIM to whose name it is humbly dedicated, the writer will receive a rich reward.*

LETTERING,
October 10, 1799.

* The powers of Europe, signified by the Ten Horns, or Kings, into which the Roman empire should be divided, were to give their kingdoms to the Beast. They did so; and France particularly took the lead. The same powers, it is predicted, shall hate the Whore, and burn her flesh with fire. They have begun to do so; and in this business also France has taken the lead. Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 16, 17, 18.

INTRODUCTION.

THE controversies between believers and unbelievers are confined to a narrower ground than those of professed believers with one another. Scripture testimony, any farther than as it bears the character of truth, and approves itself to the conscience, or is produced for the purpose of explaining the nature of genuine Christianity, is here out of the question. *Reason* is the common ground on which they must meet to decide their contests. On this ground Christian writers have successfully closed with their antagonists: so much so, that of late ages, notwithstanding all their boast of reason, not one in ten of them can be kept to the fair and honourable use of this weapon. On the contrary, they are driven to substitute dark insinuation, low wit, profane ridicule, and gross abuse. Such were the weapons of *Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon*; and such are the weapons of the author of *The Age of Reason*. Amongst various well-written performances in answer to their several productions, the reader may see a concise and able refutation of the greater part of them in *Leland's Review of the Deistical writers*.

It is not my design to go over the various topics

usually discussed in this controversy, but to select a single one, which I conceive has not been so fully attended to but that it may yet be considered with advantage. The *internal evidence* which Christianity possesses, particularly in respect of its holy nature, and divine harmony, will be the subject of the present inquiry.

Mr. Paine, after the example of many others, endeavours to discredit the Scriptures by representing the number of hands through which they have passed, and the uncertainty of the historical evidence by which they are supported. “ It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us, he says, whether such of the writings as now appear under the names of the Old and New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.”* It is a good work which many writers have undertaken, to prove the validity of the Christian history; and to show that we have as good evidence for the truth of the great facts which it relates as we have for the truth of any ancient events† whatever. But if in addition to this it can be proved that the Scriptures contain internal characteristics of divinity, or that they carry in them the evidence of their authenticity, this will at once answer all objections from the supposed uncertainty of historical evidence.

Historians inform us of a certain valuable medicine, called *Mithridate*, an antidote to poison, and which is still in reputation. It is said to have been “ Invented by Mithridates, king of Pontus; that

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 10, 11.

† *Lardner*, *Simpson*, and others.

“ the receipt of it was found in a cabinet, written
 “ with his own hand, and was carried to Rome by
 “ Pompey ; that it was translated into verse by De-
 “ mocrates, a famous physician ; and that it was
 “ afterwards translated by Galen, from whom we
 “ have it.”* A modern caviller might take it into
 his head to object to the authenticity of this histo-
 ry ; he might alledge that the preparation has pas-
 sed through so many hands, and that there is so
 much hear-say and uncertainty attending it, that
 no dependance can be placed upon it, and that it
 had better be rejected from our *Materia Medica*.
 But of what account would such an objection be in
 the estimation of mankind ? They would ask, *Has*
it not been tried, and found to be effectual ; and that
in a great variety of instances ? Such are Mr. Paine’s
 objections to the Bible ; and such is the answer that
 may be given him.

This language is not confined to infidel writers.
 Mr. Locke speaks of what he calls “ Traditional
 Revelation,” or Revelation as we have it, in such a
 manner as to convey the idea, that we have no evi-
 dence of the Scriptures being the Word of God,
 but from a succession of witnesses having told us so.†
 But I conceive these sacred writings may contain
 such internal evidence of their being what they pro-
 fess to be, as that it might with equal reason be
 doubted whether the world was created by the pow-
 er of God, as whether they were written by the in-
 spiration of his Spirit : and if so, our dependence
 is not upon mere tradition.

It is true, the scriptures having been conveyed

* *Chambers’s Dict.* Mithridate.

† *Human Und.* B. IV. Chap. xviii.

to us through the medium of man, the work must necessarily in some respects have been humanized ; yet there may be sufficient marks of divinity upon it to render it evident to every candid mind that it is of God.

We may call the Mosaic account of the Creation, a tradition, and may be said to know through this medium that the heavens and the earth are the productions of divine power. But it is not through this medium only that we know it: The heavens and the earth carry in them evident marks of their divine original. These works of the Almighty speak for themselves ; and in language which none but those who are wilfully deaf can misunderstand. *Their sound is gone forth throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Were any man to pretend that its being a matter of Revelation, and to us merely traditional Revelation, that God made the heavens and the earth, and therefore that a degree of uncertainty must necessarily attend it ; he would be reminded that the thing itself carried in it its own evidence. Let it be candidly considered whether the same may not be said of the Holy Scriptures. They will *admit* of historical defence ; but they do not require it. Their contents, come through whose hands they may, prove them to be of God. It was on this principle that the gospel was proclaimed in the form of a *testimony*. The primitive preachers were not required by him who sent them to prove their doctrine in the manner that philosophers were wont to establish a proposition ; but to *declare the counsel of God*, and leave it. In delivering their message, they *commended themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.*

It is no objection to this statement of things that

the Scriptures are not embraced by every man, whatever be the disposition of his mind. This is a property that no divine production whatever possesses; and to require it is equally unreasonable as to insist that for a book to be perfectly legible it must be capable of being read by those who shut their eyes upon it. Mr. Paine holds up the advantages of the book of nature in order to disparage that of Scripture, and informs us that "No deist can doubt whether the works of nature be God's works." An admirable proof this that we have arrived at The age of reason! Can no *Atheist* doubt it? I might as well say, no Christian doubts the truth of the Scriptures: the one proves just as much as the other. A prejudiced mind discerns nothing of divine beauty either in nature or scripture; yet each may include the most indubitable evidence of being wrought by the finger of God.

If Christianity can be proved to be a religion that inspires the love of God and man, yea and the only religion in the world that does so; if it endues the mind of him that embraces it with a principle of justice, meekness, chastity, and goodness, and even gives a tone to the morals of society at large, it will then appear to carry its evidence along with it. The effects which it produces will be its letters of recommendation; written *not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*—Moreover, If Christianity can be proved to be in harmony with itself, correspondent with observation and experience, and consistent with the clearest dictates of sober reason, it will further appear to carry in it its own evidence: Come through whose hands it may, it will evince

itself to be what it professes to be, a religion from God.

I will only add in this place, that the Christianity here defended is not Christianity as it is corrupted by popish superstition, lowered by philosophical ingenuity, or as interwoven with national establishments, for the accomplishment of secular purposes; but as it is taught in the New Testament, and practised by sincere Christians. There is no doubt but that in many instances Christianity has been adopted by worldly men, even by infidels themselves, for the purposes of promoting their political designs. Finding the bulk of the people inclined to the christian religion under some particular form, and attached to certain leading persons amongst them who sustained the character of teachers; they have considered it as a piece of good policy to give this religion an establishment, and these teachers a share in the government. It is thus that religion, to its great dishonour, has been converted into an engine of state. The politician may be pleased with his success, and the teacher with his honours, and even the people be so far misled as to love to have it so; but the mischief resulting from it to religion is incalculable. Even where such establishments have arisen from piety, they have not failed to corrupt the minds of Christians from the simplicity which is in Christ. It was by these means that the church at an early period, from being the bride of Christ, gradually degenerated to a harlot, and in the end became the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The good that is done in such communities is not in consequence of their peculiar ecclesiastical constitution, but in spite of it:

it arises from the virtue of individuals which operates notwithstanding the disadvantages of their situation.

These are the things that afford a handle to unbelievers. They seldom chuse to attack Christianity as it is drawn in the sacred writings, and exemplified in the lives of real christians, who stand at a distance from worldly parade, political struggles, or state intrigues; but as it is corrupted and abused by worldly men. Mr. Paine racks his imagination to make out a resemblance betwixt the heathen mythology and Christianity. While he is going over the ground of Christianity as instituted by Christ and his apostles, the resemblance is faint indeed. There are only two points in which he even pretends to find an agreement; and these are formed by his misrepresenting the scriptures. The heathen deities were said to be *celestially begotten*; and Christ is called *the Son of God*.* The heathens had a *plurality* of deities, even twenty or thirty thousand; and Christianity has reduced them to three! It is easy to see that this is ground not suited to Mr. Paine's purpose: he therefore hastens to corrupted Christianity; and here he finds plenty of materials. "The statue of Mary, he says, succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for every thing. The Christian mythologists had saints for every thing. The Church became as crowded with the one, as the Pantheon had with the other; and Rome was the place of both."† Very true, Mr. Paine;

* To give a colour to this statement, he is obliged to affirm that *only gentiles believed Jesus to be the Son of God*. What a palpable falsehood.

† *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 5.

but you are not so ignorant as to mistake this for Christianity. Had you been born and educated in Italy, or Spain, you might have been excused in calling this "The Christian theory;" but to write in this manner with your advantages is disingenuous. Such conduct would have disgraced any cause but yours. It is capable however of some improvement. It teaches us to defend nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus. It also affords presumptive evidence in its favour: for if Christianity itself were false, there is little doubts but that you, or some of your fellow-labourers, would be able to prove it so; and this would turn greatly to your account. Your neglecting this, and directing your artillery chiefly against its corruptions and abuses, betrays a consciousness that the thing itself is, if not invulnerable, yet not so easy of attack. If Christianity had really been a relic of heathenism, as you suggest, there is little reason to think that you would have so strenuously opposed it.

The Gospel its own Witness:
Ec. Ec.

P A R T I.

IN WHICH THE HOLY NATURE OF THE CHRIS-
TIAN RELIGION IS CONTRASTED WITH
THE IMMORALITY OF DEISM.

THE greatest enemies of Christianity would still be thought friendly to morality, and will plead for it as necessary to the well-being of mankind. However immoral men may be in their practice, and to whatever lengths they may proceed in extenuating particular vices; yet they cannot plead for immorality in the gross. A sober, upright, humble, chaste, and generous character is allowed on all hands to be preferable to one that is profligate, treacherous, proud, unchaste, or cruel. Such indeed is the sense which men possess of right and wrong, that whenever they attempt to disparage the former, or vindicate the latter, they are reduced to the necessity of covering each with a false disguise. They cannot traduce good *as good*, or justify evil *as evil*. The love of God must be called *fanaticism*, and benevolence to men *methodism*, or some such opprobrious name, before they can run them down. Theft, cruelty, and murder, on the other hand, must assume the names of *wisdom*, and *good policy*,

ere a plea can be set up in their defence. Thus were the arguments for the abolition of the Slave-trade answered, and in this manner was that iniquitous traffic defended in the British Parliament. Doubtless there is a *woe* hanging over the heads of those men who thus *called evil good and good evil*; nevertheless we see even in their conduct the amiableness of righteousness, and the impossibility of fairly opposing it.

C H A P. I.

Christianity reveals a God, glorious in Holiness: but Deism, though it acknowledges a God, yet denies or overlooks his Moral Character.

THERE are certain perfections which all who acknowledge a God agree in attributing to him: such are those of wisdom, power, immutability, &c. These by Christian divines are usually termed his *natural* perfections. There are others which no less evidently belong to deity, such as goodness, justice, veracity, &c. all which may be expressed in one word, *holiness*; and these are usually termed his *moral* perfections. Both natural and moral attributes tend to display the glory of the divine character, but especially the latter. Wisdom and power in the Supreme Being render him a proper object of admiration; but justice, veracity, and goodness attract our love. No being is beloved for his greatness, but for his goodness. Moral excellence is the highest glory of any intelligent being, created or uncreated. Without this, wisdom would be sub-

tilty, power tyranny, and immutability the same thing as being unchangeably wicked.

We account it the glory of Revelation, that while it displays the natural perfections of God in a way superior to any thing that has been called religion, it exhibits his moral excellencies in a manner peculiar to itself. It was with good reason that Moses affirmed in behalf of Israel, *Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.* The God or Rock of Israel is constantly described as a Being glorious in holiness, and as requiring pure and holy worship. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth—The Lord our God is holy—Holy and reverend is his name—Glory ye in his holy name—And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory—He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; and cannot look on iniquity—A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.* Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of the ancient heathens? No. The generality of their deities were the patrons of vice, and their worship was accompanied with the foulest abominations that could disgrace the nature of man. Justice, benevolence, and veracity were not considered as necessary in any part of their religion; and a large proportion of it consisted in drunkenness, lewdness, and the offering up of human sacrifices.

The object of Christian adoration is JEHOVAH, the God of Israel; whose character for holiness, justice, and goodness is displayed in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in a more affecting light than by any of the preceding dispensations. But who or what is the God of deists? It is true they

have been fanned out of the polytheism of the heathens. They have reduced their thirty thousand deities into one : but what is his character? What attributes do they ascribe to him? For any thing that appears in their writings, he is as far from the holy, the just and the good, as those of their heathen predecessors. They enjoy a pleasure, it is allowed, in contemplating the productions of wisdom and power; but as to holiness, it is foreign from their enquiries: A holy God does not appear to be suited to their wishes.

Lord *Bolingbroke* acknowledges a God, but is for reducing all his attributes to *wisdom* and *power*; blaming divines for distinguishing between his physical and moral attributes; asserting that “ we cannot ascribe goodness and justice to God, according to our ideas of them, nor argue with any certainty about them; and that it is absurd to deduce moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to imitate him in those attributes.”*

Voltaire admits “ A supreme, eternal, incomprehensible intelligence;” but passes over his moral character.†

Mr. *Paine* says, “ I believe in one God, and no more;”‡ and in the course of his work ascribes to him the natural perfections of *wisdom* and *power*; but is very sparing in what he says of his moral excellence, of his being the moral governor of the world, and of man’s being an accountable creature. He affects indeed to be shocked at the impurity of

* See *Lelands Review*, Let. xxiii.

† *Ignor. Philos.* Nos. xv, xvi, xviii.

‡ *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 1.

the ideas and expressions of the Bible, and to feel for "the honour of his Creator in having such a book called after his name."* This is the only passage, that I recollect, in which he expresses any concern for the moral character of God; and whether this would have appeared but for the sake of giving an edge to reproach, let the reader judge.

How are we to account for these writers thus denying or overlooking the moral character of the Deity, but by supposing that a *holy* God is not suited to their inclinations? If we bear a sincere regard to moral excellence, we shall regard every being in proportion as he appears to possess it; and if we consider the Divine Being as possessing it supremely, and as the source of it to all other beings, it will be natural for us to love him with supreme affection, and all other beings in subserviency to him. And if we love him supremely on account of his moral character, it will be no less natural to take pleasure in contemplating him under that character.

On the other hand, if we be enemies to moral excellence, it will render every being who possesses it unlovely in our eyes. Virtuous or holy characters may indeed command our *respect*, and even *admiration*; but will not attract our *affection*. Whatever regard we may bear to them it will not be on account of their virtue, but of other qualities of which they may be possessed. Virtuous characters may be also wise and mighty; and we may admire their ingenuity, be delighted with their splendor, and take pleasure in visiting them that we may inspect their curiosities: but in such cases the more

* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 16.

things of a moral nature are kept at a distance, the more agreeable will be our visit. Much the same may be said of the Supreme Being. If we be enemies to moral excellence, God, as a holy Being, will possess no loveliness in our eyes. We may admire him with that kind of admiration which is paid to a great genius, and may feel a pleasure in tracing the grandeur and ingenuity of his operations: but the farther his moral character is kept out of sight, the more agreeable it will be to us.

Lord *Shaftesbury*, not contented with overlooking, attempts to satirize the scripture representations of the divine character. "One would think, he says, "it were easy to understand that provocation and "offence, anger, revenge, jealousy in point of honour or power, love of fame, glory, and the like, "belong only to limited beings, and are necessarily excluded a Being which is perfect and universal."* That many things are attributed to the divine Being in a figurative style, speaking merely after the manner of men, and that they are so understood by Christians, Lord *Shaftesbury* must have well known. We do not think it lawful, however, so to explain away these expressions as to consider the Great Supreme as incapable of being offended with sin and sinners, as destitute of pleasure or displeasure, or as unconcerned about his own glory, the exercise of which involves the general good of the universe. A Being of this description would be neither loved nor feared, but would become the object of universal contempt.

It is no part of the imperfection of our nature that we are susceptible of provocation and offence,

* *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. § V.

of anger, of jealousy, and of a just regard to our own honour. Lord Shaftesbury himself would have ridiculed the man, and still more the magistrate that should have been incapable of these properties on certain occasions. They are planted in our nature by the Divine Being, and are adapted to answer valuable purposes. If they be perverted and abused to fordid ends, which is too frequently the case, this does not alter their nature or lessen their utility. What would Lord Shaftesbury have thought of a magistrate, who should have witnessed a train of assassinations and murders without being in the least *offended* at them, or *angry* with the perpetrators, or inclined to take *vengeance* on them for the public good? What would he think of a British House of Commons, who should exercise no *jealousy* over the encroachments of a minister, or of a king of Great Britain who should suffer, with perfect indifference, his just authority to be treated with contempt?

But we are *limited* beings, and are therefore in danger of having our just rights invaded. True; and though God be unlimited, and so in no danger of being deprived of his essential glory, yet he may lose his just authority *in the esteem of creatures*; and were this to take place universally, the whole creation would be a scene of anarchy and misery. But we understand Lord Shaftesbury. He wishes to compliment his Maker out of all his moral excellencies. He has no objection to a God, provided he be one after his own heart, one who shall pay no such regard to human affairs as to call men to account for their ungodly deeds. If he thought the Creator of the world to bear such a character, it is no wonder that he should speak of him with what he calls

“good humour, or pleasantry.”* In speaking of such a God, he can, as Mr. *Hume* expresses it, “feel more at ease” than if he conceived of him as he is characterized in the Holy Scriptures. But let men beware how they play with such subjects. Their conceptions do not alter the nature of God: and however they suffer themselves to trifle now, they may find in the end that there is not only a GOD, but a *God that judgeth in the earth.*

C H A P. II.

Christianity teaches us to acknowledge God, and to devote ourselves to his service: but Deism, though it confesses One Supreme Being, yet refuses to worship him.

IF there be a God, he ought to be worshipped. This is a principle which no man will be able to eradicate from his bosom; or even to suppress, but at great labour and expence. The Scriptures, it is well known, both inculcate and inspire the worship of God. Their language is, *O, come let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms—O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker—Give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory due to his Name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts—O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth—Give thanks unto*

* *Characteristics*, Vol. I. § III.

the Lord, call upon his Name; make known his deeds among the people—glory ye in his holy Name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face continually.

The *spirit* also which the Scriptures inspire is favourable to divine worship. The grand lesson which they teach is *love*; and love to God delights to express itself in acts of obedience, adoration, supplication, and praise. The natural language of a heart well affected to God, is, *I will call upon him as long as I live—Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy Name—Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

Is it thus with our adversaries? They speak indeed of “true and fabulous theology,” and of “true and false religion;” and often talk of “adoring” the Supreme Being. But if there be no true religion amongst Christians, where are we to look for it? Surely not amongst deists. Their “adorations” seem to be a kind of exercises much resembling the benevolent acts of certain persons, who are so extremely averse to ostentation, that nobody knows of their being charitable but themselves.

Mr. *Paine* professes to “believe in the equality of man, and that religious duties consist in *doing justice, loving mercy, and*”——and what? I thought to be sure he had been going to add, *walking humbly with God.* But I was mistaken. Mr. *Paine* supplies the place of walking humbly with God, by adding, “and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures happy.”* Some people would have thought that this was included in *doing justice, and loving mer-*

* *Age of Reason, Part I. p. 2.*

ey : but Mr. *Paine* had rather use words without meaning than write in favour of godliness. *Walking humbly with God* is not comprehended in the list of his “ religious duties.” The very phrase offends him. It is that to him, in quoting scripture, which a nonconductor is to the electrical fluid : it causes him to fly off in an oblique direction ; and, rather than say any thing on so offensive a subject, to deal in unmeaning tautology.

Mr. *Paine* not only avoids the mention of *walking humbly with God*, but attempts to load the practice itself with the foulest abuse.* He does not consider himself as “ an out-cast, a beggar, or a worm ;” he does not approach his Maker through a Mediator ; he considers “ Redemption as a fable,” and himself as standing in an honourable situation with regard to his relation to the Deity. Some of this may be true ; but not the whole. The latter part is only a piece of religious gasconade. If Mr. *Paine* really think so well of his situation as he pretends, the belief of a hereafter would not render him “ the slave of terror.”† But allowing the whole to be true, it proves nothing. A high conceit of one’s self is no proof of excellence. If he chuse to rest upon this foundation, he must abide the consequence : but he had better have forborne to calumniate others. What is it that has transported this child of reason into a paroxysm of fury against devout people ? By what spirit is he inspired in pouring forth such a torrent of slander ? Why is it that he must accuse their humility of “ ingratitude,” their grief of “ affectation,” and their prayers of being “ dictatorial” to the al-

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 21.

† Part II. near the end.

mighty? *Cain hated his brother; and wherefore hated he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Prayer and devotion are things that Mr. Paine should have let alone, as being out of his province. By attempting however to run them down, he has borne witness to the devotion of Christians, and fulfilled what is written in a book which he affects to despise, *Speaking evil of the things which he understands not.*

To admit a God, and yet refuse to worship him, is a modern and inconsistent practice. It is a dictate of reason as well as of Revelation, *If the Lord be God, worship him; and if Baal, worship him.* It never was made a question whether the God in whom we believe should receive our adorations. All nations in all ages paid religious homage to the respective deities or supposed deities, in which they believed. Modern unbelievers are the only men who have deviated from this practice. How this is to be accounted for is a subject worthy of enquiry. To me it appears as follows—

In former times, when men were weary of the worship of the true God, they exchanged it for that of idols. I know of no account of the origin of idolatry so rational as that which is given by Revelation. *Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge: therefore they were given up to a mind void of judgment; to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; and to defile their bodies by every species of lewdness, and wickedness.** It was thus with the people who came to inhabit the country of Samaria af-

* Rom. i.

ter the Israelites were carried captives into Assyria. At first they seemed desirous to know and fear the God of Israel : but when they came to be informed of his holy character, and what kind of worship he required, they presently discovered their dislike. They pretended to fear him ; but it was mere pretence ; for every nation *made gods of their own.*† Now gods of their own making would doubtless be characterized according to their own mind ; they would be patrons of such vices as their makers wished to indulge ; gods whom they could approach without fear, and in addressing them be “ more at ease,” as Mr. Hume says, than in addressing the one living and true God ; gods, in fine, the worship of whom might be accompanied with banquetings, revellings, drunkenness, and lewdness. These, I conceive, were the exercises, rather than the mere falling down to an idol, that interested the passions of the worshippers. These were the exercises that seduced the ungodly part of the Israelitish nation to an imitation of the heathens. They found it extremely disagreeable to be constantly employed in the worship of a *holy* God. Such worship would awe their spirits, damp their pleasures, and restrain their inclinations. It is not surprising therefore that they should be continually departing from the worship of Jehovah, and leaning towards that which was more congenial with their propensities. But the situation of modern unbelievers is singular. Things are so circumstanced with them that they cannot worship the gods which they prefer. They never fail to discover a strong partiality in favour of heathens ; but they have not the face to practise or defend their

• 2 Kings, xvii.

absurd idolatries. The doctrine of one living and true God has appeared in the world, by means of the preaching of the gospel, with such a blaze of evidence, that it has forced itself into the minds of men, whatever has been the temper of their hearts. The stupid idolatry of past ages is exploded. Christianity has driven it out of Europe. The consequence is, great numbers are obliged to acknowledge a God whom they cannot find in their hearts to worship.

If the light that is gone abroad in the earth would permit the rearing of temples to Venus or Bacchus, or any of the rabble of heathen deities, there is little doubt but that modern unbelievers would in great numbers become their devotees: but seeing they cannot have a god whose worship shall accord with their inclinations, they seem determined not to worship at all. And to come off with as good a grace as the affair will admit, they compliment the Deity out of his sovereign prerogatives; professing to “love him for his giving them existence, and all their properties, without *Interest*, and without subjecting them to any thing but their own nature.”*

The introduction of so large a portion of heathen mythology into the songs, and other entertainments of the stage, sufficiently shews the bias of people’s hearts. The house of God gives them no pleasure: but the resurrection of the obscenities, intrigues, and Bacchanalian revels of the old heathens affords them exquisite delight. In a country where Christian worship abounds, this is plainly saying, ‘What a weakness is it! O that it were no more! Since however we cannot introduce the worship of the gods,

* *Ignor. Philos.* No. XXIV.

‘ we will neglect all worship, and celebrate the
 ‘ praises of our favourite deities in another form.’—
 In a country where deism has gained the ascenden-
 cy, this principle is carried still farther. Its lan-
 guage there is, ‘ Seeing we cannot, for shame, wor-
 ‘ ship any other than the one living and true God,
 ‘ let us abolish the day of worship, and substitute
 ‘ in its place one day in ten, which shall be devo-
 ‘ ted chiefly to theatrical entertainments, in which
 ‘ we can introduce as much heathenism as we
 ‘ please.’

Mr. *Hume* acknowledges the *justice* of consider-
 ing the Deity as infinitely superior to mankind; but
 he represents it at the same time as very generally
 attended with unpleasant effects, and magnifies the
 advantages of having gods which are only a little
 superior to ourselves. “ While the Deity, he says,
 “ is represented as infinitely superior to mankind,
 “ this belief, though altogether just, is apt when
 “ joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the hu-
 “ man mind into the lowest submission and abase-
 “ ment, and to represent the monkish virtues of
 “ mortification, penance, humility and passive suf-
 “ fering, as the only qualities which are accepta-
 “ ble to him. But where the gods are conceived
 “ to be only a little superior to mankind, and to
 “ have been many of them advanced from that in-
 “ ferior rank, we are more at our ease in our ad-
 “ dresses to them, and may even without profane-
 “ ness aspire sometimes to a rivalry and emulation
 “ of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, mag-
 “ nanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues
 “ which aggrandize a people.”*

* *Dissert. on the Nat. Hist. of Rel. § X.*

It is easy to perceive from this passage, that though Mr. Hume acknowledges the *justice* of conceiving of a God infinitely superior to us, yet his *inclination* is the other way. In a nation at least, the bulk of which will be supposed to be inclined to superstition, it is better, according to his reasoning, and more friendly to virtue, to promote the worship of a number of imaginary deities, than of the one only living and true God. Thus *the fool saith in his heart, no God!*

The sum of the whole is this, modern unbelievers are deists in theory, pagans in inclination, and atheists in practice.

If deists loved the one only living and true God, they would delight in worshipping him: for love cannot be inoperative; and the only possible way for it to operate towards an infinitely glorious and all-perfect Being is by worshipping his name, and obeying his will. If Mr. *Paine* really felt for "The honour of his Creator," as he affects to do,* he would mourn in secret for all the great wickedness which he has committed against him; he would lie in the dust before him, not merely as "an out-cast, a beggar, and a worm," but as a sinner, deserving his eternal displeasure. He would be glad of a Mediator, through whom he might approach his offended Creator; and would consider Redemption by his blood not as "a fable," but a divine reality, including all his salvation, and all his desire. Yes, he himself would "turn devout;" and it would be said of him as of Saul of Tarsus, *Behold he prayeth!* Nor would his prayers, though importunate, be "dictatorial," or his grief "affected." On the

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 16.

contrary, he would look on Him whom he hath pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. But these are things pertaining to *godliness*; things, alas for him, the mention of which is sufficient to inflame his mind with malignity, and provoke him to the most outrageous and abusive language.

C H A P. III.

The Christian standard of morality is enlarged, and free from impurity: but deism confines our obligations to those duties which respect our own species, and greatly palliates vice with regard to a breach even of them.

PERSONS who profess the strictest regard to the rule of duty, and carry the extent of it to the highest pitch, may, it is allowed, be insincere, and contradict by their practice what they advance in their professions. But those whose ideas of virtue are low and contracted, and who embrace every opportunity to reconcile the vices of the world with its sacred precepts, cannot possibly be accounted any other than its enemies.

That which the Scriptures call *holiness*, *spirituality*, &c. as much surpasses every thing that goes under the names of morality and virtue amongst unbelievers, as a living man surpasses a painting, or even a rude and imperfect daubing. If in this controversy I have used these terms to express the scriptural ideas, it is not because in their ordinary ac-

ception they are equal to the purpose, but for the sake of meeting unbelievers upon their own ground. I have a right however to understand by them, those dispositions of the mind, whatever they be, which are *right, fit, or amiable*; and so explained, I undertake to prove that the morality and virtue inculcated by the gospel, is enlarged, and free from impurity, while that which is taught by its adversaries is the reverse.

It is a distinguishing property of the Bible that all its precepts aim directly at the heart. It never goes about to form the mere exterior of man. To merely external duties it is a stranger. It forms the lives of men no otherwise than by forming their dispositions. It never addresses itself to their vanity, selfishness, or any other corrupt propensity. You are not pressed to consider what men will think of you, or how it will affect your temporal interest; but what is right, and what is necessary to your eternal well-being. If you comply with its precepts, you must *be*, and not merely *seem to be*. It is the heart that is required; and all the different prescribed forms of worship and obedience, are but so many modifications, or varied expressions of it.

Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of deists? No. Their deity does not seem to take cognizance of the heart. According to them "There is no merit or crime in intention."* Their morality only goes to form the exterior of man. It allows the utmost scope for wicked desires, provided they be not carried into execution to the injury of society.

The morality which the Scriptures inculcate is

* Volney's *Law of Nature*, p. 18.

summed up in these few words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thy self.* This single principle is competent to the government of all intelligent nature. It is a band that would hold together the whole rational creation; and diffuse peace, order, and happiness wherever it existed.

If mankind loved God supremely, there would be no idolatry upon earth, nor any of its attendant abominations; no profaning the name of God, nor making a gain of godliness; no opposing, corrupting, perverting, nor abusing the truth; no perjuries, nor hypocrisies; no despising of those that are good; no arrogance, ingratitude, pride, nor self-complacency under the smiles of providence; and no murmuring, heart-riasing, fullness, nor suicide under its frowns. Love would render it their meat and drink to fear, honour, and obey him, and induce them to take every thing well at his hands.—

And if they loved their fellow-creatures as themselves, for his sake, there would be no wars, rivalships, antipathies, nor breach of treaties between nations; no envyings, strifes, wrongs, slanders, duels, litigations, nor intrigues between neighbours; no flattering complaisance, nor persecuting bitterness in religion; no deceit, fraud, nor over-reaching in trade; no tyranny, venality, haughtiness, nor oppression amongst the great; no envy, discontent, disaffection, cabals, nor evil-devilings among common people; no murders, robberies, thefts, burglaries, nor brothels, in city or country; no cruelty in parents or masters; no ingratitude nor disobedience in children or servants; no unkindness, treachery, nor implacable resentments between friends;

no illicit connexions between the sexes; no infidelities, jealousies, nor bitter contentions in families; in short, none of those streams of death, one or more of which flow through every vein of society, and poison its enjoyments.

Such is the principle and rule of Christian morality; and what has deism to substitute in its place? Can it find a succedaneum for love? No, but it proposes the love of *ourselves* instead of the love of God. Lord *Bolingbroke* resolves all morality into *self-love* as its first principle. "We love ourselves," he says, "we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong; and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the centre of all is self-love."* Such also are the principles of *Volney*.

Could this disposition be admitted as a proper source of moral action, the world, would certainly not be wanting in morality. All men possess at least the *principle* of it, whether they carry it to the extent which Lord *Bolingbroke* proposes, or not: for though some may err in the choice of their end, and others in the means of obtaining it; yet no man was ever so wanting in regard to himself as intentionally to pursue his own injury. But if it should prove that to render self-love the source of moral action is the same thing as for every individual to treat himself as the Supreme Being; and therefore that this said self-love, instead of being a source of virtue, is of the very essence of vice, and the source of all the mischief in the universe, consequences may follow of a very different complexion.

* *Posthum. Works*, Vol. V. p. 82.

To subordinate self-love I have no objection. It occupies a place in the Christian standard of morality, being the measure of that love which we owe to our fellow-creatures. And as the universal love which we owe to them does not hinder but that some of them, by reason of their situation, or peculiar relation to us, may require a larger portion of our regard than others, it is the same with respect to ourselves. Our own concerns are our own immediate charge; and those which are of the greatest importance, such as the concerns of our souls, undoubtedly require a proportionate degree of attention. But all this does not affect the present subject of inquiry. It is our *supreme*, and not our subordinate regard, that will ever be the source of action.

I take it for granted that it is the intention of every good government, human or divine, to *unite* its subjects, and not to set them at variance. But there can be no union without a common object of regard. Either a character whom all love and venerate, or an end which all pursue, or both, is that to a community which a head stone is to an arch; nor can they keep together without it. It is thus that the love of God holds creation together: He is that lovely character to whom all holy intelligences bear supreme affection; and the display of his glory, in the universal triumph of truth and righteousness, is that end which they all pursue. Thus united in their grand object, they cannot but feel a union of heart with one another, arising from, what is common to every other voluntary union, a congeniality of sentiments and pursuits.

But if our supreme affection terminate on ourselves, and no being, created or uncreated, be re-

garded but for our own sakes, it is manifest there can be no union beyond the sphere in which other beings become voluntarily subservient to our wishes. The Supreme Being, if our plan do not comport with his, will be continually thwarting us; and so we shall be always at variance with *him*. And as to created beings, those individuals whom we desire to be subservient to our wishes, having the same right, and the same inclination to require that we should be subservient to theirs, will also be continually thwarting us; and so we shall always be at variance with *them*. In short, nothing but an endless succession of discord and confusion can be the consequence. Every one setting up for pre-eminence, every one must of course contribute to the general state of anarchy and misery which will pervade the community. Such is in fact the state of this apostate world; and, but for divine providence, which for wise ends balances all human affairs, by causing one set of evils to counteract the influence of another, it must be overfret by its own disorders.

To regard every other being, created or uncreated, only for our own sakes, is supreme self-love; and instead of being a source of virtue, is itself abominable, and the source of all the mischief and misery in the universe. All the evils just enumerated are to be traced to this principle as their common parent: nor is there any ground of hope that it will ever produce effects of a different nature. Some persons have talked much of “self-love ripening into benevolence.” Had it been said *malevolence* it had been nearer the truth: for it is contrary to all experience that any thing should change its nature by becoming more mature. No, a child in knowledge may discern, that if ever genuine benevolence

exist in the breast of an individual, or extend its healing wings over a bleeding world, it must be by the subversion of this principle, and by the prevalence of that religion which teaches us to love God supremely, ourselves subordinately, and our fellow-creatures as ourselves.

To furnish a standard of morality, some of our adversaries have had recourse to *the Laws of the State*; avowing them to be the rule or measure of virtue. Mr. *Hobbes* maintained that *The civil law was the sole foundation of right and wrong*, and that *religion had no obligation but as enjoined by the magistrate*: and Lord *Bolingbroke* often writes in a strain nearly similar, disowning any other sanction or penalty by which obedience to the law of nature is enforced, than those which are provided by the laws of the land.*

But this rule is defective, absurd, contradictory, and subversive of all true morality. First, It is grossly defective. This is justly represented by a prophet of their own. "It is a narrow notion of innocence," says *Seneca*, to measure a man's goodness only by the law. Of how much larger extent is the rule of duty, or of good offices, than that of legal right? How many things are there which piety, humanity, liberality, justice, and fidelity require, which yet are not within the compass of the public statutes?"† Secondly, It is absurd: for if the public statutes be the only standard of right and wrong, legislators in framing them could be under no law; nor is it possible that in any instance they

* *Works*, Vol. V. p. 90.

† *Leland's Advantage and Necessity of Revolution*,
Vol. II. Pt. II. Ch. III. p. 42.

should have enacted injustice. Thirdly, It is contradictory. Human laws, we all know, require different, and opposite things in different nations; and in the same nation at different times. If this principle be right, it is right for deists to be persecuted for their opinions at one period, and to persecute others for theirs at another.

Finally, It is *subversive of all true morality*. “The civil laws, as Dr. *Leland* has observed, take no cognizance of secret crimes, and provide no punishment for internal bad dispositions, or corrupt affections. A man may be safely as wicked as he pleases, on this principle, provided he can manage so as to escape punishment from the laws of his country, which very bad men, and those that are guilty of great vices easily may, and frequently do evade.”

Rousseau has recourse to *feelings* as his standard. “I have only to consult myself, he says, concerning what I ought to do. All that I *feel* to be right is right. Whatever I *feel* to be wrong is wrong. All the morality of our actions lies in the judgment we ourselves form of them.”* By this rule his conduct through life appears to have been directed, as we shall hereafter perceive.

But that on which our opponents insist the most, and with the greatest show of argument, is *the law and light of nature*. This is their professed rule on almost all occasions; and its praises they are continually founding. I have no desire to depreciate the light of nature, or to disparage its value as a rule. On the contrary, I consider it as occupying an important place in the divine government. Whatever

* *Emilius*, Vol. I. pp. 166—168.

may be said of the light possessed by the heathen as being derived from revelation, I feel no difficulty in acknowledging, that the grand law which they are under is that of nature. Revelation itself appears to me so to represent it; holding it up as the rule by which they shall be judged, and declaring its dictates to be so clear as to leave them *without excuse*.* Nature and Scripture appear to me to be as much in harmony as Moses and Christ; both are celebrated in the same Psalm.†

By the *light of nature*, however, I do not mean those ideas which heathens have actually entertained, many of which have been darkness; but those which were presented to them by the works of creation, and which they might have possessed had they been desirous of retaining God in their knowledge. And by the *dictates of nature*, with regard to right and wrong, I understand those things which appear to the mind of a person sincerely disposed to understand and practise his duty, to be *natural, fit, or reasonable*. There is doubtless an eternal difference between right and wrong; and this difference, in a vast variety of instances, is manifest to every man who sincerely and impartially considers it. So manifest have the power and Godhead of the Creator been rendered in every age, that no person of an upright disposition could, through mere mistake, fall into idolatry or impiety; and every one who has continued in these abominations is *without excuse*. The desire also which every human being feels of having justice done to him from all other persons must render it sufficiently manifest to his judgment that he ought to do the same to them; and where-

* Rom. ii. 12—16. i. 20.

† Ps. xix.

in he acts otherwise, his conscience, unless it be seared as with a hot iron, must accuse him.

But does it follow from hence that Revelation is unnecessary. I trow not. It is one thing for nature to afford so much light, in matters of right and wrong, as to leave the sinner without excuse; and another to afford him any well-grounded hope of forgiveness, or to answer his difficulties concerning the account which something within him says he must hereafter give of his present conduct.

Farther, It is one thing to leave sinners without excuse in sin, and another thing to recover them from it. That the light of nature is insufficient for the latter, is demonstrated by melancholy fact. Instead of returning to God and virtue, those nations which have possessed the highest degrees of it have gone farther and farther into immorality. There is not a single example of a people, of their own accord, returning to the acknowledgment of the true God, or extricating themselves from the most irrational species of idolatry, or desisting from the most odious kinds of vice. Those nations where science diffused a more than ordinary lustre, were as superstitious, and as wicked as the most barbarous; and in many instances exceeded them. It was, I doubt not, from a close observation of the different efficacy of nature and scripture, that the writer of the *Nineteenth Psalm* (a Psalm which Mr. Paine pretends to admire) after having given a just tribute of praise to the former, affirmed of the latter, *The Law of Jehovah is perfect converting the soul.*

Again, It is one thing for that which is natural, fit, or reasonable, in matters of duty, to approve itself to a mind *sincerely disposed to understand and practise it*, and another to approve itself to a mind

of an opposite description. The judgments of men concerning the dictates of nature are greatly influenced by their prevailing inclinations. If under certain circumstances they feel prompted to a particular course of conduct, they will be apt to consider that promptitude as a dictate of nature, though it may be no other than corrupt propensity: and thus, while the law of nature is continually in their mouth, their principles, as well as their conduct, are a continual violation of it. How was it that, notwithstanding the light of nature shone round the old philosophers, their minds, in matters of morality, were dark as night, and their precepts in many instances full of impurity? Did nature inspire *Plato* to teach the doctrine of a community of wives; *Lycurgus* to tolerate dextrous thieving; *Solon* to allow of Sodomy; *Seneca* to encourage drunkenness, and suicide; and almost all of them to declare in favour of lewdness? * No, verily; it is a perversion of language to call the principles of such men the dictates of nature: they are unnatural and abominable; as contrary to reason as to religion.

It is true, what is called nature by modern infidels, is not quite so gross as the above; but it falls very little short of it. So far as relates to the encouragement of theft, and perhaps of unnatural crimes, they would disavow; and for this we are indebted to Christianity: but as to fornication and adultery, they are not a whit behind their predecessors.

Lord *Herbert*, the father of the English deists, and whose writings are far more sober than the generality of those who have come after him, apolo-

* See *Leland's Advantage and Necessity of Revelation*,
Vol. II. pp. 147, 50, 59, 210, 213.

gizes for lewdness, in certain cases, as resembling thirst in a dropfy, and inactivity in a lethargy.* Lord *Bolingbroke* unblushingly insinuates, that the only consideration that can reconcile a man to confine himself by marriage to one woman, and a woman to one man, is this, that nothing hinders but that they may indulge their desires with others.† This is the same as accusing the whole human race of incontinency, and denying that there is any such thing as conjugal fidelity; a plain proof that whoever was clear of this indecent charge, Lord *Bolingbroke* was not. Mr. *Hume*, who has written a volume on the principles of morality, scruples not to stigmatize self-denial as “a monkish virtue;” and adopts the opinion of a French writer, that “adultery must be practised if we would obtain all the advantages of life; that female infidelity when known is a small thing, and when unknown nothing.”

It is true these writers will on some occasions descant in favour of chastity, as being conducive to health and reputation; but on others they seldom fail to apologize for the contrary, and that under the pretence of indulging the dictates of nature. Yet the same things might be alleged in behalf of oppression, revenge, theft, duelling, ambitious war, and a thousand other vices which desolate the earth: they are practices which men, placed in certain circumstances, will feel themselves prompted to commit; nor is there a vice that can be named but what would admit of such an apology.

Finally, It is one thing for the light of nature to

* *Ireland's Review*, &c. Vol. I. Lett. I.

† Works, Vol. V. p. 167.

be so clear as to render idolatry, impiety, and injustice inexcusable; and another thing to render the *whole will* of our Creator evident, and in the most *advantageous manner*. If a person, possessed of only the light of nature, were ever so sincerely desirous of knowing God, or grieved for the sins of which his conscience accused him, or attached to the holy, the just, and the good; or disposed to obey his Creator's will if he did but understand it; though he should be in no danger of confounding the dictates of nature with those of corrupt propensity, yet he must labour under great disadvantages; which, allowing they might not affect his eternal state, yet would greatly injure his present peace and usefulness.

To illustrate this remark, let us suppose the inhabitants of a province to throw off the government of a just and lawful prince. Being once engaged, they may feel themselves impelled to go forward. They may chuse new rulers, and use all possible means to efface every sign and memorial of the authority of their ancient sovereign. They may even labour to forget, and teach their children to forget, if possible, that there ever was such a character in being, to whom they owed allegiance. Yet, after all, there may be certain traces and memorials of his government which it is not in their power to efface. Yea, there may be continued instances of forbearance and clemency, which in spite of all their efforts, will bear witness of his goodness and just authority over them.

Thus it was that God, while he *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, nevertheless LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT A WITNESS, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and*

fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. But as the memorials of just authority in the one case, though sufficient to leave the rebellious without excuse, would not contain a *full* expression of the prince's will, nor be conveyed in so *advantageous* a manner as that in which he treated his professed subjects; so the light afforded by the works of nature, and the continued goodness of God, in the other, though sufficient to leave the world without excuse, does not express his *whole* will, nor convey what it does express so *advantageously* as by Revelation. And as an individual residing in the midst of the rebellious province, whose heart might relent, and who might long to return to his allegiance, would be under inexpressible disadvantages, so it must necessarily be with a heathen whose desire should be towards the God against whom he had sinned.

The amount is, that modern unbelievers have no standard of morals, except it be their own inclination. Morality with them is any thing, or nothing, as conveniency requires. On some occasions they will praise that of Jesus Christ: but ere we can have time to ask them, Why then do you not submit to it, they are employed in opposing it. Attend to their general declamations in favour of virtue, and you will be ready to imagine they are its warmest friends: but follow them up, and observe their exposition of particular precepts, and you will be convinced that they are its decided enemies; applauding in the gross that which they are ever undermining in detail.

By the foolish and discordant account which these writers give of morality, it should seem that they know not what it is. Every new speculator is dis-

satisfied with the definition of his predecessor, and endeavours to mend it. "Virtue," says Lord Shaftesbury, "is a sense of beauty, of harmony, of order, and proportion, an affection towards the whole of our kind, or species." "It is," says Lord Bolingbroke, "only the love of ourselves." "It is every thing that tends to preserve and perfect man," says Volney; and as "good reputation" has this tendency, it is in his account "a moral good."* "It is whatever is useful in society," says Mr. Hume; and as "health, cleanliness, facility of expression, broad shoulders, and taper legs," are of use, they are to be reckoned amongst the virtues. To this might have been added, a large portion of effrontery, as the last named writer assures us, it may be from his own experience, that "Nothing carries a man through the world like a true, genuine, natural impudence."† Mr. Paine brings up the rear, and informs us, "It is doing justice, loving mercy, and . . . endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy." O Paine, had you but for once suffered yourself to be taught by a Prophet, and have quoted his words as they stand, you would undoubtedly have borne away the palm: but you had rather write nonsense than say any thing in favour of godliness.

It is worthy of notice that amidst all the discordance of these writers, they agree in excluding the Divine Being from their theory of morals. They think after their manner; but *God is not in all their thoughts*. In comparing the Christian doc-

* *Law of Nature*, p. 17.

† *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, § 6, 7, 8.
Essays Moral and Political, Ed. III. p. 15.

trine of morality, the sum of which is *love*, with their atheistical jargon, one seems to hear the voice of the Almighty, saying, *Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge? Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man.*

The words of Scripture are spirit and life. They are the language of *love*. Every exhortation of Christ and his apostles is impregnated with this spirit. Let the reader turn to the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, for an example, and read it carefully; let him find, if he can, any thing in the purest part of the writings of deists that is worthy of being compared with it. No; virtue itself is no longer virtue in their hands. It loses its charms when they affect to embrace it. Their touch is that of the cold hand of death. The most lovely object is deprived by it of life and beauty, and reduced to a shrivelled mass of inactive formality.

C H A P. IV.

Christianity furnishes motives to a virtuous life, which Deism either rejects, or attempts to undermine.

SO long as our adversaries profess a regard to virtue, and acknowledge with Lord Bolingbroke that “the gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality; of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity,”* they must allow those

* *Works*, Vol. V. p. 183.

to be the best principles which furnish the most effectual motives for reducing it to practice.

Now there is not a doctrine in the whole compass of Christianity but what is improvable to this purpose. It is a grand peculiarity of the gospel, that none of its principles are merely speculative: each is pregnant with a practical use. Nor does the discovery of it require any extraordinary degree of ingenuity: real Christians, however weak as to their natural capacities, have always been taught by the gospel of Christ, that *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world.*

Ancient philosophers have taught many things in favour of morality, so far at least as respect justice and goodness towards our fellow-creatures; but where are the motives by which the minds of the people, or even their own minds, have been moved to a compliance with them? They framed a curious machine; but who amongst them could discover a power to work it? What principles have appeared in the world under the names either of philosophy or religion, that can bear a comparison with the following?—

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life—Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another—Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you—Be ye followers, or imitators of God, as

dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour—Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light—Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God—If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy,—be of one accord, of one mind: let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves—Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation—Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's—The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again—The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing

then that all these things shall be dissolved, What manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God!—Hold fast that which thou hast; let no man take thy crown!—To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

These are motives by which Christians in every age have been induced to practise that morality which Bolingbroke, Paine, and many others, while writing against Christianity have been compelled to applaud: but the far greater part of them are rejected by deists; and what will they substitute of equal efficacy in their place? The love of Christ constraineth us; but what have they to constrain them? Will self-love, or the beauty or utility of virtue answer the purpose? Let history and observation determine.

It may be alleged, however, that deists do not reject the *whole* of these important motives; for that some of them at least admit the doctrine of a *future life*, which, with the acknowledgement of one living and true God, may be thought sufficient for all the purposes of morality.

That the doctrine of a future life is of great importance in the moral system, is allowed; but the greatest truth, if dissevered from other truths of equal importance, will be divested of its energy. A hand dissevered from the body might as well be represented as sufficient for the purposes of labour,

* John, iii. 18. 1 John, iii. 10, 11. Eph. iv. 31, 32. v. 1, 2. Pct. ii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. vii. 1. Phil. ii. 1, 2, 3. 1 Pct. ii. 11, 12. 1 Cor. vi. 20. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 2 Pct. iii. 10—12. Rev. iii. 11, 21.

as one or two unconnected principles for the purpose of morality. This is actually the case in the present instance. The doctrine of a future life, as held by Christians, has stimulated them to labour and suffer without intermission. From a *respect to this recompense of reward*, a kingdom has been refused, where the acceptance of it would have interfered with a good conscience. Yea, life itself has been sacrificed, and that not in a few, but in innumerable instances, where it could not be retained but at the expence of truth and uprightnes. But is it thus amongst deists? Does the doctrine of a future life, as held by them, produce any such effects? When was it known, or heard of, that they sacrificed any thing for this, or any other principle of a moral nature? Who amongst them ever thought of such a thing; or who expected it at their hands?

But this is not all: There is such a connexion in truth, that if one part of it be given up, it will render us less friendly towards other parts, and so destroy their efficacy. This also is actually the case in the present instance. Our adversaries do not cordially embrace even this truth: but on the contrary are continually undermining it, and rendering it of no effect. Lord *Herbert*, it is true, considered it as an essential article of natural religion; and it was his opinion that he could scarcely be accounted a reasonable creature who denied it: but this is far from being the case with later deistical writers; the greater part of whom either deny it, or represent it as a matter of doubt. Some of them disown every principle by which it is supported, and others go so far as to hold it up to ri-

dicule, labouring withal to prove the hope of it unfriendly to the disinterested love of virtue.

Volney in his *Law of Nature, or Catechism for French Citizens*, says nothing about it. *Paine* just touches upon it in the outset of his *Age of Reason*, by informing us that “He hopes for happiness beyond this life:” but as happiness has its counterpart, and stands upon the general doctrine of *retribution*, he is afraid to say he *believes* it. It must be reduced to a mere matter of “probability,” lest the thoughts of it should damp him in his present pursuits, and render him “the slave of terror.”*

Bolingbroke, though he acknowledges its antiquity, and great utility in promoting virtue, yet represents it as a “mere invention of philosophers, and legislators,” and as being “originally an hypothesis, and which may therefore be a vulgar error.” “Reason,” he says, “will neither affirm nor deny a future state.” By this the reader might be led to expect that this writer was neither for it, nor against it; yet the whole of his reasonings are directed to undermine it.†

Hume, like the writer last mentioned, acknowledges the utility of the doctrine, but questions its truth. He would not have people disabused, or delivered from such a prejudice, because it would free them from one restraint upon their passions. Any person who should undertake this work, he allows, would be a bad citizen; yet he might for ought he knows be a good reasoner.‡

* *Age of Reason*, Pt. I. p. I. Pt. II. p. 100, 101.

† *Works*, Vol. V.

‡ *Philosophical Essays*, p. 231.

Shaftesbury goes farther : he employs all his wit and satire in endeavouring to raise a laugh at the very idea, representing the heathen world as very happy till Christianity arose, and teased them about a hereafter. “ A new sort of policy,” he says, “ which extends itself to another world, and considers the future lives and happiness of men rather than the present, has made us leap beyond the bounds of natural humanity, and out of a supernatural charity has taught us the way of plaguing one another most devoutly.”*

Lord *Shaftesbury's* wit may very well be passed by as being what it is : it suffices, in connection with the foregoing quotations, to shew us what efficacy the doctrine of a future life, as held by deists, may be expected to possess. But this writer is not contented with raillery ; he must also attempt to *reason* against the doctrine, contending that it has a pernicious influence on the morals of men ; that it is a mercenary principle, and opposed to the disinterested love of virtue for its own sake. “ The principle of self-love,” he observes, “ which is naturally so prevailing in us, is improved, and made stronger by the exercise of the passions on a subject of more extended interest : and there may be reason to apprehend that a temper of this kind will extend itself through all the parts of life. And this has a tendency to create a stricter attention to self-good and private interest, and must insensibly diminish the affection towards public good, or the interest of society, and introduce a certain narrowness of spirit, which is ob-

* *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. p. 18.

“servable in the devout persons and zealots of almost every religious persuasion.”*

This objection, the reader will recollect, is in direct contradiction to the principles of *Bolingbroke*, and it may be added, of *Volney*, and other deistical writers, who maintained self-love to be the origin of virtuous affection. Some christian writers, in answering it, have given up the doctrine of disinterested love, allowing that all religious affection is to be traced to the love which we bear to ourselves as its first principle. To me this appears no other than betraying the truth, and ranking Christianity with every species of apostacy, and false religion, which have at any time prevailed in the world. A clear idea of the nature of self-love, if I mistake not, will enable us to determine this question; and to answer the deistical objection without rendering Christianity a mercenary system.

Every man may be considered either singly, or connectedly; either as a being by himself, or as a link in a certain chain of beings. Under one or other of these views every man considers himself while pursuing his own interest. If the former, this is to make himself the ultimate end of his actions, and to love all other beings, created or uncreated, only as they subserve his interest or his pleasure: this is private self-love: this is mean, and mercenary, and what we commonly understand by the term *selfishness*. But if the latter, there is nothing mean or selfish in it. He who seeks his own well-being in connection with the general good, seeks it as he ought to do. No man is required directly to oppose his own welfare, though

* *Characteristics*, Vol. II. p. 58.

in some instances he may be required to sacrifice it for the general good. Neither is it necessary that he should be indifferent towards it. Reason, as well as scripture, requires us to love ourselves as we love our neighbour. To this may be added, every man is not only a link in the chain of intelligent beings, and so deserving of some regard from himself, as well as from others; but every man's person, family and connexions, and still more the concerns of his soul, are, as it were, his own vineyard, over the interests of which it is his peculiar province to exercise a watchful care. Only let the care of himself and his immediate connexions be in subserviency to the general good, and there is nothing mercenary in it.

I need not multiply arguments to prove that the doctrine of *rewards* does not necessarily tend to encourage a mercenary spirit, or that it is consistent with the disinterested love of virtue. Lord *Shaftsbury* himself has acknowledged this. "If by the hope of reward," he says, "be understood the love
" and desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very
" practice or exercise of virtue in another life, the
" expectation or hope of this kind is so far from
" being derogatory to virtue, that it is an evidence
" of our loving it the more sincerely, and for its
" own sake."* This single concession contains an answer to all which his lordship has advanced on the subject: for the rewards promised in the gospel are all exactly of the description which he mentions. It is true they are often represented under the images of earthly things; but this does not prove that in themselves they are not pure and spiritual. That

* *Characteristicks*, Vol. II. p. 65, 66.

there is nothing in them adapted to gratify a mercenary spirit, the following observations will render plain to the meanest capacity.

First, The nature of heavenly enjoyments is such as to admit of no monopoly, and consequently to leave no room for the exercise of private self-love. Like the beams of the sun, they are equally adapted to give joy to a world as to an individual; Nay, so far is an increase in the number of the participants from diminishing the quantum of happiness possessed by each individual, that it has a tendency to increase it. The interest of one is the interest of all; and the interest of all extends to every one.

Secondly, The sum of heavenly enjoyments consists in a holy likeness to God, and in the eternal enjoyment of his favour.* But holy likeness to God is the same thing as “the very practice or exercise of virtue,” the hope of which Lord Shaftesbury acknowledges “is so far from being derogatory to it, that it is an evidence of our loving it the more sincerely, and for its own sake.” And as to the enjoyment of the divine favour, a proper pursuit of this object, instead of being at variance with disinterested affection, clearly *implies* it: for no man can truly desire the favour of God as his chief good, without a proportionate esteem of his character, and that for its own excellency. It is impossible that the favour of any being whose character we disapprove should be sought as our chief good, in preference to every other object in the universe. But a cordial approbation of the divine character is the same thing as a disinterested affection to virtue.

Thirdly, The only method by which the rewards

* 1 John, iii. 2. Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

of the gospel are attainable, faith in Christ, secures the exercise of disinterested and enlarged virtue. No man has any warrant from the scriptures to expect an interest in the promises of the gospel, unless he cordially acquiesce in his Mediation. But to acquiesce in this, is to acquiesce in the holy government of God, which it was designed to glorify; to feel and acknowledge that we deserved to have been made sacrifices to divine displeasure; to forego all claim or hope of mercy from every selfish consideration; and to be willing to receive forgiveness as an act of mere grace, and along with the chief of sinners. In fine, to acquiesce in this is to be of one heart with the Saviour of sinners, which, our adversaries themselves being judges, is the same thing as to be filled with devotedness to God and benevolence to men; and this, if any thing deserves that name, is true, disinterested, and enlarged virtue.

It is very possible that the objections which are made by this writer, as well as Mr. Paine and others, against the doctrine of *rewards*, as being servile and mercenary, may after all in reality, be against their *counterpart*. It does not appear to be "the hope of happiness beyond this life" that excites their disgust, though the nature of the Christian's happiness might be disagreeable to them; but the fear of being "called to account for the manner in which they have lived in this world." This it is which even the daring author of *The Age of Reason* cannot endure to consider as a certainty, as the thought of it would render him "the slave of terror." Yet as though he would not have it thought that the dread of futurity rendered him afraid of believing it, he alleges another reason: "Our belief, on this principle," he says, "would have no merit, and our

best actions no virtue.”* In order then to our actions being virtuous, it is necessary, it seems, that we be under no law but that of our own inclination; and this will be loving virtue *for its own sake*. This is at once shaking off the divine authority; which if it could be accomplished, might be very agreeable to some men; and if with this they could get fairly rid of a judgment to come, it might be still more agreeable: but alas, if they should be mistaken!

It is a fact that the passions of hope and fear are planted in our nature by Him who made us; and it may be presumed they are not planted there in vain. The proper exercise of the former has I conceive been proved to be consistent with the purest, and most disinterested love; and the same thing is proveable of the latter. The hope and fear against which these writers declaim are those of a slave; and where love is absent, these it is granted are the only effects which the doctrine of rewards and punishments will produce. But even here they have their use. Terror is the grand principle by which vicious minds are kept in awe. Without this their licentiousness would be intolerable to society. It is not however for the mere purpose of restraint that threatenings are exhibited, but to express the displeasure of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and his resolution to punish it. Some are hereby taught the evil of their ways to a good purpose, and all are fairly warned, and their perseverance in sin is rendered inexcusable.

Before our adversaries object to this, they should shew the impropriety of human laws being accom-

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 100, 101.

panied with penalties. Let them furnish us with a system of government in which men may be guilty of crimes without fear of being called to account for them; and in which those who are enemies to virtue are to be governed merely by the love of it. If it be improper to threaten sinners; it is improper to punish them; and if it be improper to punish them, it is improper for moral government to be exercised. But if it be thus in the government of God, there is no good reason to be given why it should not be the same in human governments; that is, there is no good reason why servants, unless they chuse to do otherwise, should not disobey their masters, children their parents, and private individuals in a state be continually rising up to destroy all just authority.

The above may suffice to ascertain the weight of Lord *Shaftesbury's* objections to the doctrine of rewards; and now I shall take the liberty to retort the charge, and attempt to prove that the epithets "narrow and selfish," which he applies to the Christian system, properly belong to his own.

In his *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, contained in the Second Volume of his *Characteristics*, though he allows it to consist in our being proportionably affected towards the whole system to which we bear a relation;* and that this world may be only a part of a more extended system;† yet he studiously leaves out God as the head of it. Amongst all the *relations* which he enumerates, there is no mention of that between the creature and his Creator. His enlarged and disinterested scheme of morality is at last nothing more than for a creature to regard those

* Page 17.

† p. 20.

“ of its own kind or species.” Not only is all gentleness, kindness, and compassion to inferior creatures left out, but the love of God is not in it. On the contrary, it is the professed object of his *Inquiry* to prove that virtue, goodness, or moral excellency, may exist without religion, and even “ in an atheist.”* In short it is manifest that it is the love of God, and not self-love, to which his love of virtue *for its own sake* stands opposed. That for which he pleads is the impious spirit of a child, who disregarding his father’s favour, pays no attention to his commands, *as his commands* ; but complies with them only on account of their approving themselves to his own mind. But this is no other than self-will, which, instead of being opposed to self-love, is one of its genuine exercises.

“ Our holy religion,” says this sneering writer, “ takes but little notice of the most heroic virtues, “ such as zeal for the public, and our country.” † That Christianity takes but little notice of what is commonly called, *patriotism*, is admitted; and if Lord Shaftesbury had been free from that “ narrowness of mind” which it is his intention here to censure; yea if he had only kept to his own definition of virtue, “ A regard to those of our own kind, or species,” he would have taken as little. By the public good he evidently means no more than the temporal prosperity of a particular country; which is to be sought at the expence of all other countries with whom it happens, justly or unjustly, to be at variance. Christianity, we acknowledge, knows nothing of this spirit. It is superior to it. It is not natural for a Christian to enter into the antipathies,

* p. 6.

† *Characteristick*, Vol. I. p. 98, 99.

or embroil himself in the contentions of a nation, however he may be occasionally drawn into them. His soul is much more in its element when breathing after the present and future happiness of a world. In undertakings, both public and private, which tend to alleviate the miseries, and enlarge the comforts of human life, Christians have ever been foremost: and when they have conceived themselves lawfully called even into the field of battle, they have not been wanting in valour. But the heroism to which they principally aspire is of another kind: it is that of subduing their own spirit, doing good against evil, seeking the present and eternal well-being of those who hate them, and laying down their lives if required for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Such is the "narrow spirit" of Christians; and such have been their "selfish pursuits." But these are things which do not emblazon their names in the account of unbelievers. The murderers of mankind will be applauded before them. But they have enough: their blood is precious in the sight of the Lord, and their names are embalmed in the memory of the upright.

C H A P. V.

The lives of those who reject the Gospel will not bear a comparison with theirs who embrace it.

NO books are so plain as the lives of men; no characters are so legible as their moral conduct. If the principles of a body of men will not bear this

criterion, we may expect to hear them exclaim against it as unfair, and uncertain; but when they have said all, they will endeavour to avail themselves of it if possible. It is thus that the virtues of idolaters are the constant theme of deistical panegyric; and all the corruptions, intrigues, persecutions, wars, and mischiefs, which of late ages have afflicted the earth, are charged to the account of Christians. It is thus that Christian ministers, under the name of *priests*, are described as mercenary, designing, and hypocritical; and the lives of hectoring profligates praised in comparison to them.* In short, it is thus that Christians are accused of fanaticism, affectation, ingratitude, presumption, and almost every thing else that is mean and base; and men are persuaded to become deists, with an assurance that by so doing they will “live more consistently, and morally, than by any other system.”†

But let us examine whether these representations accord with fact. Is it fact that the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome were virtuous characters? It is true that, like the deists, they talked and wrote much about virtue, and if the latter may be believed, they were very virtuous. “They opposed each other,” says *Voltaire*, “in their dogmas; but in morality they were all agreed.” After loading each of them with encomiums, he sums it up by affirming, “There has been no philosopher in all antiquity who has not been desirous of making men better.”‡ This is a very favourable report; and if well founded, the writer of the first chapter

* *Humes Essay's Moral and Political*, Essay XXIV.

† *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 21.

‡ *Ignorant Philosopher*, p. 60.

of the epistle to the Romans must not only have dealt largely in calumny, but have possessed the most consummate effrontery, to address such an epistle to the citizens of Rome, who from their own knowledge must have been able to contradict him. There are other reports, however, of a very different complexion.

It is no part of my design to enter minutely into this subject; nor is it necessary. Many able writers have proved, from the most authentic sources of information, that the account given of the heathens by the apostle is not exaggerated. An extract or two from their writings will be sufficient for my purpose.

“ *Epicætetus* bids you *temporize, and worship the gods after the fashion of your country.** *Pythagoras* forbids you to *pray to God, because you know not what is convenient.*† *Plutarch* commends *Cato Uticensis* for killing himself amidst philosophic thoughts, with resolution, and deliberation, after reading *Plato* on the immortality of the soul.‡ *Cicero* pleads for self-murder. Herein he was seconded by *Bрутus, Cassius,* and others, who practised it. Many of their learned men applauded their opinion and practice. *Seneca* thus pleads for it: “ If thy mind
 “ be melancholy and in misery, thou mayest put a
 “ period to this wretched condition: wherever thou
 “ lookest, there is an end to it. See that precipice;
 “ there thou mayest have liberty. Seest thou that
 “ sea, that river, that well? Liberty is at the bot-
 “ tom of it: that little tree? freedom hangs upon

* *Enchiridion* Cap. 38. pag. m. 56.

† *Diog. Laertius.*

‡ *Plutarch's Life of Cato, near the end.*

“ it : thy own neck, thy own throat may be a refuge to thee from such servitude ; yea, every vein of thy body.”*

“ We may find in the heathen philosophers customary swearing commended, if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of their best moralists, *Plato, Socrates, Seneca*, and *Julian the Emperor*, in whose works numerous oaths by *Jupiter, Hercules, the Sun, Serapis*, and the like, do occur. In the same manner we see the unnatural love of boys recommended. † *Aristippus* maintained that it was lawful for a wise man to steal, commit adultery, and sacrilege, when opportunity offered ; for that none of these actions were naturally evil, setting aside the vulgar opinion, which was introduced into the world by silly and illiterate people—that a wise man might publicly, without shame or scandal, keep company with common harlots, if his inclinations led him to it. “ May not a beautiful woman be made use of, he asks, because she is fair ; or a youth because he is lovely ? Certainly they may.” ‡

If, as *Voltaire* asserts, it was the desire of these philosophers to make men better, assuredly they employed very extraordinary means to accomplish their desire.

What are the lives recorded by *Plutarch* ? Many of them no doubt entertained a high sense of honour, and possessed a large portion of patriotism. But were either of these morality ? If by this term be meant such dispositions of the mind as are right,

* *De ira*, Lib. 3. Cap. 15. pag. m, 319.

† *Juvenal Satyr II. Ver. 10.*

‡ *Diog. Laertus*, Vol. I. pag. m. 165, 166. See in *Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 63—65.

fit, and amiable, it was not. Their sense of honour was not of that kind which made them scorn to do evil; but like the false honour of modern duellists, consisted merely in a dread of disgrace. It induced many of them to carry about them the fatal means of self-destruction; and rather than fall into the hands of an adversary, to make use of them. And as to their patriotism, generally speaking, it operated not merely in the preservation of their country, but in endeavours to extend and aggrandize it at the expence of other nations. It was a patriotism inconsistent with justice, and good will to men. Add to this, that fornication, adultery, and unnatural crimes were common amongst them.

As to the moral state of society among heathens, both ancient and modern, we may have occasion to consider this a little more particularly hereafter. At present I would inquire, Is it fact that the persecutions, intrigues, wars, and mischiefs of late ages are to be charged to the account of Christianity?

With regard to *persecution*, nothing is more common with our adversaries than to lay it wholly at our door. They are continually alledging that the heathens all agreed to tolerate each other till Christianity arose. Thus writes Shaftesbury,* Hume,† Voltaire,‡ Gibbon,§ and Paine.|| That the heathens tolerated each other before the introduction of Christianity, is allowed; and they did the same after it. It was not against each other that their enmity was directed. In the diversity of their idols,

* *Characteristics*, Vol. I. p. 18.

† *Essay on Parties*.

‡ *Ignor. Philos.* p. 83.

§ *Hist. of Decl.* Ch. II. p. 29.

|| *Age of Reason*, Part II. Pref.

and modes of worship, there were indeed *different administrations*, but it was *the same lord*: whereas in the religion of Jesus Christ there was nothing that could associate with heathenism, but every thing that threatened its utter subversion.

It is allowed also that individual persecution, except in a few instances, commenced with Christianity: but who began the practice? Was it Jesus that persecuted Herod and Pontius Pilate; or they him? Did Peter and James, and John, and Paul set up for inquisitors, and persecute the Jews and Romans; or the Jews and Romans them? Did the primitive Christians discover any disposition to persecute? By whom was Europe deluged with blood in ten successive persecutions during the three first centuries? Were Christians the authors of this? When the church had so far degenerated as to imbibe many of the principles and superstitions of the heathen, then indeed it began to imitate their persecuting spirit; but not before. When Christ's kingdom was transformed into a kingdom of this world, the weapons of its warfare might be expected to become carnal, and to be no longer, as formerly, *mighty through God*.

The religious persecutions among christians have been compared to the massacres attending the French Revolution in the times of Robespierre. The horrid barbarities of the latter, it has been said, by way of apology, "have not even been equal to those of the former." If deists may be allowed to confound Christianity and Popery, I shall not dispute the justness of the comparison. There is no doubt a great resemblance between the papal and the infidel spirit; or rather they are one. Both are the spirit of this world, which is averse to true religion. The

difference between them is but as that between the wolf and the tiger.* But those who reason thus should prove that the Reformers in religion have been guilty of as great excesses as the deistical Reformers in politics. Were there any such assassinations amongst the protestants towards one another, or towards the papists, as have been wantonly committed by infidels? It is true there were examples of persecution amongst protestants, and such as will ever remain a dishonour to the parties concerned; but those which affected the lives of men were few in number compared with the other, and those few, censurable as they are, were not performed by assassination.

Mr. *Paine* affirms that "all sects of Christians, except the Quakers, have persecuted in their turn." That much of this spirit has prevailed is too true: but this assertion is unfounded. I could name more denominations than one, whose hands I believe were never stained with blood, and whose avowed principles have always been in favour of universal liberty of conscience.

But let us inquire into the principles and spirit of our adversaries on this subject. It is true that almost all their writers have defended the cause of liberty, and levelled their censures against persecution. But where is the man that is not an enemy to this practice when it is directed against himself? Have they discovered a proper regard to the rights of conscience among Christians? This is the ques-

* The resemblance between Popery and Infidelity is pointed out with great beauty and energy in a piece which has appeared in some of the periodical publications, entitled *The progress of the Moderns in knowledge, refinement, and virtue*. See *Theol. Mag.* Vol. I. No. V. p. 344. *Ev. Mag.* Vol. IV. p. 405.

tion. There may be individuals among them who have; but the generality of their writers discover a shameful partiality in favour of their own side, and a contemptuous disregard of all who have suffered for the name of Christ. While they exhibit persecution in its deservedly infamous colours, they as constantly hold up the persecuted, *if found among Christians*, in a disadvantageous point of view. Mr. *Hume* allows that “the persecutions of Christians in the early ages were cruel;” but lays the blame chiefly on themselves:* and all through his *History of England* he palliates the conduct of the persecutors, and represents the persecuted in an unfavourable light. The same may be said of *Gibbon* in his *History of the Decline of the Roman Empire*; of *Shaftesbury* in his *Characteristics*, and indeed of the generality of deistical writers. *Voltaire*, boasting of the wisdom and moderation of the ancient Romans, says, “they never persecuted a single philosopher for his opinions, from the time of Romulus till the popes got possession of their power.”† But did they not persecute Christians? The millions of lives that fell a sacrifice in the first three centuries after the Christian Era, are considered as nothing by *Voltaire*. The benevolence of this apostle of deism feels not for men if they happen to be believers in Christ. If an Aristotle, a Pythagoras, or a Galileo suffer for their opinions, they are “martyrs:” but if a million of French Protestants “from a desire to bring back things to the primitive institutes of the Church,” endure the most cruel treatment, or quit their country to escape it, they, according to this writer, are

* *Essay on Parties in general.*

† *Ignorant Philosopher*, p. 82, 83.

“weak and obstinate men.” Say, reader, are these men friends to religious liberty? What does all their declamation against persecution amount to but this, that such of them who reside in christianized countries wish to enjoy their opinions without being exposed to it?

Till of late, deists have been in the minority in all the nations of Europe, and have therefore felt the necessity of a free enjoyment of opinion. It is not what they have pleaded under those circumstances, but their conduct when in power, that must prove them friends to religious liberty. Few men are known to be what they are till they are tried. They and Protestant Dissenters have in some respects been in a similar situation. Of late, each, in a different country, have become the majority, and the civil power has been entrusted in their hands. The descendants of the Puritans in the western world, by dispensing the blessings of liberty even to Episcopalians, by whose persecutions their ancestors were driven from their native shores, have shewn themselves worthy of the trust. But have the deists acted thus in France, and other countries which have fallen into their hands? It is true we believe them to have been the instruments in the hand of God of destroying the papal antichrist; and in this view we rejoice: howbeit they meant not so. If we judge of their proceedings towards the Catholics in the ordinary way of judging of human actions, which undoubtedly we ought, I fear it will be found not only persecuting, but perfidious and bloody in the extreme.

I am not without hope that liberty of conscience will be preserved in France; and if it should, it will be seen whether the subversion of the national

establishment will prove, what the advisers of that measure without doubt expected, and what others who abhorred it apprehended, the extinction of Christianity. It may prove the reverse, and issue in things which will more than balance all the ills attending the Revolution. These hopes however are not founded on an idea of the just or tolerant spirit of infidelity; but, so far as human motives are concerned, on that regard to *consistency* which is known to influence all mankind. If the leading men in France, after having so liberally declaimed against persecution, should ever enact laws in favour of it, or in violation of the laws encourage it, they must appear in a most disgraceful light in the opinion of the whole civilized world.

Not only persecution, but *unjust wars, intrigues*, and other mischiefs, are placed to the account of Christianity. That such things have existed, and that men who are called Christians have been deeply concerned in them, is true. Wicked men will act wickedly by whatever name they are called. Whether these things be fairly attributable to the Christian Religion, may be determined by a few plain enquiries.

First, Did these evils commence with Christianity, or have they increased under its influence? Has not the world in every age with which history acquaints us been a scene of corruption, intrigue, tumult, and slaughter? All that can with any face be objected to Christianity is, that these things have continued in the world *notwithstanding* its influence; and that they have been practised in as great a degree by men calling themselves Christians as by any other persons.

Secondly, Are those who ordinarily engage in these practices real Christians; and do our adverfa-

ries themselves account them so? They can distinguish, when they please, between sincere and merely nominal Christians. They need not be told that great numbers in every nation are of that religion which happens to prevail at the time; or rather that they are of no religion.

Thirdly, Have not the courts of princes, notwithstanding Christianity may have been the professed religion of the land, been generally attended by a far greater proportion of deists, than of serious Christians; and have not public measures been directed by the counsels of the former much more than by those of the latter? It is well known that great numbers amongst the nobility and gentry of every nation consider religion as suited only to vulgar minds; and therefore either wholly absent themselves from worship, or attend but seldom, and then only to save appearances towards a national establishment, by which provision is made for the younger branches of their families. In other words they are unbelievers. This is the description of men by which public affairs are commonly managed; and to which the good or the evil pertaining to them, so far as human agency is concerned, is to be attributed.

Finally, Great as have been the evils abounding in nations professing Christianity, (and great they have been, and ought greatly to be deplored) can unbelievers pretend to have given us any hope at present of the state of things being meliorated? It is true they have talked and written much in this way; and many well-wishers to the human race have been disposed to give them credit. But it is not words that will prove any thing. Have they *done* any thing that justifies a hope of reformation? No,

themselves must first be reformed ; or rather, to use an appropriate term of their own, *regenerated*. Far be it from me that in such a cause as this I should write under the influence of national prejudice, or side with the enemies of civil and religious freedom : but I must say, there never was a representation more necessary than that which was given in an address from the Executive Directory of France to the Council of Five Hundred, about the beginning of the year 1796. In this address they “ request the most earnest attention of the Council towards adopting some measure for the *regeneration* of the public morals.” This is the regeneration wanted, and which, having rejected Christianity, they may be ever seeking, but will never be able to obtain. They may continue to revolutionize as long as a party shall be found that wishes for an increase of power, and perceives an opportunity of gaining it ; and every party in its turn may talk of “ saving liberty :” but never will they be *free indeed* until they are emancipated in some good degree from the dominion of vice ; and never will this be effected but by a knowledge of evangelical truth.

The friends of legitimate liberty have deeply to regret, that under that revered name has been perpetrated almost every species of atrocity : and that not only towards individuals, but nations, and nations the most peaceable and inoffensive, whose only crime was that of being unable to resist. Liberty has suffered more from the hands of infidels, amidst all their successes and declamations, than from its professed enemies ; and still it bleeds beneath their wounds. Without entering into political disputes, I may safely affirm, that if ever the nations of the earth be blessed with equal liberty, it will be by the

prevalence, not of the pretended illuminations of infidel philosophy, but of that doctrine which teaches us to *do unto others as we would that others should do unto us.*

Finally, Mr. *Paine* affirms, that men by becoming deists would “live more consistently and morally than by any other system.” As to living more *consistently*, it is possible there may be some truth in it: for the best christians, it must be allowed, have many imperfections, which are but so many inconsistencies; whereas by complying with this advice, they would be uniformly wicked. And as to their living more *morally*, if Mr. *Paine* could coin a new system of morals, from which the love of God should be excluded, and intemperance, incontinency, pride, profane swearing, cursing, lying, and hypocrisy exalted to the rank of virtues, he might very probably make good his assertion.

Mr. *Paine* professes to “detest the Bible on account of its obscene stories, voluptuous debaucheries, cruel executions, and unrelenting vindictiveness.”* That the Bible relates such things, is true; and every impartial history of mankind must do the same. The question is, Whether they be so related as to leave a favourable impression of them upon the mind of a serious reader. If so, and if the Bible be that immoral book which Mr. *Paine* represents it to be, how is it that the reading of it should have reclaimed millions from immorality? Whether he will acknowledge this, or not, it is a fact too notorious to be denied by impartial observers. Every man residing in a christian country will acknowledge, unless he have an end to answer in saying

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 12.

otherwise, that those people who read the Bible, believe its doctrines, and endeavour to form their lives by its precepts, are the most sober, upright, and useful members of the community: and that those on the other hand, who discredit the Bible, and renounce it as the rule of their lives, are generally speaking, addicted to the grossest vices; such as profane swearing, lying, drunkenness, and lewdness. It is very singular, I repeat it, that men by regarding an immoral book should learn to practise morality; and that others by disregarding it should learn the contrary.

How is it that in countries where Christianity has made progress, men have almost universally agreed in reckoning a true Christian, and an amiable, open, modest, chaste, conscientious, and benevolent character, as the same thing? How is it also that to say of a man 'he rejects the Bible,' is nearly the same thing, in the account of people in general, as to say, he is a man of a dissolute life? If there were not a general connexion between these things, public opinion would not so generally associate them. Individuals, and even parties, may be governed by prejudice; but public opinion of character is seldom far from the truth. Besides, the prejudices of merely nominal Christians, so far as my observation extends, are equally strong, if not stronger, against those Christians who are distinguished by their devout and serious regard to the Scriptures, than against professed infidels. How is it then to be accounted for that although they will call them fanatics, enthusiasts, and other unpleasant names, yet it is very rare that they reckon them immoral? If, as is sometimes the case, they accuse them of unworthy motives, and insinuate that in se-

cret they are as wicked as others, either such insinuations are not seriously believed, or, if they be, the party is considered as insincere in his profession. No man thinks that genuine Christianity consists with a wicked life, open or secret. But the ideas of infidelity and immorality are associated in the public mind; and the association is clear and strong; so much so, as to become a ground of action. Whom do men ordinarily choose for Umpires, Trustees, Guardians, and the like? Doubtless they endeavour to select persons of intelligence: but if to this be added *christian principle*, is it not of weight in these cases? It is seldom known, I believe, but that a serious intelligent Christian, whose situation in the world renders him conversant with its concerns, will have his hands full of employment. Ask bankers, merchants, tradesmen, and others, who are frequently looking out for persons of probity whom they may place in situations of trust, in whose hands they would chuse to confide their property? They might object, and with good reason, to persons whose religion rendered them pert, conceited, and idle; but would they not prefer one who really makes the Bible the rule of his life, to one who professedly rejects it? The common practice in these cases affords a sufficient answer.

How is it that the principles and reasonings of infidels, though frequently accompanied with great natural and acquired abilities, are seldom known to make any impression on sober people? Is it not because the men and their communications are known?*

* It is said of a Gentleman lately deceased, who was eminent in the literary world, that in early life he drank deeply into the free-thinking scheme. He and one of his companions, of the same turn of mind, often carried on their conversations in the hearing of a reli-

How is it that so much is made of the falls of Noah, Lot, David, Jonah, Peter, and others? The same things in heathen philosophers, or modern unbelievers, would be passed over without notice. All the declamations of our adversaries on these subjects plainly prove that such instances with us are more *singular* than with them. With us they are occasional, and afford matter for deep repentance; with them they are habitual, and furnish employment in the work of palliation. The spots on the garments of a child attract attention; but the filthy condition of the animal that wallows in the mire is disregarded, as being a thing of course.

The morality, such as it is, which is found among deists, amounts to nothing more than a little exterior decorum. The criminality of *intention* is expressly disowned.* The great body of these writers pretend to no higher motives than a regard to their safety, interest, or reputation. Actions proceeding from these principles must not only be destitute of virtue, but wretchedly defective as to their influence on the well-being of society. If the heart be towards God, a sober, righteous, and godly life becomes a matter of choice: but that which is performed, not for its own sake, but from fear, inter-

gious but illiterate countryman. This gentleman, afterwards becoming a serious Christian, was concerned for the countryman, lest his faith in the Christian Religion should have been shaken. One day he took the liberty to ask him Whether what had so frequently been advanced in his hearing had not produced this effect upon him? By no means, answered the countryman, it never made the least impression upon me. No impression upon you, said the gentleman! Why, you must know that we had read and thought on these things much more than you had any opportunity of doing. O yes, said the other, but I knew also your manner of living: I knew that to maintain such a course of conduct, you found it *necessary* to renounce Christianity.

* Volney's *Law of Nature*, p. 18.

est, or ambition, will extend no farther than the eye of man can follow it. In domestic life it will be but little regarded; and in retirement not at all. Such in fact is the character of infidels. "Will you dare to assert," says *Linguet*, a French writer, in an address to *Voltaire*, "that it is in philosophic families we are to look for models of filial respect, conjugal love, sincerity in friendship, or fidelity among domestics? Were you disposed to do so, would not your own conscience, your own experience, suppress the falsehood, even before your lips could utter it?*

"Wherever society is established there it is necessary to have religion: for religion, which watches over the crimes that are secret, is, in fact, the only law which a man carries about with him; the only one which places the punishment at the side of the guilt; and which operates as forcibly in solitude and darkness as in the broad and open face of day." Would the reader have thought it? These are the words of *Voltaire*!†

Nothing is more common than for deistical writers to level their artillery against the *christian ministry*. Under the appellation of *priests*, they seem to think themselves at liberty to load them with every species of abuse. That there are great numbers of worldly men who have engaged in the christian ministry, as other worldly men engage in other employments, for the sake of profit, is true; and where this is the case, it may be expected that hunting, gaming, and such kind of amusements,

* *Linguet* was an admirer of *Voltaire*; but disapproved of his opposition to Christianity. See his *Review* of that author's Works, p. 264.

† In *Sullivan's Survey of Nature*.

will be their favourite pursuits, while religious exercises will be performed as a piece of necessary drudgery. Where this is the case, "their devotion must be feigned, and their seriousness mere hypocrisy and grimace." But that this should be represented as a general case, and that the ministry itself should be reproached on account of the hypocrisy of worldly men who intrude themselves into it, can only be owing to malignity. Let the fullest subtraction be made of characters of the above description, and I appeal to impartial observation, Whether there will not still remain in only this particular order of Christians, and at almost any period, a greater number of serious, upright, disinterested, and benevolent persons, than could be found amongst the whole body of deists in a succession of centuries.

It is worthy of notice that Mr. *Hume*, in attempting to plunge christian ministers into the mire of reproach, is obliged to descend himself, and to drag all mankind with him, into the same situation. He represents ministers as "drawn from the common mass of mankind, as people are to other employments by the views of profit;" and suggests that "therefore they are obliged on many occasions to feign more devotion than they possess," which is friendly to hypocrisy.* The leading motives of all public officers, it seems, is to aggrandize themselves. If Mr. *Hume* had accepted of a station under government, we can be at no loss, therefore, in judging what would have been his predominant principle. How weak as well as wicked must that man have been, who, in order to wound the reputation

* *Essay on National Characters*, Note.

of one description of men, could point his arrows against the integrity of all ! But the world must forgive him. He had no ill design against them, any more than against himself. It was for the purpose of destroying these Philistines, that he has aimed to demolish the temple of human virtue.

Nor is his antipathy, or that of his brethren, at all to be wondered at : These are the men who in every age have exposed the sophistry of deists, and vindicated Christianity from their malicious aspersions. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that they will always be considered as their natural enemies. It is no more a matter of surprise that they should be the objects of their invective, than that the weapons of nightly depredators should be pointed against the watchmen, whose business it is to detect them, and expose their nefarious practices.

After all, Mr. Hume pretends to respect “ *Clergymen*, who are set apart by the laws to the care “ of sacred matters ;” and wishes to be understood as directing his censures only against *priests*, or those who pretend to power and dominion, and to a superior sanctity of character, distinct from virtue and good morals.* It should seem then that they are *dissenting* ministers only that incur Mr. Hume’s displeasure ; but if, as he represents them, they be “ drawn to their employment by the views of profit,” they certainly cannot possess the common understanding of men, since they could scarcely pursue an occupation less likely to accomplish their design. The truth is, Mr. Hume did not mean to censure dissenting ministers only ; nor did he feel any respect to clergymen set apart by the laws. Those

* *Essays Mor. and Polit.* Es. XII. p. 107, 108. Note.

whom he meant to spare were such clergymen as were men after his own heart ; and the objects of his dislike were truly evangelical ministers, whether churchmen or dissenters, who were not satisfied with *his* kind of morality, but were men of holy lives, and consequently were respected by the people. These are the men against whom the enmity of deists has ever been directed. As to other priests, they have no other difference with them than that of rivalry, wishing to possess their wealth and influence, which the others are not always the most willing to relinquish. In professing, however, to “respect” such clergymen, Mr. Hume only means to flatter them, and draw them on to a little nearer alliance with his views. Respect is excited only by consistency of character, and is frequently involuntary. A clergyman of loose morals may be preferred, and his company courted, but *respected* he cannot be.

As^s to those ministers against whom Mr. Hume levels his artillery, and against whom the real enmity of his party has always been directed, there is not a body of men in the world, of equal talents and industry, who receive less, if so little, for their labours. If those who have so liberally accused them of interested motives gained no more by their exertions than the accused, they would not be so wealthy as many of them are.

Compare the conduct of the leading men among deists with that of the body of serious christian divines. Amidst their declamations against priestly hypocrisy, are they honest men? Where is their ingenuousness in continually confounding Christianity and popery? Have these workers of iniquity no knowledge? ‘No,’ say some, ‘they do not understand the difference between genuine and cor-

‘ rupted Christianity. They have never had opportunity of viewing the religion of Jesus in its native dress. It is popish superstition against which their efforts are directed. If they understood Christianity they would embrace it.’ Indeed? And was this the case with Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Hume, or Gibbon? or is this the case with Paine? No, they have both seen and hated the light; nor will they come to it, lest their deeds should be made manifest.

It may be thought, however, that some excuse may be made for infidels residing in a popish country; and this I shall not dispute, as it respects the ignorant populace, who may be carried away by their leaders: but as it respects the leaders themselves, it is otherwise. The National Assembly of France, when they wished to counteract the priests, and to reject the adoption of the Roman Catholic faith as the established Religion, could clearly distinguish between genuine and corrupted Christianity.* Deists can distinguish between Christianity and its abuses, when an end is to be answered by it; and when an end is to be answered by it, they can with equal facility confound them.

“ Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Woolston,
 “ Tindal, Chubb, and Bolingbroke are all guilty
 “ of the vile hypocrisy of professing to love and re-
 “ verence Christianity, while they are employed in
 “ no other design than to destroy it. Such faithless
 “ professions, such gross violations of truth, in
 “ Christians, would have been proclaimed to the
 “ universe by these very writers as infamous deser-
 “ tions of principle and decency. Is it less infamous

* *Mirabeau's Speeches*, Vol. II. p. 269—274.

“ in themselves? All hypocrisy is detestable; but
 “ I know of none so detestable as that which is
 “ coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man
 “ of talents, assuming the character of a moral and
 “ religious instructor. Truth is a virtue perfectly
 “ defined, mathematically clear, and compleatly
 “ understood by all men of common sense. There
 “ can be no haltings between uttering truth and
 “ falsehood, no doubt, no mistakes, as between
 “ piety and enthusiasm, frugality and parsimony,
 “ generosity and profusion. Transgression therefore
 “ is always a known, definite, deliberate villany.
 “ In the sudden moment of strong temptation, in
 “ the hour of unguarded attack, in the flutter and
 “ trepidation of unexpected alarm, the best man
 “ may, perhaps, be surpris'd into any sin: but he
 “ who can coolly, of steady design, and with no
 “ unusual impulse; utter falsehood, and vend hy-
 “ pocrify, is not far from finished depravity.”

“ The morals of *Rocheſter* and *Wharton* need no
 “ comment. *Woolſton* was a groſs blaſphemer.
 “ *Blount* ſolicited his ſiſter-in-law to marry him,
 “ and being reſuſed, ſhot himſelf. *Tindal* was ori-
 “ ginally a proteſtant, then turned paſiſt, then pro-
 “ teſtant again, merely to ſuit the times; and was
 “ at the ſame time infamous for vice in general,
 “ and the total want of principle. He is ſaid to
 “ have died with this prayer in his mouth, ‘ If
 “ there be a God, I deſire that he may have mer-
 “ cy on me.’ *Hobbes* wrote his *Leviathan* to ſerve
 “ the cauſe of Charles I.; but finding him fail of
 “ ſucceſs, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell,
 “ and made a merit of this fact to the uſurper: as
 “ *Hobbes* himſelf unbluſhingly declared to Lord
 “ Clarendon. *Morgan* had no regard to truth, as

“ is evident from his numerous falsifications of
“ scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of
“ professing himself a Christian in those very writ-
“ ings in which he labours to destroy Christianity.
“ *Voltaire* in a Letter now remaining, requested his
“ friend *D’Alembert* to tell for him a direct and
“ palpable lie, by denying that he was the author
“ of the *Philosophical Dictionary*. *D’Alembert* in
“ his answer informed him that he had told the
“ lie. *Voltaire* has indeed expressed his own moral
“ character perfectly in the following words, ‘*Mon-*
“ *sieur Abbe*, I must be read, no matter whether
“ I am believed or not.’ He also solemnly profes-
“ sed to believe the Catholic Religion, although at
“ the same time he doubted the existence of a God.
“ *Hume* died as a fool dieth. The day before his
“ death he spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern
“ about this tremendous subject, playing at whist,
“ reading *Lucian’s Dialogues*, and making silly at-
“ tempts at wit, concerning his interview with
“ *Charon* the heathen ferry-man of *hades*.”*

Collins, though he had no belief in Christianity, yet qualified himself for civil office by partaking of the Lord’s Supper. *Shaftesbury* did the same; and the same is done by hundreds of infidels to this day. Yet these are the men who are continually declaiming against the hypocrisy of priests! *Godwin* is not only a lewd character, by his own confession; but the unblushing advocate of lewdness. And as to *Paine*, he is well known to have been a profane swearer, and a drunkard. We have evidence upon oath that “ Religion was his favourite topic when

* The two last paragraphs are taken from *Dr. Dwight’s excellent Discourses on The nature and danger of Infidel Philosophy*, p. 45—47.

intoxicated;* and, from the scurrility of the performance, it is not improbable that he was frequently in this situation while writing his *Age of Reason*.

I shall conclude this catalogue of worthies with a brief abstract of the *Confessions of J. J. Rousseau*. After a good education, in the protestant religion, he was put apprentice. Finding his situation disagreeable to him, he felt a strong propensity to vice; inclining him to covet, dissemble, lie, and at length to steal; a propensity of which he was never able afterwards to divest himself. "I have been a Rogue, says he, and am so still sometimes, for trifles which I had rather take than ask for."†

He abjured the protestant religion, and entered the hospital of the Catechumens at *Turin*, to be instructed in that of the Catholics; "For which in return, says he, I was to receive subsistence. From this interested conversion he adds, nothing remained but the remembrance of my having been both a dupe and an apostate."‡

After this he resided with a *Madame de Warrens*, with whom "he lived in the greatest possible familiarity." This lady often suggested that there would be no justice in the Supreme Being, should he be strictly just to us; because, not having bestowed what was necessary to render us essentially good, it would be requiring more than he had given. She was nevertheless a very good Catholic, or pretended at least to be one, and certainly desired to be such. If there had been no Christian morality esta-

* See *Trial of T. Paine at Guild-Hall for a Libel, &c.* p. 43.

† *Confessions*, London Ed. 1796, Vol. I. pp. 52, 55, 68.

‡ pp. 125, 126.

blished, Rousseau supposes she would have lived as though regulated by its principles. All her morality however was subordinate to the principles of M. Tavel, (who first seduced her from conjugal fidelity by urging, in effect, that *exposure* was the only crime) or rather she saw nothing in religion that contradicted them. Rousseau was far enough from being of this opinion; yet he confessed he dared not combat the arguments of the lady: nor is it supposable he could, as he appears to have been acting on the same principles at the time. "Finding in *her*, he adds, all those ideas *I had occasion for* to secure me from the fears of death, and its future consequences, I drew confidence and security from this source."*

The writings of Port Royal, and those of the Oratory, made him half a Jansenist; and notwithstanding all his confidence, their harsh theory sometimes alarmed him. A dread of hell, which till then he had never much apprehended, by little and little disturbed his security, and had not *Madame de Warrens* tranquilized his soul, would at length have been too much for him. His Confessor also, a Jesuit, contributed all in his power to keep up his hopes.†

After this he became familiar with another female, *Theresa*. He began by declaring to her that he would never either abandon or marry her. Finding her pregnant with her first child, and hearing it observed in an eating-house that *he who had best filled the Foundling Hospital was always the most applauded*, "I said to myself, quoth he, since it is the custom of the country, they who live here may

* Vol. II. pp. 88, 89, 103—106.

† Vol. II. p. 127.

“ adopt it. I cheerfully determined upon it without
 “ the least scruple; and the only one I had to over-
 “ come was that of Theresa; whom, with the
 “ greatest imaginable difficulty, I persuaded to
 “ comply.” The year following a similar inconve-
 nience was remedied by the same expedient: no
 more reflection on his part, nor approbation on
 that of the mother. “ She obliged with trembling.
 My fault, says he, was great; but it was an er-
 ror.”*

He resolved on settling at Geneva; and on going
 thither, and being mortified at his exclusion from
 the rights of a citizen by the profession of a religion
 different from his forefathers, he determined open-
 ly to return to the latter. “ I thought, says he,
 “ the gospel being the same for every Christian;
 “ and the only difference in religious opinions the
 “ result of the explanations given by men to that
 “ which they did not understand, it was the exclu-
 “ sive right of the sovereign power in every coun-
 “ try to fix the mode of worship, and these unin-
 “ telligible opinions; and that consequently it was
 “ the duty of a citizen to admit the one, and con-
 “ form to the other, in the manner prescribed by
 “ the law.” Accordingly at Geneva he renounced
 popery.†

After passing twenty years with Theresa, he made
 her his wife. He appears to have intrigued with a
 Madame de H——. Of his desires after that lady
 he says, “ Guilty without remorse, I soon became
 “ so without measure.”‡

Such according to his own account was the life

* Part II. Vol. I. pp. 123, 154, 155. 183, 187, 315.

† Part II. Vol. I. pp. 263, 264.

‡ pp. 311, 378.

of uprightnefs and honour which was to expiate for a theft which he had committed when a young man, and laid it to a female fervant, by which ſhe loſt her place and character.* Such was Rouſſeau, the man whom the rulers of the French nation have delighted to honour; and who for writing this account had the vanity and preſumption to expect the applauſe of his Creator. “Whenever the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound, ſaith he, I will preſent myſelf before the ſovereign Judge, with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, Thus have I acted—theſe were my thoughts—ſuch was I. Power eternal! Aſſemble round thy throne the innumerable throng of my fellow-mortals. Let them liſten to my Confeſſions, let them bluſh at my depravity, let them tremble at my ſufferings, let each in his turn expoſe with equal ſincerity the failings, the wanderings of his heart; and if he dare, aver, I was better than that man.”†

C H A P. VI.

Chriſtianity has not only produced good effects in thoſe who cordially believe it, but has given to the morals of ſociety at large a tone, which Deiſm ſo far as it operates, goes to counteract.

NO man walks through life without a rule of ſome kind, by which his conduct is directed, and his inclinations reſtrained. They who fear not God are influenced by a regard to the opinions of

* Vol. I. pp. 155, 160.

† Vol. p. I.

men. To avoid the censure, and gain the applause of the public, is the summit of their ambition.

Public opinion has an influence not only on the conduct of individuals in a community, but on the formation of its laws. Legislators will not only conform their systems to what the humours of the people will bear, but will themselves incline to omit those virtues which are the most ungrateful, and to spare those vices which are most agreeable.

Nor is this all: so great is the influence of public opinion, that it will direct the conduct of a community against its own laws. There are obsolete statutes, as we all know, the breach of which cannot be punished: and even statutes which are not obsolete, where they operate against this principle, have but little effect; witness the connivance at the atrocious practice of duelling.

Now if public opinion be so potent a principle, whatever has a prevailing influence in forming it, must give a decided tone to what are considered as the morals of a nation. I say *to what are considered* as the morals of a nation: for strictly speaking, so much of the love of God and man, as prevails in a nation, so much morality is there in it, and no more. But as we can judge of love only by its expressions, we call those actions moral, though it is possible their morality may be only counterfeit, by which the love of God and man is ordinarily expressed. If we perform those actions which are the ordinary expressions of love, from some other motive, our good deeds are thereby rendered evil in the sight of him who views things as they are: nevertheless what we do may be equally beneficial to society as though we acted from the purest motive. In this indirect way Christianity has operated

more than any thing that has been called by the name of religion, or by any other name, towards meliorating the state of mankind.

It has been observed, and with great propriety, that in order to know what religion has done for an individual, we must consider what he would have been without it. The same may be said of a nation, or of the world. What would the nations of Europe have been at this time, if it had not been for the introduction of Christianity? It cannot reasonably be pretended that they would have been in any better situation, as to morality, than that which they were in previous to this event: for there is no instance of any people having by their own efforts emerged from idolatry, and the immoralities which attend it. Now as to what that state was, some notice has been taken already, so far as relates to the principles and lives of the old philosophers. To this I shall add a brief review of the state of society amongst them.

Great praises are bestowed by Plutarch on the customs and manners of the *Lacedemonians*. Yet the same writer acknowledges that *theft* was encouraged in their children by a law; and that to “sharp-
“ en their wits, to render them crafty and subtle,
“ and to train them up in all sorts of wiles and
“ cunning, watchfulness and circumspection, where-
“ by they were more apt to serve them in their
“ wars, which was upon the matter the whole
“ profession of this Commonwealth. And if at any
“ time they were taken in the act of stealing, they
“ were most certainly punished with rods, and the
“ penance of fasting; not because they esteemed
“ the stealth criminal, but because they wanted
“ skill and cunning in the management and conduct

“ of it.”* Hence, as might be expected, and as Herodotus observes, their actions were generally contrary to their words; and there was no dependence upon them in any matter.

As to their *chastity*, there were common baths in which the men and women bathed together: and it was ordered that the young maidens should appear naked in the public exercises, as well as the young men, and that they should dance naked with them at the solemn festivals and sacrifices. Husbands also were allowed to impart the use of their wives to handsome and deserving men, in order to the producing of healthy and vigorous children for the Commonwealth.

Children which were deformed, or of a bad constitution were *murdered*. This inhuman custom was common all over Greece; so much so that it was reckoned a singular thing among the Thebans, that the law forbid any Theban to expose his infant, under pain of death. This practice, with that of procuring abortion, were encouraged by Plato and Aristotle.

The unnatural *love of boys* was so common in Greece, that in many places it was sanctioned by the public laws, of which Aristotle gives the reason: viz. to prevent their having too many children. *Maximus Tyrius*, celebrates it as a most singular heroic act of Agefilaus, that being in love with a beautiful barbarian boy, he suffered it to go no farther than looking at him, and admiring him. *Epietetus* also praises Socrates in this manner: “ Go to So-
“ crates, and see him lying by Alcibiades, yet flight-
“ ing his youth and beauty. Consider what a victo-

* *Plutarch's Morals*, Vol. I. p. 96.

“ry he was conscious of obtaining! What an Olympic prize! So that, by heaven, one might justly salute him, Hail incredibly great, universal victor!” What an implication does such language contain of the manners of those times!

The *Romans* were allowed by Romulus to destroy all their female children, except the eldest: and even with regard to their male children if they were deformed, or monstrous, he permitted the parents to expose them, after having shewn them to five of their nearest neighbours. Such things were in common use amongst them, and were celebrated upon their theatres.

Such was their *cruelty* to their slaves, that it was not unusual for the masters to put such of them as were old, sick, and infirm, into an island in the Tiber, where they left them to perish. So far did some of them carry their luxury and wantonness as to drown them in the fish-ponds, that they might be devoured by the fish, to make the flesh more delicate!

Gladiatory shows were common amongst them; in which a number of slaves were engaged to fight for the diversion of the multitude, till each one slew or was slain by his antagonist. Of these brutish exercises the people were extremely fond; even the women ran eagerly after them, taking pleasure in seeing the combatants kill one another, desirous only that they should fall genteely, or in an agreeable attitude! They were exhibited at the funerals of great and rich men, and on many other occasions: So frequent did they become, that no war, it is said, caused such slaughter of mankind as did these sports of pleasure, throughout the several provinces of the Roman empire.

That odious and *unnatural* vice, which prevailed amongst the Greeks, was also common amongst the Romans. *Cicero* introduces, without any mark of disapprobation, Cotta, a man of the first rank and genius, freely and familiarly owning to other Romans of the same quality, that worse than beastly vice as practised by himself, and quoting the authorities of ancient philosophers in vindication of it. It appears also from *Seneca*, that in his time it was practised at Rome openly and without shame. He speaks of flocks and troops of boys, distinguished by their colours and nations, and that great care was taken to train them up for that detestable employment.

The religious rites performed in honour of *Venus* in *Cyprus*, and at *Aphac* on Mount Libanus, consisted in lewdness of the grossest kinds. The young people of both sexes crowded from all parts to those sinks of pollution, and filling the groves and temples with their shameless practices, committed whoredom by thousands, out of pure devotion.

All the *Babylonian* women were obliged to prostitute themselves once in their lives, at the temple of *Venus* or *Mylitta*, to the first man that asked them; and the money earned by this means was always esteemed sacred.

Human sacrifices were offered up in almost all heathen countries. Children were burnt alive by their own parents to *Baal*, *Moloch*, and other deities. The *Carthaginians*, in times of public calamity, not only burnt alive the children of the best families to *Saturn*, and that by hundreds, but sometimes sacrificed themselves in the same manner in great numbers. Here in *Britain*, and in *Gaul*, it was a common practice to surround a man with a

kind of wicker-work, and burn him to death in honour of their gods.*

In addition to the above, Mr. *Hume* has written as follows: "What cruel tyrants were the Romans over the world during the time of their Commonwealth! It is true they had laws, to prevent oppression in their provincial magistrates; but Cicero informs us that the Romans could not better consult the interest of the provinces than by repealing these very laws. For in that case, says he, our Magistrates having entire impunity would plunder no more than would satisfy their own rapaciousness; whereas at present they must also satisfy that of their judges, and of all the great men of Rome, of whose protection they stand in need."

The same writer, who certainly was not prejudiced against them, speaking of their Commonwealth, in its more early times, farther observes, "The most illustrious period of the Roman history, considered in a political view, is that between the beginning of the first, and end of the last Punic war; yet at this very time the horrid practice of *poisoning* was so common, that during part of a season a Prætor punished capitally for this crime above *three thousand* persons, in a part of Italy; and found informations of this nature still multiplying upon him! So depraved in private life," adds Mr. *Hume*, "were that people, whom in their history we so much admire."†

* The authorities on which this brief statement of facts is founded may be seen in Dr. *Leland's Advantages and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. III, IV. where the subject is more particularly handled. See also *Deism Revealed*, Vol. I. p. 77, 78.

† *Essay on Politics à science.*

From the foregoing facts we may form some judgment of the justness of Mr. *Paine's* remarks. "We know nothing," says he, "of what the ancient gentile world was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations.—As far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and moral people, and not addicted like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statues and images, as is done now-a-days by statuary and painting: but it does not follow from this that they worshipped them any more than we do."*

Unless heathens before the time of the Jews were totally different from what they were in all after ages, there can be no reasonable doubt of their worshipping a plurality of deities, of which images were supposed to be the representations. Mr. *Paine* himself allows, and that in the same performance, that prior to the Christian æra they were "Idolaters, and had twenty or thirty thousand gods."† Yet by his manner of speaking in this place, he manifestly wishes to insinuate, in behalf of *all* the heathen nations, that they might worship idols no more than we do. It might be worth while for this writer, methinks, to bestow a little more attention to the improvement of his memory.

With respect to their being "just and moral people," unless they were extremely different before the time of the Jews from what they were in all after ages, there can be no reasonable doubt of their be-

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 39, 40.

† Page 5.

ing what the sacred writers have represented them. If those writers have said nothing worse of them than has been said by the most early and authentic historians from amongst themselves, it will be easy for an impartial reader to decide whether heathens have been "calumniated and blackened" by the Jewish writers, or the Jewish writers by Mr. Paine.

But it is not by the state of the *ancient* heathens only that we discover the importance of Christianity. A large part of the world is still in the same condition; and the same immoralities abound amongst them which are reported to have abounded amongst the Greeks and Romans.

I am aware that deistical writers have laboured to hold up the modern as well as the ancient heathens in a very favourable light. In various anonymous publications much is said of their simplicity and virtue. One of them suggests, that the Chinese are so "superior to Christians in relation to moral virtues, that it may seem necessary that they should send missionaries to teach us the use and practice of Natural Theology, as we send missionaries to them to teach them Revealed Religion."* Yea, and some who wish to rank as Christians, have on this ground objected to all missionary undertakings among the heathen. Let us examine this matter a little closely.

Almost all the accounts which are favourable to heathen virtue are either written by the adversaries of Christianity, and with a design to disparage it; or by navigators, and travellers, who have touched at particular places, and made their reports according to the treatment they have met with, rather than

* *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 366, 367.

from a regard to universal righteousness. An authentic report of the morals of a people requires to be given, not from a transient visit, but from a continued residence amongst them; not from their occasional treatment of a stranger, but from their general character; and not from having an end to answer, but with a rigid regard to truth.

It is worthy of notice, that the far greater part of these representations respect people with whom we have little or no acquaintance; and therefore are less liable to contradiction, whatever the truth may be. As to China, Hindostan, and some other parts of the world, with whose moral state we have had the means of acquiring some considerable degree of knowledge, the praises bestowed on them by our adversaries have proved to be unfounded. From the accounts of those who have resided in China, there does not seem to be much reason to boast of their virtue. On the contrary, their morals appear to be full as bad as those of the ancient heathens. It is allowed they take great care of their outward behaviour, more than perhaps is taken in any other part of the world besides; that whatever they do or say is so contrived that it may have a good appearance, please all, and offend none; and that they excel in outward modesty, gravity, good words, courtesy, and civility. But notwithstanding this, it is said that the sin against nature is extremely common—that drunkenness is considered as no crime—that every one takes as many concubines as he can keep—that many of the common people grow rich upon the sale of opium; and some lend them for a month, or more or less, according as they please—that prostitution is dissolved on the most trifling occasions—that sons and daughters are

fold whenever their parents please, and that is frequently—that many of the rich as well as the poor, when they are delivered of daughters, stifle and kill them—that those who are more tender-hearted will leave them under a vessel, where they expire in great misery—and finally, that notwithstanding this, they all, except the learned, plead humanity and compassion against killing other living creatures, thinking it a cruel thing to take that life which they cannot give. *Montesquieu* says, “ The Chinese, “ whose whole life is governed by the established “ rites, are the most void of common honesty of “ any people upon earth; and that the laws, “ though they do not allow them to rob or to spoil “ by violence, yet permit them to cheat and de- “ fraud.” With this agrees the account given of them in *Lord Anson’s Voyages*, and by other navigators, that lying, cheating, stealing, and all the little arts of chicanery abound amongst them; and that if you detect them in a fraud, they calmly plead *the custom of the country*.* Such are the people by whom we are to be taught the use and practice of natural theology!

If credit could be given to what some writers have advanced, we might suppose the moral philosophy and virtuous conduct of the *Hindoo*s to be worthy of being a pattern to the world. The rules by which they govern their conduct are, as we have been told, “ Not to tell false tales, nor to utter any “ thing that is untrue; not to steal any thing from “ others, be it ever so little; not to defraud any “ by their cunning in bargains, or contracts; not

* See *Leland’s Advantage and Necessity of Revelation*,
Vol. II. Part II. Chap. IV.

“ to oppress any when they have power to do
“ it.”*

Very opposite accounts however are given by numerous and respectable witnesses, and who do not appear to have written under the influence of prejudice. I shall select but two or three—

Francis Bernier, an intelligent French Traveller, speaking of the Hindoos, says, “ I know not whether there be in the world a more covetous and
“ fordid’ nation.—The Brahmins keep these people in their errors and superstitions, and *scruple*
“ *not to commit tricks and villanies so infamous*, that
“ I could never have believed them, if I had not
“ made an ample inquiry into them.”†

Governor Holwell thus characterizes them: “ A
“ race of people, who from their infancy are utter
“ strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty.”

“ This is the situation of the bulk of the people
“ of Indostan, as well as of the modern Brahmins;
“ amongst the latter, if we except one in a thousand,
“ we give them over measure.”

“ The Gentoos in general are as degenerate, superstitious, litigious, and wicked a people, as any
“ race of people in the known world, if not eminently more so, especially the common run of Brahmins;
“ and we can truly aver that during almost five
“ years that we presided in the Judicial Cutchery
“ Court of Calcutta, never any murder or other
“ atrocious crime came before us, but it was proved
“ in the end a Brahmin was at the bottom of it.”‡

* Harris’s *Voyages and Travels*, Vol. I. Ch. II. § xi, xii.

† *Voyages de Francis Bernier*, Tome I. p. 150, 162. et Tome II. p. 105.

‡ *Holwell’s Historical Events*, Vol. I. p. 228. and Vol. II. p. 151.

Mr. afterwards *Sir John Shore*, and Governor General of Bengal, speaking of the same people, says, “A man must be long acquainted with them before he can believe them capable of that barefaced falsehood, fervile adulation, and deliberate deception, which they daily practice.—It is the business of all, from the Ryott to the Dewan, to conceal and deceive; the simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, through which no human understanding can penetrate.”*

In perfect agreement with these accounts are others which are constantly received from persons of observation and probity, now residing in India. Of these the following are extracts—“Lying, theft, whoredom, and deceit are sins for which the Hindoos are notorious. There is not one man in a thousand, who does not make lying his constant practice. Their thoughts of God are so very light, that they only consider him as a sort of play-thing. Avarice and servility are so united in almost every individual, that cheating, juggling, and lying, are esteemed no sins with them: and the best among them, though they speak ever so great a falsehood, yet it is not considered as an evil, unless you first charge them to speak the truth. When they defraud you ever so much, and you charge them with it, they coolly answer, *It is the custom of the country.*”

“In England the poor receive the benefit of the gospel in being fed and clothed by those who know not by what principles they are moved. For when the gospel is generally acknowledged in a land, it puts some to fear, and others to

* *Parliamentary Proceedings against Mr. Hastings, Appendix to Vol. II. p. 65.*

“ shame ; so that to relieve their own smart they
 “ provide for the poor : but here, O miserable state !
 “ I have found the pathway stopped up by sick and
 “ wounded people, perishing with hunger ; and
 “ that in a populous neighbourhood, where num-
 “ bers pass by, some singing, others talking, but
 “ none shewing mercy ; as though they were dy-
 “ ing weeds, and not dying men.”*

Comparing these accounts, a reader might be apt to suppose that the people must have greatly *degenerated* since their laws were framed ; but the truth is, the laws are nearly as corrupt as the people. Those who examine the *Hindoo Code*,† will find them so ; and will perceive that there is scarcely a species of wickedness which they do not tolerate, especially in favour of the Bràmmhans, of which order of men, it may be presumed, were the first framers of the constitution.

Let the reader judge from this example of the Hindoos, what degree of credit is due to anti-christian historians, when they undertake to describe the virtues of heathens.

From this brief statement of facts it is not very difficult to perceive somewhat of that which Christianity has accomplished with regard to the general state of society. It is by no means denied that the natural dispositions of heathens, as well as other men, are various. The Scriptures themselves record instances of their amiable deportment towards their fellow creatures.‡ Neither is it de-

* *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Mission*, No. II. p. 129. No. III. p. 191, 230. No. IV. p. 291.

† Translated from the Shanacrit, and published in 1773.

‡ Gen. XXIII.

nied that there are characters in christianized nations, and that in great numbers, whose wickedness cannot be exceeded, nor equalled, by any who are destitute of their advantages. There is no doubt but that the general moral character of heathens is far less atrocious than that of deists, who reject the light of Revelation, and of multitudes of nominal Christians who abuse it. The state of both these descriptions of men with respect to unenlightened pagans, is as that of Chorazin and Bethsaida with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah.

But that for which I contend is the effect of Christianity upon *the general state of society*. It is an indisputable fact, that it has banished gross idolatry from every nation in Europe. It is granted that where whole nations were concerned, this effect might be at first accomplished, not by persuasion, but by force of arms. In this manner many legislators of former times thought they did God service. But whatever were the means by which the worship of the one living and true God was at first introduced, it is a fact that the principle is now so fully established in the minds and consciences of men, that there needs no force to prevent the return of the old system of polytheism. There needs no greater proof of this than has been afforded by unbelievers of a neighbouring nation. Such evidently has been their predilection for pagan manners, that, if the light that is gone abroad amongst mankind permitted it, they would at once have plunged into gross idolatry, as into their native element. But this is rendered morally impossible. They must be theists or atheists; polytheists they cannot be.

By accounts which from time to time have been

received, it appears that the prevailing party in France have not only laboured to eradicate every principle of Christianity, but, in one instance, actually made the experiment for restoring something like the old idolatry. A respectable Magistrate of the United States,* in his Address to the Grand Jury in Luzerne County, has stated a few of these facts to the public.

“ Infidelity, says he, having got possession of
 “ the power of the State, every nerve was exerted
 “ to efface from the mind all ideas of religion and
 “ morality. The doctrine of the immortality of
 “ the soul, or a future state of rewards and pu-
 “ nishments, so essential to the preservation of or-
 “ der in society, and to the prevention of crimes,
 “ was publicly ridiculed, and the people taught to
 “ believe that death was an everlasting sleep.”

“ They ordered the words ‘ Temple of Reason’
 “ to be inscribed on the churches in contempt of
 “ the doctrine of Revelation. Atheistical and li-
 “ centious Homilies have been published in the
 “ churches instead of the old service, and a ludi-
 “ crous imitation of the Greek mythology exhibit-
 “ ed under the title of ‘ The Religion of Reason.’
 “ Nay, they have gone so far as to dress up a com-
 “ mon strumpet with the most fantastic decora-
 “ tions, whom they blasphemously styled ‘ The
 “ Goddess of Reason,’ and who was carried to
 “ church on the shoulders of some Jacobins select-
 “ ed for the purpose, escorted by the National
 “ Guards and the constituted *authorities*. When
 “ they got to the church, the strumpet was placed
 “ on the altar erected for the purpose, and ha-

* Judge Rush.

“ranged the people, who in return professed the
“deepest adoration to her, and sung the *Carmagne-*
“*nole* and other songs, by way of worshipping her.
“This horrid scene—almost too horrid to relate—
“was concluded by burning the prayer-book, con-
“fessional, and every thing appropriated to the
“use of public worship; numbers in the mean
“time danced round the flames with every ap-
“pearance of frantic and infernal mirth.”

These things sufficiently express the inclinations of the parties concerned, and what kind of blessings the world is to expect from Atheistical philosophy; but all attempts of this kind are vain. The minds of men throughout Europe, if I may for once use a cant term of their own, are too *enlightened* to stoop to the practice of such fooleries. We have a gentleman in our own country who appears to be a sincere devotee to the pagan worship, and who it seems would wish to introduce it; but as far as I can learn, all the success which he has met with, is to have obtained from the public the honourable appellation of *the gentile priest*.

Whatever we are, and whatever we may be, gross idolatry I presume may be considered as banished from Europe; and thanks be to God, a number of its attendant abominations, with various other immoral customs of the heathen, are in a good measure banished with it. We have no human sacrifices; no gladiatory combats; no public indecencies between the sexes; no law that requires prostitution; no plurality or community of wives; no dissolving of marriages on trifling occasions; nor any legal murdering of children, or of the aged and infirm. If unnatural crimes be committed amongst us, they are not common; much

less are they tolerated by the laws or countenanced by public opinion. On the contrary, the odium which follows such practices is sufficient to stamp with perpetual infamy the first character in the land. Rapes, incests, and adulteries, are not only punishable by law, but odious in the estimation of the public. It is with us, at least in a considerable degree, as it was in Judea, where he that was guilty of such vices was considered as *a fool in Israel*. The same, in less degrees, may be said of fornication, drunkenness, lying, theft, fraud, and cruelty; no one can live in the known practice of these vices, and retain his character. It cannot be pleaded in excuse with us, as it is in China, Hindostan, and Otaheite, that **SUCH THINGS ARE THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.**

We freely acknowledge that if we turn our eyes upon the great evils which still exist, even in those nations where Christianity has had the greatest influence, we find abundant reason for lamentation: but while we lament the evil, there is no reason that we should overlook the good. Comparing our state with that of former times, we cannot but with thankfulness acknowledge, *What hath God wrought!*

I can conceive of but one question that can have any tendency to weaken the argument arising from the foregoing facts; viz. *Are they the effects of Christianity?* If they be not, and can be fairly accounted for on other principles, the argument falls to the ground: but if they be, though Shaftesbury satirize, Hume doubt, Voltaire laugh, Gibbon insinuate, and Paine pour forth scurrility like a torrent, yet honest men will say, *An evil tree bringeth not*

forth good fruit : If this religion were not of God, it could do nothing.

If there be any adequate cause distinct from Christianity to which these effects may be ascribed, it becomes our adversaries to state it. Meanwhile, I may observe, 'They are not ascribable to any thing besides Christianity that has borne the name of *Religion*. As to that of the ancient heathens, it had no manner of relation to morality. The priests, as Dr. Leland has proved, "made it not their business to teach men virtue."^{*}

It is the same with modern heathens. Their religion has nothing of morality pertaining to it. They perform a round of superstitious observances which produce no good effect whatever upon their lives. What they were yesterday, they are to-day, no man repenteth himself of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done! Nor is it materially different with Mahomedans. Their religion, though it includes the acknowledgment of one living and true God, yet, rejecting the Messiah as the Son of God, and attaching them to a bloody and lascivious impostor, produces no good effect upon their morals, but leaves them under the dominion of barbarity and voluptuousness. In short there is no religion but that of Jesus Christ that so much as professes to *blefs men by turning them from their iniquities*.

Neither can these effects be attributed to *philosophy*. A few great minds despised the idolatries of their countrymen; but they did not reform them: and no wonder, for they practised what they themselves despised. Nor did all their harangues in favour of virtue produce any substantial effect, either on

^{*} *Advantage and Necessity of Revelation*, Vol. II. p. 38.

themselves or others. The heathen nations were never more enlightened as to philosophy, than at the time of our Saviour's appearance; yet as to morality, they never were more depraved.

It is Christianity then, and nothing else, which has destroyed the odious idolatry of many nations, and greatly contracted its attendant immoralities. It was in this way that the gospel operated in the primitive ages, wherever it was received; and it is in the same way that it continues to operate to the present time. Real Christians must needs be adverse to these things; and they are the only men living who cordially set themselves against them.

This truth will receive additional evidence from an observation of the different degrees of morality produced in different places, according to the degree of purity with which the Christian religion has been taught, and liberty given it to operate. In several nations of Europe popery has long been established, and supported by sanguinary laws. By these means the Bible has been kept from the common people, Christian doctrine and worship corrupted, and the consciences of men subdued to a usurper of Christ's authority. Christianity is there in prison; and anti-christianism exalted in its place.— In other nations this yoke is broken. Every true Christian has a Bible in his family, and measures his religion by it. The rights of conscience also being respected, men are allowed to judge and act in religious matters for themselves, and Christian churches are formed according to the primitive model. Christianity is here at liberty: here therefore it may be expected to produce its greatest effects. Whether this does not correspond with fact, let those who are ac-

customed to observe men and things with an impartial eye, determine.

In Italy, France, and various other countries, where the Christian religion has been so far corrupted as to lose nearly all its influence, illicit connexions may be formed, adulterous intrigues pursued, and even crimes against nature committed, with but little dishonour. Rousseau could here send his illegitimate offspring to the Foundling Hospital, and lay his accounts with being applauded for it, as being *the custom of the country*. It is not so in Britain, and various other nations, where the gospel has had a freer course: for though the same dispositions are discovered in great numbers of persons, yet the fear of the public frown holds them in awe. If we except a few abandoned characters, who have nearly lost all sense of shame, and who by means either of their titles and fortunes on the one hand, or their well-known baseness on the other, have almost bid defiance to the opinion of mankind, this observation will hold good, I believe, as to the bulk of the inhabitants of protestant countries.

And it is worthy of notice, that in those circles or connexions where Christianity has had the greatest influence, a sobriety of character is carried to a much higher degree than in any other. Where there is one divorce from amongst protestant dissenters, and other serious professors of Christianity, there are I believe a hundred from amongst those whose practice it is to frequent the amusements of the theatre, and to neglect the worship of God. And in proportion to the singularity of such cases, such is the surprise, indignation, and disgrace which accompany them. Similar observations might be made on public executions for robbery, forgery, tu-

mults, assassinations, murders, &c. It is not amongst the circles professing a serious regard to Christianity, but amongst its adversaries, that these practices ordinarily prevail.

Some have been inclined to attribute various differences in these things to a difference in *national character*: but national character, as it respects morality, is formed very much from the state of society in different nations. A number of painful observations would arise from a view of the conduct and character of Englishmen on foreign shores. To say nothing of the rapacities committed in the East, whither is our boasted humanity fled when we land upon the coasts of Guinea? The brutality with which millions of our fellow-creatures have been torn from their connexions, bound in irons, thrown into a floating dungeon, sold in the public markets, beaten, maimed, and many of them murdered, for trivial offences, and all this without any effectual restraint from the laws, must load our national character with everlasting infamy. The same persons, however, who can be guilty of these crimes at a distance, are as apparently humane as other people when they re-enter their native country. And wherefore? Because in their native country the state of society is such as will not admit of a contrary behaviour. A man who should violate the principles of justice and humanity here, would not only be exposed to the censure of the laws, but, supposing he could evade this, his character would be lost. The state of society in Guinea imposes no such restraints; in that situation therefore wicked men will indulge in wickedness. Nor is it much otherwise in our West-India Islands. So little is there of Christianity in those quarters, that it has hitherto had

scarcely any influence in the framing of their laws, or the forming of the public opinion. There are, doubtless, just and humane individuals in those islands; but the far greater part of them, it is to be feared, are devotees to avarice; to which, as to a Moloch, one or other of them are continually offering up human victims.

Vicious practices are commonly more prevalent in large and populous cities than in other places. Hither the worst characters commonly resort, as noxious animals to a covert from their pursuers. In places but thinly inhabited, the conduct of individuals is conspicuous to the community: but here they can assemble with others of their own description, and strengthen each others hands in evil, without much fear of being detected. Christianity, therefore, may be supposed to have less effect in the way of restraining immoral characters in the city, than in the country. Yet even here it is sensibly felt. The metropolis of our own nation, though it abounds with almost every species of vice, yet what reflecting citizen will deny that it would be much worse but for the influence of the gospel? As it is, there are numbers of different religious denominations, who constantly attend to public and family worship; who are as honourable in their dealings as they are amiable in domestic life; and as liberal in their benefactions as they are assiduous to find out deserving cases. The influence which this body of men have upon the citizens at large, in restraining vice, promoting schemes of benevolence, and preserving peace and good order in society, is beyond calculation. But for their examples and unremitting exertions, London would be a Sodom in its guilt, and might expect to resemble it in its punishment.

In country towns and villages it is easy to perceive the influence which a number of serious Christians will have upon the manners of the people at large. A few families in which the Bible is daily read, the worship of God performed, and a Christian conversation exemplified, will have a powerful effect. Whether characters of an opposite description regard their conduct, or not, their consciences favour it. Hence it is that one upright man, in a question of right and wrong, will often put to silence a company of the advocates of unrighteousness; and that three or four Christian families have been known to give a turn to the manners of a whole neighbourhood.

In fine, let it be closely considered whether a great part of that sobriety which is to be found among *deists themselves* (as there are, doubtless, sober characters among deists, and even among atheists) be not owing to Christianity. It has often been remarked, and justly too, that much of the *knowledge* which our adversaries possess, is derived from this source. To say nothing of the best ideas of the old philosophers on moral subjects being derived from Revelation, of which there is considerable evidence, it is manifest that so far as the moderns exceed them, it is principally if not entirely owing to this medium of instruction. The Scriptures having diffused the light, they have insensibly imbibed it; and finding it to accord with reason, they flatter themselves that *their* reason has discovered it. "After grazing," as one expresses it, "in the pastures of Revelation, they boast of having grown fat by nature." And it is the same with regard to their sobriety. So long as they reside among people whose ideas of right and wrong

are formed by the morality of the gospel, they must, unless they wish to be stigmatized as profligates, behave with some degree of decorum. Where the conduct is uniform and consistent, charity, I allow, and even justice will lead us to put the best construction upon the motive: but when we see men uneasy under restraints, and continually writing in favour of vices which they dare not openly practise, we are justified in imputing their sobriety not to principle, but to the circumstances attending their situation. If some of those gentlemen who have deserted the Christian ministry, and commenced professed infidels, had acted years ago as licentious as they have done of late, they must have quitted their situation sooner, and were they now to leave their country and connexions, and enter into such a state of society as would comport with their present wishes, their conduct would be more licentious than it is.

On these principles that great and excellent man, President WASHINGTON, in his farewell address to the people of the United States, acknowledges the necessity of religion to the well-being of a nation. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity," he says, "Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it be simply asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of

“ religious obligation desert the oaths, which are
 “ the instruments of investigation in the courts of
 “ justice? And let us with caution indulge the
 “ supposition, that morality can be maintained
 “ without religion.—Whatever may be conceded
 “ to the influence of refined education on minds
 “ of peculiar structure; reason and experience
 “ both forbid us to expect, that national morality
 “ can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

Upon the whole, the evidence of this chapter proves that Christianity is not only a living principle of virtue in good men, but affords this farther blessing to society, that it restrains the vices of the bad. It is a tree of life whose fruit is immortality, and whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations.

C H A P. VII.

Christianity is a source of happiness to individuals and society: but Deism leaves both the one and the other without hope.

THOUGH the happiness of creatures be not admitted to be the final end of God's moral government, yet it is freely allowed to occupy an important place in the system. God is good; and his goodness appears in his having so blended the honour of his name with the felicity of his creatures, that in seeking the one they should find the other. In so important a light do we consider human happiness as to be willing to allow that to be the true religion which is most adapted to promote it.

To form an accurate judgment on this subject, it is necessary to ascertain wherein happiness consists. We ought neither to expect nor desire in the present life such a state of mind as wholly excludes painful sensations. Had we less of the exercises of godly sorrow, our sacred pleasures would be fewer than they are; or were we unacquainted with the afflictions common to men, we should be less able to sympathize with them; which would be injurious not only to society, but to ourselves, as it would deprive us of one of the richest sources of enjoyment.

Mr. *Hume*, in one of his essays, very properly called *The Sceptic*, seems to think that happiness lies in having one's inclinations gratified; and as different men have different inclinations, and even the same men at different times, *that* may be happiness in one case which is misery in another. This sceptical writer, however, would hardly deny that in happiness, as in other things, there is a false and a true, an imaginary and a real; or that a studied indulgence of the appetites and passions, though it should promote the one, would destroy the other. The light of nature, as acknowledged even by deists, teaches that self-denial, in many cases, is necessary to self-preservation; and that to act a contrary part would be to ruin our peace and destroy our health.* I presume it will be granted that no definition of happiness can be complete, which includes not peace of mind, which admits not of perpetuity, or which answers not the necessities and miseries of human life.

But if nothing deserve the name of happiness

* Volney's *Law of Nature*, p. 12.

which does not include *peace of mind*, all criminal pleasure is at once excluded. Could a life of unchastity, intrigue, dishonour and disappointed pride, like that of *Rouffeau*, be a happy life? No, amidst the brilliancy of his talents, remorse, shame, conscious meanness, and the dread of a hereafter, must corrode his heart, and render him a stranger to peace. Contrast with the life of this man that of *Howard*. Pious, temperate, just, and benevolent, he lived for the good of mankind. His happiness consisted in *-serving his generation by the will of God*. If all men were like *Rouffeau*, the world would be much more miserable than it is: If all were like *Howard*, it would be much more happy. *Rouffeau*, governed by the love of fame, is fretful, and peevish, and never satisfied with the treatment he receives: *Howard*, governed by the love of mercy, shrinks from applause, with this modest and just reflection, "Alas, our best performances have such a mixture of sin and folly, that praise is vanity, and presumption, and pain to a thinking mind." *Rouffeau*, after a life of debauchery and shame, confesses it to the world, and makes a merit of his confession, and even presumptuously supposes that it will avail him before the Judge of all: *Howard*, after a life of singular devotedness to God, and benevolence to men, accounted himself an unprofitable servant, leaving this for his motto, his last testimony, CHRIST IS MY HOPE. Can there be any doubt which of the two was the happiest man?

Further, if nothing amounts to real happiness which admits not of *perfection*, all natural pleasure, when weighed against the hopes and joys of the gospel, will be found wanting. It is an expressive

characteristic of the good things of this life, that *they all perish with the using*. The charms of youth and beauty quickly fade. The power of relishing natural enjoyments is soon gone. The pleasures of active life, of building, planting, forming schemes, and achieving enterprizes soon follow. In old age none of them will flourish; and in death they are exterminated. *The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator,* all descend in one undistinguished mass into oblivion. And as this is a truth which no man can dispute; those who have no prospects of a higher nature must often feel themselves unhappy. Contrast with this the joys of the gospel. These, instead of being diminished by time, are often increased. To them the soil of age is friendly. While nature has been fading, and perishing by slow degrees, how often have we seen faith, hope, love, patience, and resignation to God in full bloom. Who but Christians can contemplate the loss of all present enjoyments with satisfaction? Who else can view death, judgment, and eternity with desire? I appeal to the hearts of unbelievers, Whether they have not many misgivings and revoltings within them; and whether in the hour of solitary reflection they have not sighed the wish of Balaam, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*

It is observable that even *Rousseau* himself, though the language certainly did not become his lips, affected to derive consolation in advanced life from Christian principles. In a Letter to *Voltaire* he says, "I cannot help remarking, Sir, a very

“ singular contrast between you and me. Sated
 “ with glory, and undeceived with the inanity of
 “ worldly grandeur, you live at freedom, in the
 “ midst of plenty, certain of immortality; you
 “ peaceably philosophise on the nature of the soul;
 “ and if the body, or the heart are indisposed, you
 “ have Tronchin for your physician and friend.
 “ Yet with all this you find nothing but evil on
 “ the face of the earth. I, on the other hand,
 “ obscure, indigent, tormented with an incurable
 “ disorder, meditate with pleasure in my solitude,
 “ and find every thing to be good. Whence arise
 “ these apparent contradictions? You have your-
 “ self explained them. You live in a state of en-
 “ joyment, I in a state of hope; and hope gives
 “ charms to every thing.”*

Finally, If nothing deserves the name of happi-
 ness which *meets not the necessities, nor relieves the*
miserics of human life, Christianity alone can claim
 it. Every one who looks into his own heart, and
 makes proper observations on the dispositions of
 others, will perceive that man is possessed of a de-
 sire after something which is not to be found un-
 der the sun—after A GOOD WHICH HAS NO LI-
 MITS. We may imagine our desires are mode-
 rate, and set boundaries beyond which we may
 flatter ourselves we should never wish to pass;
 but this is self-deception. He that sets his heart
 on an estate, if he gain it, will wish for something
 more. It would be the same if it were a kingdom;
 or even if all the kingdoms of the world were
 united in one. Nor is this desire to be attributed
 merely to human depravity; for it is the same

* *Works*, Vol. IX. p. 336.

with regard to knowledge: the mind is never satisfied with its present acquisitions. It is depravity that directs us to seek satisfaction in something short of God; but it is owing to the nature of the soul that we are never able to find it. It is not possible that a being created immortal, and with a mind capable of continual enlargement, should obtain satisfaction in a limited good. Men may spend their time and strength, and even sacrifice their souls in striving to grasp it, but it will elude their pursuit. It is only from an uncreated source that the mind can drink its fill. Here it is that the gospel meets our necessities. Its language is, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yet come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.—In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.—He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.** How this language has been verified, all who have made the trial can testify. To them, as to the only competent witnesses, I appeal.

It is not merely the nature of the soul however, but its depravity, from whence our necessities arise. We are sinners. Every man who believes there is a God, and a future state, or even only admits the

* *I*sa. lv. 1—3. *J*ohn vii. 37. *v*i. 35.

possibility of them, feels the want of mercy. The first inquiries of a mind awakened to reflection will be, how he may escape the wrath to come; how he shall get over his everlasting ruin? A heathen, previous to any Christian instruction, exclaimed, in the moment of alarm, *What must I do to be saved?** And several Mahomedans, being lately warned by a Christian minister of their sinful state, came the next morning to him with this very serious question, *Keman par boibo*—"How shall we get over?"† To answer these inquiries is beyond the power of any principles but those of the gospel. Philosophy may conjecture, superstition may deceive, and even a false system of Christianity may be aiding and abetting; each may labour to lay the conscience asleep, but none of these can yield it satisfaction. It is only by believing in Jesus Christ, the great sacrifice that taketh away the sin of the world, that the sinner obtains a relief which will bear reflection; a relief which at the same time gives peace to the mind, and purity to the heart. For the truth of this also I appeal to all who have made the trial.

Where, but in the gospel, will you find relief under the innumerable ills of the present state? This is the well-known refuge of Christians. Are they poor, afflicted, persecuted, or reproached? They are led to consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners, who lived a life of poverty and ignominy, who endured persecution and reproach, and death itself for them; and to realize a blessed immortality in prospect. By a view of such things their hearts are cheered, and their af-

* Acts xvi. 30.

† *Periodical accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, No. IV. p. 326.

sufferings become tolerable. Looking to Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, they run with patience the race that is set before them.

But what is the comfort of unbelievers? Life being short, and having no ground to hope for any thing beyond it, if they be crossed here, they become inconsolable. Hence it is not uncommon for persons of this description, after the example of the philosophers and statesmen of Greece and Rome, when they find themselves depressed by adversity, and have no prospect of recovering their fortunes, to put a period to their lives! Unhappy men! Is this the felicity to which ye would introduce us? Is it in guilt, shame, remorse, and desperation that ye descry such charms? Admitting that our hope of immortality is visionary, where is the injury? If it be a dream, is it not a pleasant one? To say the least, it beguiles many a melancholy hour, and can do no mischief: but if it be a reality, what will become of you?

I may be told, that if many put a period to their lives through unbelief, there is an equal number who fall sacrifices to religious melancholy. But to render this objection of force, it should be proved that the religion of Jesus Christ is the *cause* of this melancholy. Reason may convince us of the being of a God, and conscience bear witness that we are exposed to his displeasure. Now if in this state of mind the heart refuse to acquiesce in the gospel way of salvation, we shall of course either rest in some delusive hope, or sink into despair. But here, it is not religion, but the want of it that generates the evil. It is unbelief, and not faith that sinks the sin-

ner into despondency. Christianity disowns such characters. It records some few examples, such as Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas; but they are all branded as apostates from God and true religion. On the contrary, the writings of unbelievers, both ancient and modern, are known to plead for suicide, as an expedient in extremity. Rousseau, Hume, and others have written in defence of it. The principles of such men both produce and require it. It is the natural offspring of unbelief, and the last resort of disappointed pride.

Whether Christianity or the want of it, be best adapted to relieve the heart under its various pressures, let those testify who have been in the habit of visiting the afflicted poor. On this subject the writer of these sheets can speak from his own knowledge. In this situation characters of very opposite descriptions are found. Some are serious and sincere Christians: others, even among those who have attended the preaching of the gospel, appear neither to understand nor to feel it. The tale of woe is told perhaps by both: but the one is unaccompanied with that discontent, that wretchedness of mind, and that inclination to despair, which is manifest in the other. Often have I seen the cheerful smile of contentment under circumstances the most abject and afflictive. Amidst tears of sorrow, which a full heart has rendered it impossible to suppress, a mixture of hope and joy has glistened. "The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Such have been their feelings, and such their expressions; and where this has been the case, death has generally been embraced as the messenger of peace. *Here, I have said, participating of their sensations,*

here is the patience, and the faith of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God?

From individual happiness let us proceed to examine that of *society*. Let us enquire whether there be any well-grounded hope of the future melioration of the state of mankind besides that which is afforded by the gospel. Great expectations have been raised of an end being put to wars, and of universal good-will pervading the earth in consequence of philosophical illumination, and the prevalence of certain modes of civil government. But these speculations proceed upon false data. They suppose that the cause of these evils is to be looked for in the ignorance rather than in the depravity of men: or if depravity be allowed to have any influence, it is confined to the precincts of a court. Without taking upon me to decide which is the best form of civil government, or what mode is most adapted to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, it is sufficient in this case to shew that wars generally originate, as the apostle James says, in the lusts, or *corrupt passions* of mankind. If this be proved, it will follow, that however some forms of government may be more friendly to peace and happiness than others, yet no *radical* cure can be effected till the dispositions of men are changed. Let power be placed where it may, with one, or with many, still it must be in the hands of men. If all governments were so framed as that every national act should be expressive of the real will of the people,

still if the preponderating part of them be governed by pride and self-love rather than equity, we are not much the nearer. Governors taken from the common mass of society, must needs resemble it. If there be any difference at the time of their first elevation to office, owing, as may be supposed, to the preference which all men give to an upright character for the management of their concerns, yet this advantage will be balanced, if not overbalanced, by the subsequent temptations to injustice which are afforded by situations of wealth and power.

What is the source of contentions in common life? Observe the discords in neighbourhoods, and families; which, notwithstanding all the restraints of relationship, interest, honour, law, and reason, are a fire that never ceases to burn; and which, were they no more controlled by the laws than independent nations from each other, would in thousands of instances break forth into assassinations and murders. From whence spring these wars? Are they the result of *ignorance*? If so, they would chiefly be confined to the rude, or uninformed part of the community. But is it so? There may, it is true, be more pretences to peace and good will, and fewer bursts of open resentment in the higher, than in the lower orders of people: but their dispositions are much the same. The laws of politeness can only polish the surface; and there are some parts of the human character which still appear very rough. Even politeness has its regulations for strife and murder, and establishes iniquity by a law. The evil disposition is a kind of subterraneous fire; and it will have vent in some form. Are they the result of *court-influence*? No. The truth is, if civil govern-

ment in some form did not influence the fears of the unjust and contentious part of the community, there would be no security to those who are peaceably inclined and especially to those who are withal religious, and whose pious conduct, like that of Noah, condemns the world. Now the same disposition which in persons whose power extends only to a cottage, will operate in a way of domestic discord; in others, whose influence extends to the affairs of nations, will operate on a more enlarged scale; producing war and all the dire calamities which attend it. The sum of the whole is this: when the preponderating part of the world shall cease to be proud, ambitious, envious, covetous, lovers of their own selves, false, malignant, and intriguing; when they shall love God and one another out of a pure heart; then, and not till then may we expect wars to cease, and the state of mankind to be essentially meliorated. While these dispositions remain, they will be certain to shew themselves. If the best laws or constitution in the world stand in their way, they will, on certain occasions, bear down all before them.

An anonymous writer in the *Monthly Magazine*,* (a work which without avowing it, is pretty evidently devoted to the cause of infidelity) has instituted an inquiry into "The probability of the future melioration of the state of mankind." A dismal prospect indeed it is which he holds up to his fellow-creatures; yet were I an infidel, like him, I should acquiesce in many things which he advances. The anchor of his hopes is *an increase of knowledge*, and the effects of this are circumscribed within a very narrow boundary. With

* For Feb. 1799, p. 2.

respect to what we call *civilization*, he reckons it to have undergone all the vicissitudes of which it is capable. *Scientific refinement* may contribute to the happiness of a few individuals ; but he fears cannot be made a ground of much advantage to the mass of mankind. Great scope indeed remains for the operation of increased knowledge in improvement in *government* : but even here it can only cure those evils which arise from ignorance, and not those which proceed from intention, which, “ while the propensity to prefer our own interests “ above that of the community is, as he acknow- “ ledges, interwoven into our very nature,” will always form the mass of existing ills. If indeed the majority of a community, he says, became so enlightened concerning their interests, and so wise, steady, and unanimous in the pursuit of them, as to overcome all that resistance which the possessors of undue advantages will always make to a change unfavourable to themselves, something might be hoped for. But this, while they are under their old masters, he reckons as next to impossible. As to *political revolutions*, he did form high expectations from them ; but his hopes are at an end. “ I have only the wish left, says he, the confidence is gone.” As to *improved systems of morality*, which he considers as the art of living happy, though it might seem promising, yet history, he very justly remarks, does not allow us to expect that men in proportion as they advance in this species of knowledge will become more just, more temperate, or more benevolent. Of the *extinction of wars*, he has no hope. The new order of things which seemed opening in Europe, and to bid fair for it, has rather increased the evil : and as to *Christiani-*

ty, it has been tried, it seems, and found to be insufficient for the purpose. *Commerce*, instead of binding the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendship, seems only to have given additional motives for war.

The amount is, there is little or no hope of the state of mankind being meliorated on *public* principles. All the improvement he can discern in this way consists in there being a little more lenity in the government of some countries than formerly: and as to this, it is balanced by the prodigious increase of standing armies, and other national burdens.

The only way in which *an increase in knowledge* is to operate to the melioration of the state of mankind is in *private life*. It is to soften and humanize men's manners, and emancipate their minds from the shackles of superstition and bigotry, names which writers of this class commonly bestow upon Christianity. This is the boundary beyond which, whatever be his wishes, the hopes of this writer will not suffer him to pass: and even this respects only Europe and her immediate connexions, and not the whole of them. The great mass of mankind are in an absolutely hopeless condition: for there are no means of carrying our improvements among them but by conquest, and conquest is a Pandora's box, at the mention of which he shudders.

Such are the prospects of unbelievers; such is the horrid despondency under which they sink when Providence counteracts their favourite schemes; and such the spirit which they take pains to infuse into the minds of men in order to make them happy! Christian reader, Have you no bet-

ter hopes than these? Are you not acquainted with a principle, which like the machine of Archimedes, will remove this mighty mass of evils? Be they as great and as numerous as they may, if all can be reduced to a single cause, and that cause removed, the work is done. All the evils of which this writer complains are reducible to that one principle, which he says, (and 'tis well *he* says it) "is interwoven into our very nature; namely, "The propensity to prefer our own interests above "that of the community." It is this propensity that operates in the great, and induces them to "oppose every thing that would be unfavourable "to their power and advantage;" and the same thing operates among common people, great numbers of whom, it is well known, would sell their country for a piece of bread. If this principle cannot be removed, I shall, with this writer, for ever despair of any essential changes for the better in the state of mankind, and will content myself with cultivating private and domestic happiness, and hoping for the blessedness of a future life: but if it can, I must leave him to despair alone.

My hopes are not founded on forms of government, nor even on an increase of knowledge, tho' each may have its value; *but on the spirit by which both the rulers and the people will be governed.* All forms of government have hitherto rested on the basis of *self-love*. The wisest and best statesmen have been obliged to take it for granted that the mass of every people will be governed by this principle; and consequently all their schemes have been directed to the balancing of things in such a manner as that people in pursuing their own interest should promote that of the public. If in any case

they have presumed on the contrary, experience has soon taught them that all their schemes are visionary, and inapplicable to real life. But if the mass of the people, composed of all the different orders of society, were governed by a spirit of justice and disinterested benevolence, systems of government might safely be formed on this basis. It would then be sufficient for Statesmen to ascertain what was right, and best adapted to promote the good of the community, and the people would cheerfully pursue it; and pursuing this, would find their own good more effectually promoted than by all the little discordant arts of a selfish mind.

The excellence of the most admired constitutions which have hitherto appeared in the world has chiefly consisted in the balance of power being so distributed amongst the different orders of society as that no one should materially oppress or injure the other. They have endeavoured to set boundaries to each others encroachments, and contrived in some degree to counteract venality, corruption and tumult. But all this supposes a corrupt state of society, and amounts to no more than making the best of things, taking them as they are. Locks, and keys, and bolts, and bars are necessary in our houses as things are; but it were better if there were no occasion for them. I do not take upon me to say that things will ever be in such a state as that there shall be no need of these political precautions; but I believe they will be far less necessary than they now are.

If the Bible be true, the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; idolatry, and every

species of false religion shall be no more; the art and instruments of war shall be laid aside, and exchanged for those of husbandry; the different tribes of man shall be united in one common band of brotherly love; slavery and oppression will cease; righteousness will be established in the earth; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

But "Christianity has been tried, it seems, and found insufficient." That it has not been as yet sufficient to banish unjust wars from the earth, is true; and it were more than wonderful if it had, seeing it has never yet been cordially embraced by the majority, nor perhaps by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheless it has had its influence. This gloomy writer himself acknowledges that the state of society in Europe and America, that is to say in Christendom, is far preferable to what it is in other parts of the earth. Of the rest of the world he has no hope. Has Christianity done nothing in this case? That thousands in different nations are by a cordial belief of it rendered sober, just, disinterested, and peaceable; and that the state of society at large is greatly meliorated, has been proved, I hope, already:* to believe then in the future accomplishment of the foregoing prophecies is only to believe that what is already effected in individuals will be extended to the general body of mankind, or at least, to such a proportion of them as shall be sufficient to give a preponderance in human affairs.

Moreover, the same book which declares that

* Chap. V. VI.

the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, has foretold in a great variety of language, the downfall of the Papal Antichrist, and that by means of the same powers from which its dominion was first derived. We have in part seen the fulfilment of the one, and live in expectation of the other. We are not ignorant of the evil designs of infidels, but we believe that God is above them, and that they are only instruments in his hand in the fulfilment of his word. While therefore we feel for the miseries of mankind, occasioned by the dreadful devastations of war, we sorrow not as those who have no hope; but are persuaded that all things, even now, are working together for good: and while we pity individual sufferers, we cannot join the whining lamentations of interested men, *Alas, Alas, that great city!* On the contrary, we feel disposed to join the song of the heavenly host, *Amen, Alleluia! Salvation, and honour, and glory, and power be unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his Judgments — Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready.*

If, according to the doctrine of *Bolingbroke, Vclney*, and other deists, we knew no other source of virtue and happiness than *self-love*, we should often be less happy than we are. Our blessedness is bound up with that of Christ, and his followers throughout the world. His friends are our friends, and his enemies our enemies. They that seek his life seek ours. The prosperity of his kingdom is our prosperity; and we prefer it above our chief joy. From the public stock of blessedness, being thus considered as the common property of every

individual, arises a great and constant influx of enjoyment. Hence it is that in times when temporal comforts fail us, or family troubles depress us, or a cloud hangs over our particular connexions, or death threatens to arrest us in a course of pleasing labour, we have still our resources of consolation. ‘ Affairs with me are sinking ; but *he must increase*’—‘ My house is not so with God ; but the kingdom of my Lord shall be established for ever.’—‘ His interest sinks in this congregation ; but it rises elsewhere’—‘ I die ; but God will surely visit you !’ Such is the heritage of the servants of the Lord ; and such the blessedness of those whose chief desire it is, *that they may see the good of his chosen, that they may rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and that they may glory with his inheritance.*

The Gospel its own Witness:
&c. &c.

P A R T II.

IN WHICH THE HARMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION IS CONSIDERED AS AN EVIDENCE
OF ITS DIVINITY.

IF Christianity be an imposture, it may, like all other impostures, be detected. Falsehood may always be proved to clash with fact, with reason or with itself, and often with them all. If on the contrary, its origin be divine, it may be expected to bear the character of consistency, which distinguishes every other divine production. If the Scriptures can be proved to harmonize with historic fact, with truth, with themselves, and with sober reason; they must, considering what they profess, be divinely inspired, and Christianity must be of God.

C H A P. I.

*The harmony of Scripture with historic fact, evinced
by the fulfilment of prophecy.*

IF the pretence which the Scriptures make to divine inspiration be unfounded, it can be no

very difficult undertaking to prove it so. The sacred writers, besides abounding in history, doctrine, and morality, have dealt largely in prophecy; and this not in the manner of the heathen priests, who made use of dark and dubious language. Their meaning in general is capable of being understood, even at this distance of time; and in many instances cannot be mistaken. The dispute, therefore, between believers and unbelievers is reducible to a short issue. If Scripture prophecy be divinely inspired, it will be accomplished: but if it be imposture, it will not.

Let us suppose that, by digging in the earth, a chest were discovered, containing a number of ancient curiosities; and among other things a tablet, inscribed with calculations of the most remarkable eclipses that should take place for a great while to come. These calculations are examined, and found to correspond with fact for more than two thousand years past. The inspectors cannot agree perhaps in deciding who was the author, whether it had not gone through several hands when it was deposited in the chest, and various other questions: but does this invalidate the truth of the calculations, or diminish the value of the tablet?

It cannot be objected that events have been predicted from mere political foresight, which have actually come to pass: for though this may have been the case in a few instances, wherein causes have already existed which afforded ground for the conclusion; yet it is impossible that the successive changes and revolutions of empires, some of which were more than a thousand years distant, and depended on ten thousand unknown incidents, should be the objects of human speculation.

Mr. *Paine* seems to feel the difficulty attending his cause on this subject. His method of meeting it is not by soberly examining the agreement or disagreement of prophecy and history : that would not have suited his purpose ; but, as though he had made a wonderful discovery, he in the first place goes about to prove that the prophets wrote *poetry* ; and from hence would persuade us that a prophet was no other than an ancient Jewish bard. That the prophecies are what is now called poetic, Mr. *Paine* need not have given himself the trouble to prove, as no person of common understanding can doubt it : but the question is, did not these writings, in whatever kind of language they were written, contain *predictions of future events* ; yea and of the most notorious and remarkable events, such as should form the grand outlines of history in the following ages ? Mr. *Paine* will not deny this ; nor will he soberly undertake to disprove that many of those events have already come to pass. He will, however, take a shorter method ; a method more suited to his turn of mind. He will call the prophets “ impostors and liars ;” he will roundly assert without a shadow of proof, and in defiance of historic evidence, that the prediction concerning Cyrus was written after the event took place ; he will labour to pervert and explain away some few of the prophecies, and get rid of the rest by calling the writer “ a false prophet,” and his production “ a book of falsehoods.”* These are weapons worthy of Mr. *Paine*’s warfare. But why all this rage against an ancient bard ? Just now a prophet was only a poet, and the idea of a predictor of future events was not

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 53, 44, 47.

included in the meaning of the term. It seems, however, by this time, that Mr. Paine has found a number of *predictions* in the prophetic writings, to get rid of which he is obliged, as is usual with him in cases of emergency, to summon all his talents for misrepresentation and abuse.

I take no particular notice of this writer's attempts to explain away a few of the predictions of Isaiah, and other prophets. Those who have undertaken to answer him have performed this part of the business. I shall only notice that he has not dared to meet the great body of scripture prophecy, or fairly to look it in the face.

To say nothing of the predictions of the destruction of mankind by a flood; of that of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire; of the descendants of Abraham being put in possession of Canaan within a limited period; and of various other events, the history as well as the prophecy of which is confined to the Scriptures; let us review those predictions the fulfilment of which has been recorded by historians who knew nothing of them, and consequently could have no design in their favour.

It is worthy of notice, that sacred history ends where profane history, that part of it at least which is commonly reckoned authentic, begins. Prior to the Babylonish Captivity, the scriptural writers were in the habit of narrating the leading events of their country, and of incidentally introducing those of the surrounding nations; but shortly after this time the great changes in the world began to be recorded by other hands, as *Herodotus*, *Xenophon*, and others. From this period they dealt chiefly in prophecy, leaving it to common historians to record its fulfilment.

Mr. Paine says the scripture prophecies are “a book of falsehoods.” Let us examine this charge. Isaiah, above a hundred years before the Captivity, predicted the destruction of the Babylonish empire by the Medes and Persians, and Judah’s consequent deliverance. *The plunderer is plundered, and the destroyer is destroyed: Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media: all the crying thereof have I made to cease.** Ask Herodotus and Xenophon; Was this a falsehood?

Daniel, fourteen years before the establishment of the Medo-Persian dominion by the taking of Babylon, described that dominion, with its conquests, and the superiority of the Persian influence to that of the Median, under the symbol of a Ram with two horns. *I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold there stood by the river a ram, which had two horns; and the two horns were high, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. This is expounded as follows: The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.†* Ask the afore-mentioned historians; Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, two hundred and twenty-three years before the event, predicted the overthrow of this Medo-Persian dominion, by the arms of Greece, under the command of Alexander; and described the latter government

* Lowth’s translation of Isai. xxi. 2. Other prophecies of the same event may be seen in Isai. xiii. xiv. xxi. xliii. 14—17. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—4. xlvii. Jer. xxv. 12—26. l. li. Hab.

† Dan. viii. 3, 4, 20. See also on the same subject, Chap. vii. 5.

under the symbol of a he-goat, with a notable horn between his eyes. *As I was considering, behold a he-goat came from the west, on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground. And the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing by the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns. And there was no power in the ram to stand before him; but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.* The exposition of this vision follows: *The rough goat is the kingdom or power of Grecia; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.** Ask *Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch*, and other historians of those times; Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, two hundred and thirty years before the event, predicted the death of Alexander, and the division of his empire amongst four of his principal Commanders, each of whom had an extensive dominion. *The he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones towards the four winds of heaven.* The interpretation of this was as follows: *Now the great horn being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.†* Ask the afore-mentioned historians of those times; Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, three hun-

* Dan. viii. 5—7, 21. See also on the same subject, Chap. xi. 2, 3, 4.

† Dan. viii. 8. 22. See also on the same subject, Chap. vii. 6.

dred and eighty years before the event, foretold the outrageous reign, and sudden death of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of Syria: particularly, that by flattery and treachery he should accomplish his end; and, on account of the degeneracy of the Jews, should be permitted for a time to ravage their country, interrupt their ordinary course of worship, profane their temple, and persecute even to death those who refused to comply with his heathen abominations; but that in the midst of his career he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from heaven. *And out of one of them* (the four branches of the Grecian empire) *came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host, and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice, by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised and prospered.* Of this the following is the exposition: *In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.*

Daniel also foretels, in the eleventh Chapter of his prophecies, the wars between this king of Syria and *Ptolemy Philometer*, king of Egypt; with the interposition of the Romans, whose ambassadors should come over in *ships from Chittim*, and compel him to desist: also that being thus disappointed of his object in Egypt, he should return full of wrath and indignation to his own land, and wreak his vengeance upon the Jews, whose country lay in his way, though they had done nothing to offend him. I will not say, ask *Josephus*, *Diodorus Siculus*, and *Polybius*, if these were falsehoods; ask *Porphyry*, a professed enemy to the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and who wrote against them about the middle of the third Century. He has proved from the testimony of six or seven historians of those times, that these predictions were all exactly fulfilled: and like Mr. Paine by the prophecies concerning Cyrus, is driven, *merely on account of their being true*, to fly in the face of historic evidence, and maintain that they could not be the production of Daniel, but must have been written by some Jew after the events took place.*

As in the eighth and eleventh chapters of his prophecies Daniel has foretold the Persian and Grecian governments, with the subdivisions of the latter, and how they should affect the Jewish people; so in the seventh chapter he has, in connexion with them, foretold the government of *Rome*. This singular empire he represents as exceeding all

* See *Prileaux's Connexion*, Part I. Book II. VIII. Part II. Book III. where the accomplishment of all the foregoing events is clearly narrated, and the authorities cited.

that had gone before it in power and terror; and as that of Greece, soon after the death of Alexander, should be divided into four kingdoms, signified by the four heads of the third beast, so this, it is foretold, should be, at the time of its dissolution, divided into ten kingdoms, which are signified by the ten horns of the fourth beast. Ask universal history, Is this a falsehood? Those who adopt the cause of Porphyry must in this instance desert his hypothesis: they cannot say that this part of the prophecy was written by some Jew after the event took place, seeing Porphyry himself has acknowledged its existence some hundreds of years before it was accomplished.

The predictions of this prophet did not end here: he at the same time foretold that there should arise among the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire should be broken, a power diverse from all the rest; *a little horn* which should *speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High*; and that this power should continue until *a time, and times, and the dividing of time*. At the end of this period, he adds, *the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy unto the end*. Are these falsehoods? Let the history of the last twelve hundred years, and the present state of the Papal hierarchy, determine.

Passing over the predictions of the Messiah, whose birth, place of nativity, time of appearance, manner of life, doctrine, miracles, death, and resurrection, were each particularly pointed out,* let us examine a few examples from the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ foretold the destruction of

* Isai. ix. 6. Mic. v. 2. Dan. ix. 20.—27. Isai. xlii. 2. xxxv. 5. 6. liii. Ps. xvi. 10, 11.

Jerusalem by the Romans, and limited the time of its accomplishment to the then *present generation*.* Ask Josephus, the Jewish historian, Is this a falsehood?

It was intimated at the same time that the Jewish people should not only fall by the edge of the sword, but that great numbers of them should be *led away captive into all nations*; and that *Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the gentiles should be fulfilled*.† Ask the present descendants of that unhappy people, Is this a falsehood?

The apostle of the Gentiles foretold that there should be *a falling away*, or a grand apostacy in the Christian church; wherein *the man of sin should be revealed, even the son of perdition; who would oppose, and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and who as God would sit in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God*.‡ Also in his epistle to Timothy: *Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth*.§

A large proportion of the Apocalypse of John respects this grand apostacy, and the corrupt community in which it was accomplished. He describes it with great variety of expression. On some accounts it is represented under the form of a *city*, on others of a *beast*, and on others of a *woman sitting upon a*

* Matt. xxiv. 1—35. Luke xxi.

† Luke xxi. 24.

‡ 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

beast. That we might be at no loss to distinguish it on its appearance, it is intimated that it should not be so much a civil as an apostate ecclesiastical power: It is a *harlot*, opposed to the bride the Lamb's wife:—that it should greatly abound in wealth, and worldly grandeur: *The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls*:—that its dominion should not be confined to its own immediate territories: *Power was given it over all kingdoms and tongues and nations*:—that its authority should not be derived from its own conquests, but from the voluntary consent of a number of independent kingdoms to come under its yoke: *The kings of the earth have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast*:—that it should be distinguished by its blasphemies, idolatries, and persecuting spirit: *Upon her were the names of blasphemy. They should make an image of the beast, and as many as would not worship the image of the beast were to be killed. And the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints*:—that its persecutions should extend to such a length as for no man to be allowed the common rights of men, unless he became subject to it: *No man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*:—that its power should continue for a time, times, and half a time, *forty and two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days*; during which long period God's witnesses should prophesy in sackcloth, be driven as into a wilderness, and, as it were, slain, and their bodies lie unburied:—finally, that they who gave it an existence should be the instruments of taking it away: *The kings, or powers, of the earth shall hate the*

*where, and burn her flesh with fire.** Whether all, or any part of this be falsehood, let history and observation determine.

It has often been observed that the prophecies of the Messiah were so numerous and explicit, that at the time of his appearance there was a general expectation of it, not only in Judea, but in all the neighbouring nations: and is not the same thing observable at this time of the fall of antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, and the general spread of the gospel?

Once more, The sacred writers have predicted the opposition which Christianity should meet with, and described the characters from whom it should proceed. *In the last days, say they, perilous times will come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Again, There shall be mockers in the last time, who shall walk after their own ungodly lusts; filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.†* Let Mr. Paine, and other infidels consider well the above picture, and ask their own consciences, Is this a falsehood?

Bishop Newton in his *Dissertations* has clearly evinced the fulfilment of several of these and other scripture prophecies; and has shewn that some of

* Rev. xi, xiii. and xvii. Chapters.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1—4. Jude.

them are fulfilling at this day. To those *Dissertations* I refer the reader. Enough has been said to enable us to determine which production it is that deserves to be called “a book of falsehoods,” the prophecies of Scripture, or the *Age of Reason*.

C H A P. II.

The harmony of Scripture with truth, evinced from its agreement with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and the result of the closest observation.

IF a brazen mirror were found on some remote uninhabited island, it might be a doubtful matter how it came thither; but if it properly reflected objects, there could be no doubt of its being a real mirror.

The Bible was written with the professed design of being *profitable for reproof*; nor was there ever a book so adapted to the purpose, or so effectual in its operation in disclosing the inward workings of the human mind. Thousands can bear witness from experience that it is *quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. Its entrance into the mind giveth light; and light which discovers the works of darkness. Far from flattering the vices of mankind, it charges without ceremony every son of Adam with possessing the heart of an apostate. This charge it brings home to the conscience, not only by its pure precepts, and awful threatenings, but oftentimes by the very invitations and promises

of mercy ; which, while they cheer the heart with lively hope, carry *conviction* by their *import* to the very soul. In reading other books you may admire the ingenuity of the writer ; but here your attention is turned inward. Read it but seriously, and your heart will answer to its descriptions. It will touch the secret springs of sensibility, and if you have any ingenuofness of mind towards God, the tears of grief, mingled with those of hope and gratitude, will, ere you are aware, trickle from your eyes.

Whatever particular vices you may have been addicted to, here you will discover your likeness ; and that not as by a comic representation on the theatre, which, where it reclaims one person by shaming him out of his follies, corrupts a thousand ; but in a way that will bring conviction to your bosom.

Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ ? Such was the reasoning of the woman of Samaria ; and who could have reasoned better ? That which makes manifest must be light. But this reasoning is applicable to other things as well as the Messiahship of Jesus. No man can forbear saying of that book, that doctrine, or that preaching which tells him all things that ever he did, Is not this the truth ? The satisfaction afforded by such evidence approaches near to intuitive certainty : It is having the witness in ourselves.

Should it be objected that though this may satisfy our own minds, yet it can afford no evidence to others—I answer, It is true that they who shun the light cannot be supposed to possess that evidence of its being what it is, as those who have

come to it that their deeds may be made manifest : yet even they, if at all acquainted with the Bible, must be aware that the likenesses which it draws are in a considerable degree their own. It is not to serious Christians only that the gospel is a mirror. Many who never look into that perfect law of liberty from choice and delight, so as to be blessed in their work, but only glance at it in a transient and occasional way, yet perceive so much of their own character in it, as to be convinced that it is right, and that they are wrong. The secret conviction of thousands who hear the word, and do it not, resembles that of Pharaoh, *The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* The impressions of such people, it is true, are frequently short in their duration : like a man who seeth his natural face in a glass, they go away, and straightway forget what manner of persons they are : but the aversion which they discover to a serious resumption of the subject, places it beyond all reasonable doubt, that, let their hearts be as they may, the Scriptures have commended themselves to their consciences. They have felt the point of this two-edged sword, and are not disposed to renew the encounter. That this is the case not only with nominal Christians, but with great numbers of professed deists, is manifest from the acknowledgments of such men as *The Earl of Rochester*, and many others who have relented on the near approach of death. This is often a time in which conscience must and will be heard ; and, too often for the liking of surviving acquaintances, it proclaims to the world, that the grand source of their hatred to the Bible has been that for which Ahab

hated Micaiah, its prophesying no good concerning them.

The Scriptures are a mirror in which we see not only individual characters, our own and others, but the state of things as they move on in the great world. They shew us the spring-head whence all the malignant streams of idolatry, atheism, corruption, persecution, war, and every other evil originate; and by shewing us the origin of these destructive maladies, clearly instruct us whercin must consist their cure.

It has already been observed * that Christian morality is summed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and that these principles, carried to their full extent, would render the world a paradise. But the Scriptures teach us that man is a rebel against his Maker; that his carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; that instead of loving God, or even man in the order which is required, men are become *lovers of their own selves*, and neither God nor man are regarded but as they are found necessary to subserve their wishes.

This single principle of human apostacy, supposing it to be true, will fully account for all the moral disorders in the world; and the actual existence of those disorders, unless they can be better accounted for, must go to prove the truth of this principle, and, by consequence, of the Christian system which rests upon it.

We are affected in considering the *idolatry* of so great a part of the human race; but we are not surpris'd at it. If men be destitute of the love of

* Part I. Chap. III.

God, it is natural to suppose they will endeavour to banish him from their thoughts, and, provided the state of society will admit of it, from their worship; substituting gods more congenial with their inclinations, and in the worship of which they can indulge themselves without fear or controul.

Neither are we surpris'd at the *practical atheism* which abounds among unbelievers, and even among nominal Christians, in European nations. If the state of things be such that gross idolatry is inadmissible, still, if aversion to God predominate, it will shew itself in a neglect of all worship, and of all serious conversation, or devout exercises; in a wish to think there is no God, and no hereafter; and in endeavours to banish every thing of a religious nature from society. Or, if this cannot be, and any thing relating to such subjects become matter of discussion, they will be so explained away as that nothing shall be left which can approve itself to an upright heart. The holiness of the divine character will be kept out of sight, his precepts disregarded, and morality itself made to consist in something destitute of all true virtue.

We are not surpris'd at the *corruptions* which Christianity has undergone. Christianity itself, as we have already seen, foretold it, and the doctrine of human depravity fully accounts for it. When the Christian religion was adopted by the state, it is natural to suppose there would be great numbers of unprincipled men who would profess it; and where its leading characters in any age are of this description, it will certainly be corrupted. The pure doctrine of Christ is given up in favour of some flesh-pleasing system, the holy precepts of

Christian morality are lowered to the standard of ordinary practice, and the worship and ordinances of Christ mingled with superstition, and modelled to a worldly temper. It was thus that Judaism was corrupted by the old pharisees, and Christianity by the papal hierarchy.

The success which *evil men and seducers* meet with in propagating false doctrine, is no more than may be expected from the present state of things. So long as a large proportion of the professors of Christianity receive not the love of the truth, error will be certain to meet with a welcome reception. The grossest impostor has only to advance a system suited to corrupt nature, to assert it with effrontery, and to flatter his adherents with being the favourites of heaven, and he will be followed.*

The *persecutions* which have been carried on against religion are grievous to humanity, and equally repugnant to justice and to good policy: but they are not in the least surprising. There was not a truth more prominent in our Saviour's addresses to his followers than this, that having *re-*

* Men are much more easily deceived in these matters than in the ordinary concerns of life. If a London merchant were to open a warehouse in different parts of the city, and make it his business to traduce the characters and commodities of all other merchants; if his opposition were directed especially against men of probity and eminence, whose situations were contiguous to his own; in fine, if the only traders in the kingdom who could obtain his good word were certain agents whom he had stationed in different parts of the country for the purpose of retailing his wares, Would not his designs be evident? He might puff, and pretend to have the good of the public much at heart; but the public would despise him as a man whose object was a fortune, and whose practices evinced that he would hesitate at no means to accomplish his end. Yet such deceptions may be practised in religion with success.

ceived his word, the world would hate them! because they were not of the world, as he was not of the world. When he sent them forth to preach the gospel, it was as *sheep among wolves*; and they were treated accordingly. When he took leave of them previous to his death, he left them his *peace* as knowing that in the world they should have tribulation. All this was no more than might be expected: for if it be the character of true religion that it sets itself against every vicious propensity of the human heart, it is natural to suppose that every one who is under the dominion of such propensity will feel averse to true religion, and to those who adhere to it. The manner in which mankind have stood affected towards godly men has been nearly uniform from the beginning. Cain slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking: As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Why was Jerusalem a burdensome stone to the nations? Why were they continually forming leagues to root out its remembrance from the earth? The same spirit that was discovered by Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon towards Israel, was apparent in Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and their companions, towards Judah; and the part acted by the Horonite, the Ammonite, and the Arabian, was afterwards re-acted with additional zeal by Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the governors and people of Israel. Those who could agree in nothing else could agree in this. The persecutions of pagan and papal Rome, and of all who have symbolized with her, have been only a continuation

of the same system: and the descriptions which deistical historians give of these works of darkness, notwithstanding their pretended regard to religious liberty, bear witness that they allow the deeds of their fathers, and inherit their dispositions. The same malignant spirit which was discovered by the heathens towards the ancient Israelites, is discoverable in all the writings of unbelievers towards that people to this day. It is true they are more reconciled to the modern Jews; and for a very plain reason: they feel them to be near a-kin to themselves. Herod and Pilate were made friends by the crucifixion of Christ. Since that time the old enmity has been transferred to believing gentiles, who, being grafted into the Jewish olive, and partaking of its advantages, partake also of its persecutions: and by how much the Christian church at any period has exceeded the Jewish in purity and spirituality, by so much more fierce has the wrath of a wicked world burned against it.

After all the pains which unbelievers take to shift the charge of persecution, and to lay it at the door of Christianity, it is manifest to an observant eye that there is a deep-rooted enmity in all wicked men, whether they be pagans, papists, protestants or deists, towards all godly men, of every nation, name and denomination. This enmity, it is true, is not suffered to operate according to its native tendency. He who holdeth the winds in his hand, restrains it. Men are withheld by laws, by policy, by interests, by education, by respect, by regard founded on other than religious qualities, and by various other things. There are certain conjunctions of interests, especially, which occasionally require a temporary cessation of hostilities;

and it may seem on such occasions as if wicked men were ashamed of their animosities, and were all on a sudden become friendly to the followers of Christ. Thus at the Revolution in 1688, those who for more than twenty years had treated the nonconformists with unrelenting severity, when they found themselves in danger of being deprived of their places by a popish prince, courted their friendship, and promised not to persecute them any more. And thus at the commencement of the French Revolution, deists, catholics, and protestants, who were engaged in one political cause, seemed to have forgotten their resentments, all amicably uniting together in the opening of a place for protestant worship. But let not the servants of Christ imagine that any temporary conjunction of interests will extinguish the ancient enmity. It may seem to be so for a time; and all things being under the controul of providence, such a time may be designed as a season of respite for the faithful: but when self-interest hath gained its end, if other worldly considerations do not interpose, things will return to their former channel. The enmity is not dead, but sleepeth.

Finally, the *wars* which from the earliest period of history have desolated the earth, grievous as they are to a feeling mind, contain in them nothing surprising. The Scriptures with singular propriety describe the world as *a great Sea*, which is ever casting up its mire and dirt; and great conquerors as so many *wild beasts*, which in succession rise from its troubled waters and devour the inhabitants of the earth.* Nor is this all:

* Dan. vii.

they describe not only the fact, but the cause of it. Wars among men, as hath been already stated,* have their *immediate* causes in *the lusts which war in their members*: but besides this, the Scripture leads us to a cause more remote, and of still greater importance. They denominate the sword of war, *the sword of the Lord*, and constantly intimate that it is one of those means by which he *pleadeth with all flesh*. A part of the curse entailed on men for their departure from the living God consists in this, that, till they return to him, they shall not be able for any length of time to maintain amity among themselves. It appears to be one of those laws by which God governs the world, that PEOPLE ENGAGED IN AN EVIL CAUSE, HOWEVER HARMONIOUS THEY MAY BE IN THE OUTSET, SHALL PRESENTLY BE AT VARIANCE. Thus it was between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, as Jotham had forewarned them in his parable. Though at first they appeared to rejoice in each other; yet in a little time *fire came out from Abimelech and devoured the men of Shechem, and fire came out from the men of Shechem and devoured Abimelech.*† Such is commonly the issue of all unprincipled confederacies, traitorous conspiracies, illegal combinations, and illicit amours. Union, in order to be lasting, requires to be cemented with honour. Where this is wanting, however appearances may for a while be flattering, all will prove transitory: mutual jealousies will produce mutual enmities, which are certain to issue in confusion and every evil work. These remarks are no less applicable to the whole human race, than to par-

* Part I. Chap. VII.

† Judges ix.

ticular parts of it. Men have revolted from God; and yet think to live in harmony amongst themselves. God in just judgment appears to have determined the contrary; and that till they return to him, they shall be given up to an evil spirit towards each other, and to the ravages of a succession of ambitious leaders, who shall destroy them in great numbers from the face of the earth. It is morally impossible indeed that it should be otherwise: for the same principle which induces them to renounce the divine government, dissolves the bands of human society. Supreme self-love is the origin of both; and is sufficient to account for all the disorder in the universe.

Candid Reader, review the subject of this Chapter. In the last we traced the agreement of the Holy Scriptures with historic fact; in this we have seen their correspondence with *living truth*, or with *things as they actually exist in the mind, and in the world*. Similar arguments might also have been drawn from the characters of believers and unbelievers. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called in the early ages of Christianity; and it has been the same in every age. To the Jews the gospel was from the first a stumbling-block, and to philosophers foolishness; and such it continues to this day. The existence of the Jews as a distinct people—their dispersion—their attachment to the Old Testament, and rejection of the New—their expectation of a Messiah—their acknowledgment of the truth of the historical facts concerning our Lord—the malignity of their spirit—in a word, their exact resemblance, even at this remote period, to the picture drawn of them in the New Testament, are facts which cannot be

atroverted. Judge impartially: Is there any thing in all this that bears the marks of imposture? A connoisseur will distinguish between paintings taken from life, and such as are the mere work of imagination. An accurate judge of moral painting will do the same. If the Scriptures gave false descriptions of men and things; if they flattered the vices of mankind, or exhibited the moral state of the world contrary to well-known fact, you would conclude them to be a work of falsehood. On the other hand, If they speak of things as they are; if conscience echo to their charges, and fact comport with their representations, they must have been taken from life; and you must conclude them to be, what they profess to be, *a work of truth*. And since the objects described are many of them beyond the ken of human observation, you must conclude that they are not only a work of truth, but, what they also profess to be, *the true sayings of God*.

C H A P. III.

The harmony of Scripture with its own professions, argued from the spirit and style in which it is written.

IF the Scriptures be what they profess to be, the word of God, it may be presumed that the spirit which they breathe, and even the style in which they are composed, will be different from what are found in any other productions. It is true, that, having been communicated through hu-

man mediums, we may expect them in a measure to be humanized; the peculiar turn and talents of each writer will be visible, and this will give them the character of variety; but amidst all this variety, a mind capable of discerning the divine excellence, will plainly perceive in them the finger of God.

With respect to *style*, though it is not on the natural, but the moral, or rather the *holy* beauties of Scripture that I would lay the principal stress; yet something may be observed of the other. So far as the beauty of language consists in its freedom from affectation, and in its conformity to the nature of the subject, it may be expected that a book written by holy men, inspired of God, will be possessed of this excellence. A divinely inspired production will not only be free from such blemishes as arise from vanity, and other evil dispositions of the mind, but will abound in those beauties which never fail to attend the genuine exercises of modesty, sensibility, and godly simplicity. It will reject the meretricious ornaments of art: but it will possess the more substantial beauties of nature. That this is true of the Scriptures has been proved by several able writers.*

Mr. Paine, however, can see nothing great, majestic, or worthy of God, in any part of the Bible. Among the numerous terms of reproach with which he honours it, he is pleased to censure the writings of Isaiah as “bombast, beneath the genius of a schoolboy;” and to compare the command of the great Creator, in the first chapter of Genesis,

* See Blackwall's *Sacred Classics*: Melmoth's *Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture*: to which is added Dwight's *Dissertation on the Poetry, History, and Eloquence of the Bible*.

Let there be light, to the “imperative manner of speaking used by a conjurer.”* This writer has given us no example of the bombast from Isaiah. Bombast is that species of writing in which great swelling words are used to convey little ideas. But is it thus in the writings of Isaiah? *And one cried to another, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.* Are the ideas too little in these instances for the words? The prophets wrote in a poetic style; and how could they write otherwise? Poetry is the language of passion; and such as theirs, of passion raised and inflamed by great and affecting objects. Their language is not that of common poetry, but, as an elegant writer expresses it, “It is the burst of inspiration.”

As to the objection against the sublimity of the passage in the first chapter of Genesis, it is suffi-

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 105. Note.

cient to observe that there is nothing, be it ever so majestic, and worthy of God, but a profane and ludicrous imagination may distort it. A rainbow may be compared to a fiddlestick : but it does not follow that it is an object of equal insignificance. Thunder and lightning may be imitated by a character not less contemptible than a conjurer ; but should any one infer that there is nothing more grand, more awful, or more worthy of God, in these displays of nature, than in the exhibitions of a country show, he would prove himself to be possessed of but a small portion of either wit or good sense.

I do not pretend to any great judgment in the beauties of composition : but there are persons of far superior judgment to this writer who have expressed themselves in a very different language. The late SIR WM. JONES, who for learning, and taste, as well as character, has left but few equals, thus expresses himself : “ I have regularly and attentively read these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that this Volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity and beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been composed.”

The acknowledgments of ROUSSEAU, likewise, whose taste for fine writing, and whose freedom from prejudice in favour of Christianity, none will call in question, will serve to confront the assertions of Mr. Paine. After declaring that as there were some proofs in favour of Revelation which he could not invalidate, so there were many objections against it which he could not resolve ; that he neither admitted, nor rejected it ; and that he rejected only

the *obligation* of submitting to it; he goes on to acknowledge as follows. “ I will confess to you farther, that the majesty of the Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction—how mean—how contemptible—are they, compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the air of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind! What subtilty! What truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and die, without weakness, and without ostentation?—Shall we suppose the Evangelic History a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospels; the marks of whose truth are so striking and invincible, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”*

Rousseau’s praises of the Scriptures remind us of

* Works Vol. V. pp. 215—218.

the high encomiums bestowed by Balaam on the Tabernacles of Israel. It is no unusual thing for men to admire that which they do not love.

Let us examine a little more minutely the *spirit* in which the Scriptures are written. It is this which constitutes their *holy* beauty, that distinguishes them from all other writings, and that affords the strongest evidence of their being written by inspiration of God.

In recording historical events the sacred writers *invariably eye the hand of God*: in some instances they entirely overlook second causes; and in others, where they are mentioned, it is only as instruments, fulfilling the divine will. Events that came to pass according to the usual course of things, and in which an ordinary historian would have seen nothing divine, are recorded by them amongst the works of the Lord. *The Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight—And the Lord sent against Jehoiakim bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord would not pardon.**

In their *prophecies*, while they foretold the heaviest calamities upon nations, their own and others, and viewing the hand of God in all, acquiesced in them; as men they felt tenderly for their fellow-

* 2 Kings xvii. 18. xxiv. 2, 3, 4.

creatures, even for their enemies. *My bowels, my bowels; I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.—O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still.** When Israel was exposed to calamities, all the neighbouring nations, who hated them on account of their religion, exulted over them: but when the cup went round to them, the prophets who foretold it were tenderly affected by it. *I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer-fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made shouting to cease, wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresb.†*

The miracles which they record are distinguished from the signs and lying wonders of following ages, in that there is always to be seen in them an end worthy of God. The far greater part of them were works of pure compassion to the parties; and the whole of them of benevolence to Society.

There is nothing in the scriptures adapted to gratify *presumptuous speculation* or *idle curiosity*. Such a spirit, on the contrary, is frequently checked, and every thing is directed to the renovation or improvement of the heart. The account given of the creation of the sun, moon and stars, is not intended,

* Jer. iv. 19. xlvii. 6.

† Isai. xvi. 9—11.

as Mr. *Henry* observes, to describe things “as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, to satisfy the curious; but as they are in relation to this earth, to which they serve as *lights*; and this is enough to furnish us with matter for praise and thanksgiving.” The miracles of Jesus were never performed to gratify curiosity. If the afflicted, or any on their behalf, present their petition, it is invariably heard and answered: but if the pharisees come and say, *Master, we would see a sign from thee*; or if Herod *hope to see a miracle done by him*, it is refused.* When one said to him, *Lord are there few that be saved?* he answered, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*†

There is nothing in the Scriptures tending in its own nature to excite *levity* or *folly*. They sometimes deal in the most cutting irony; but it is never for the sake of displaying wit, or raising a laugh, but invariably for the accomplishment of a serious and important end. A serious mind finds every thing to gratify it, and nothing to offend it: and even the most profligate character, unless he read them in search of something which he may convert into ridicule, is impressed with awe by the pointed and solemn manner in which they address him.

It may be said of the scriptures, and of them only, that they are *free from affectation and vanity*. You may sometimes find things of this sort described by the sacred writers; but you will never discern any such spirit in the descriptions themselves. Yet were they as men subject to human imperfec-

* Matt. xii. 38. Luke xxiii. 8, 9.

† Luke xiii. 24. See also xxi. 5—19.

xions: if therefore they had not been influenced by divine inspiration, blemishes of this kind must have appeared in their writings as well as in those of other men. But in what instance have they assumed a character which does not belong to them; or discovered a wish to be thought more religious, more learned, or more accomplished in any way than they were? Nor were they less free from vanity than from affectation. They were as far from making the most of what they were, as from aiming to appear what they were not. Instead of trumpeting their own praise, or aiming to transmit their fame to posterity, several of them have not so much as put their names to their writings; and those who have are generally out of sight. As you read their history, they seldom occur to your thoughts. Who thinks of the Evangelists when reading the *four gospels*; or of Luke while reading the *Acts of the Apostles*? Mr. Paine weaves the laurel on his own brows, vainly boasting that he has “written a book under the greatest disadvantages, which no Bible believer can answer;” and that with his axe upon his shoulder, like another Sennacherib, he has passed through, and cut down the tall cedars of our Lebanon.* But thus did not the sacred writers, even with regard to heathenism, because of the fear of God. Paul in one instance, for the sake of answering an important end, was compelled to speak the truth of himself, and to appear to boast; yet it is easy to perceive how much it was against his inclination. A *boaster* and a *fool* were in his account synonymous terms.†

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. Pref. p. vi. and p. 64.

† 2 Cor. xii.

The sacred writers, while they respect magistracy, and frown upon faction, tumult, and sedition, are *never known to flatter the great*. Compare the fustian eloquence of Tertullus with the manly speeches of Paul. Did he flatter Felix? No; he *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and Felix trembled*. Did he flatter Festus or even Agrippa? No; the highest compliment which proceeded from him was that *he knew the latter to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews*, and to maintain the divine inspiration of the prophets, which declaration, with the whole of this admirable apology, contained only the words of truth and soberness.

They discover no *anxiety to guard against seeming inconsistencies*, either with themselves, or one another. In works of imposture, especially where a number of persons are concerned, there is need of great care and caution, lest one part should contradict another; and such caution is easily perceived. But the sacred writers appear to have had no such concern about them. Conscious that all they wrote was true, they left it to prove its own consistency. Their productions possess consistency; but it is not a studied one, nor always apparent at first sight: it is that consistency which is certain to accompany truth.*

* "There is one argument," says Mr. *Wilberforce*, in his late excellent Treatise, "which impresses my mind with particular force. This is, the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have been adduced in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation thereby afforded of its truth:—the proof from prophecy—from miracles—from the character of Christ—from that of his apostles—from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity—from the nature and excellence of her practical precepts—from the accordance we have

There is an *inimitable simplicity in all their writings, and a feeling sense of what they write.* They come to the point without ceremony or preamble; and having told the truth, leave it without mingling their own reflections. This remark is particularly exemplified by the four evangelists in narrating the treatment of their Lord. Writers who had felt less would have said more.

There is something in all they say which leaves behind it a sensation produced by no other writings; something peculiarly suited to the mind when in its most serious frames, oppressed by affliction, or thoughtful about a future life; something which

“ lately pointed out between the doctrinal and practical system of
 “ Christianity, whether considered each in itself, or in their mutual
 “ relation to each other—from other species of internal evidence,
 “ afforded in the more abundance as the sacred records have been
 “ scrutinized with greater care—from the accounts of cotemporary,
 “ or nearly cotemporary writers—from the impossibility of account-
 “ ing on any other supposition, than that of the truth of Christianity,
 “ for its promulgation, and early prevalence: these and other lines
 “ of argument have all been brought forward, and urged by dif-
 “ ferent writers, in proportion as they have struck the minds of dif-
 “ ferent observers more or less forcibly. Now granting that some
 “ obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the
 “ Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world;
 “ though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed
 “ must, have been attempted to be laid; it seems, at least to my un-
 “ derstanding, morally impossible that so many species of proofs, and
 “ all so strong, should have lent their concurrent aid, and have
 “ united their joint force in the establishment of the falsehood. It
 “ may assist the reader in estimating the value of this argument, to
 “ consider upon how different a footing, in this respect, has rested
 “ every other religious system, without exception, which was ever
 “ proposed to the world; and indeed every other historical fact, of
 “ which the truth has been at all contested.”

gives melancholy itself a charm, and produces tears more delicious to the mind than the most high-flavoured earthly enjoyments. By what name shall I express it? It is *a savour of life, a savour of God, an unction from the Holy One.*

Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the New Testament narratives: to him there appears nothing but *imposture, folly, contradiction, falsehood*, and every thing that marks an evil cause. And I suppose he could say the same of the things narrated; of the labours, tears, temptations, and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and of every thing else in the New Testament. Mr. Paine, however, is not the only instance wherein men have lacked understanding. The Jews saw no beauty in the Saviour that they should desire him: and there are persons who can see no beauty in any of the works of God. Creation is to them a blank. But though *the eyes of a fool are at the ends of the earth*, for want of objects to attract them, yet *wisdom is before him that understandeth.** If Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the sacred pages, it does not follow that there is no beauty to be seen. Let any person of candour and discernment read over the four Evangelists, and judge whether they bear the marks of imposture. If he have any difficulty, it will be in preserving the character of a critic. Unless he be perpetually on his guard, he will insensibly lose sight of the writers, and be all enamoured of the great object concerning which they write. In reading the nine last chapters of John, he will perceive the writer to be deeply affected. Though a long time had elapsed since the events had taken

* Prov. xvii. 24.

place, and he was far advanced in years; yet his heart was manifestly overwhelmed with his subject. There is reason to think that the things which Mr. Paine attempts to ridicule, drew tears from his eyes while he narrated them; as an ingenuous mind will find it difficult to review the narrative without similar sensations.

Mr. *Paine* is pleased to say, "Any person that could read and write might have written such a book as the Bible:" but nothing can be farther from the truth. It were saying but little, to affirm that *he* could not produce a single page or sentence that would have a similar effect. Stranger, as he has proved himself to be, to the love of God and righteousness, he could not communicate what he does not feel. The croaking raven might as well endeavour to imitate the voice of the dove, or the song of the nightingale, as he attempt to emulate the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Paine's spirit is sufficiently apparent in his page, and that of the sacred writers in theirs. So far from writing as they wrote, he cannot understand their writings. That which the Scriptures teach on this subject is sufficiently verified in him, and all others of his spirit: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.* As easily might the loveliness of chastity be perceived, or the pleasures of a good conscience appreciated by a debauchee, as the things of God be received by a mind like that of Mr. Paine.

Finally, If the Bible be the word of God, it may be expected that *such an authority, and divine sanction should accompany it*, that while a candid mind shall presently perceive its evidence, those

who read it either with negligence or prejudice, shall only be confirmed in their unbelief. It is fit that God's word should not be trifled with. When the pharisees captiously demanded a sign, or miracle, they were sent away without one. They might go, if they pleased, and report the inability of Jesus to work a miracle. The evidence attending the resurrection of Christ is of this description. He had exhibited proofs enow of his divine mission publicly, and before the eyes of all men; but seeing they were obstinately rejected, he told his enemies that they should see him no more till he should come on a different occasion:* and they saw him no more. They might insist, if they pleased, that the testimony of his disciples, who witnessed his resurrection, was insufficient. It is thus that heresies, offences, and scandals are permitted in the Christian church, that they who are approved may be made manifest; and that occasion may be furnished for them who seek occasion, to reproach religion, and persist in their unbelief. If men choose delusion, God also will choose to give them up to it. *The scorner shall seek wisdom, and shall not find it; and the word of life shall be a savour of death unto death to them that perish.* Mr. Paine, when he wrote the First part of his *Age of Reason*, was without a Bible. Afterwards, he tells us, he procured one; or to use his own schoolboy language, "a Bible and a Testament; and I have found them, he adds, to be much worse books than I had conceived."† In all this there is nothing surprising. On the contrary, if such a

* Matt. xxiii. 39.

† *Age of Reason*, Part II, Pref. p. xii.

scorner had found wisdom, the Scriptures themselves had not been fulfilled.*

If an insolent coxcomb had been of opinion that Sir Isaac Newton was a mere ignoramus in philosophy, and had gone into his company that he might catechize, and afterwards, as occasion should offer, expose him; it is not unlikely that this great writer, perceiving his arrogance, would have suffered him to depart without answering his questions, even though he might know at the time that his unfavourable opinion of him would thereby be the more confirmed. Let us but come to the Scriptures in a proper spirit, and we shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God: but if we approach them in a cavilling humour, we may expect not only to remain in ignorance, but to be hardened more and more in unbelief.

C H A P IV.

The consistency of the Christian doctrine, particularly that of salvation through a Mediator, with sober Reason.

IF there be a God who created us; if we have all sinned against him; and if there be reason to believe that he will call us to account for our conduct, all which principles are admitted by Mr. Paine; † a gloomy prospect must needs present itself, sufficient indeed to render man “the slave of

* Prov. xiv. 6.

† *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 1. Part II. p. 100.

terror." It is not in the power of this writer, nor of any man living who rejects the Bible, to assure us that pardon will have any place in the divine government; and however light he may make of the scripture doctrine of hell, He that calls men to account for their deeds will be at no loss how or where to punish them. But allowing that God is disposed to shew mercy to the guilty, the question is, Whether his doing so by or without a Mediator be most consistent with what we know of fitness or propriety?

That pardon is bestowed through a mediator in a vast variety of instances among men, cannot be denied; and that it is proper it should be so must be evident to every thinking mind. All who are acquainted with the common affairs of life must be aware of the necessity of such proceedings, and the good effects of them upon society.*

It is far less *humbling* for an offender to be pardoned at his own request, than through the interposition of a third person: for in the one case he may be led to think that it was his virtue and penitence which influenced the decision; whereas in the other he is compelled to feel his own unworthiness: and this may be one reason why the mediation of Christ is so offensive. It is no wonder indeed that those who deny humility to be a virtue,† should be disgusted with a doctrine, the professed object of which is to abase the pride of man.

As forgiveness without a mediator is less humbling to the offender, so it provides less for the *honour* of the offended, than a contrary proceeding.

* See Pres. Edward's *Remarks on important Theological Controversies*, Chap. VI.

† Volney's *Law of Nature*, p. 49.

Many a compassionate heart has longed to go forth, like David towards Absalom ; but, from a just sense of wounded authority, could not tell how to effect it ; and has greatly desired that some common friend would interpose, and save his honour. He has wished to remit the sentence ; but has felt the want of a mediator, at the instance of whom he might give effect to his desires, and exercise mercy without seeming to be regardless of justice. An offender who should object to a mediator would be justly considered as hardened in impenitence, and regardless of the honour of the offended : and it is difficult to say what other construction can be put upon the objections of sinners to the Mediation of Christ.

Again, To exercise pardon without a mediator, would be fixing no such *stigma upon the evil of the offence*, as is done by a contrary mode of proceeding. Every man feels that those faults which may be overlooked on a mere acknowledgment, are not of a very heinous nature : they are such as arise from inadvertence rather than from ill design ; and include little more than an error of the judgment. On the other hand, every man feels that the calling in of a third person is making much of the offence, treating it as a serious affair, a breach that is not to be lightly passed over. This may be another reason why the Mediation of Christ is so offensive to the adversaries of the Gospel. It is no wonder that men who are continually speaking of moral evil under the palliating names of *error, frailty, imperfection*, and the like, should spurn at a doctrine, the implication of which *condemns** it to everlasting infamy.

Finally, To bestow pardon without a mediator

* Rom. viii. 3.

would be treating the offence as *private*, or passing over it as a matter unknown, an affair which does not affect the well-being of society, and which therefore requires no public manifestation of displeasure against it. Many a notorious offender would doubtless wish matters to be thus conducted, and from an aversion to public exposure, would feel strong objections to the formal interposition of a third person. Whether this may not be another reason of dislike to the mediation of Christ, I shall not decide; but of this I am fully satisfied, that the want of a proper sense of the great evil of sin as it affects the moral government of the universe is a reason why its adversaries see no necessity for it, nor fitness in it. They prove by all their writings that they have no delight in the moral excellency of the divine nature, no just sense of the glory of moral government, and no proper views of the pernicious and wide extended influence of sin upon the moral system: Is it any wonder therefore that they should be unconcerned about the plague being stayed by a sacrifice? Such views are too enlarged for their selfish and contracted minds. The only object of their care, even in their most serious moments, is to escape punishment: for the honour of God, and the real good of creation, they discover no concern. The amount is this: If it be indeed improper for a guilty creature to lie low before its Creator; if it be unfit that any regard should be paid to the honour of his character; if the offence committed against him be of so small account that it is unnecessary for him to express any displeasure against it; and if it have been so private, and insulated in its operations as in no way to affect the well-being of the moral system, the doctrine of forgiveness through a medi-

ator is unreasonable. But if the contrary be true; if it be proper for a guilty creature to lie in the dust before his offended Creator; if the honour of the divine character deserve the first and highest regard; if moral evil be the greatest of all evils, and require, even where it is forgiven, a strong expression of divine displeasure against it; and if its pernicious influence be such that if suffered to operate according to its native tendency, it would dethrone the Almighty, and desolate the universe, the doctrine in question must accord with the plainest dictates of reason.

The sense of mankind, with regard to the necessity of a mediator, may be illustrated by the following similitude. Let us suppose a division in the army of one of the wisest and best of kings, through the evil council of a foreign enemy, to have been disaffected to his government; and that without any provocation on his part, they traitorously conspired against his crown and life. The attempt failed; and the offenders were seized, disarmed, tried by the laws of their country, and condemned to die. A respite however was granted them, during his majesty's pleasure. At this solemn period, while every part of the army, and of the empire, was expecting the fatal order for execution, the king was employed in meditating mercy. But how could mercy be shewn? 'To make light of a conspiracy, said he to his friends, would loosen the bands of good government: other divisions of the army might be tempted to follow their example; and the nation at large might be in danger of imputing it to tameness, fear, or some unworthy motive.'

Every one felt in this case the necessity of a mediator, and agreed as to the general line of conduct

proper for him to pursue. 'He must not attempt' said they, 'to compromise the difference by dividing the blame: That would make things worse. He must justify the king, and condemn the outrage committed against him; he must offer, if possible, some honourable expedient, by means of which the bestowment of pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority; he must convince the conspirators of their crime, and introduce them in the character of supplicants; and mercy must be shewn them out of respect to him, or for his sake.'

But who could be found to mediate in such a cause? This was an important question. A work of this kind, it was allowed on all hands, required singular qualifications. 'He must be *perfectly clear of any participation in the offence,*' said one, 'or inclination to favour it: for to pardon conspirators at the intercession of one who is friendly to their cause, would be not only making light of the crime, but giving a sanction to it.'

'He must' said another, 'be one who on account of his character and services *stands high in the esteem of the king and of the public:* for to mediate in such a cause is to become, in a sort, responsible for the issue. A mediator in effect pledges his honour that no evil will result to the state from the granting of his request. But if a mean opinion be entertained of him, no trust can be placed in him, and consequently no good impression would be made by his mediation on the public mind.'

'I conceive it is necessary,' said a third, 'that the weight of the mediation should bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crime, and to

‘ the value of the favour requested ; and that for
 ‘ this end it is proper he should be a person of *great*
 ‘ *dignity*. For his majesty to pardon a company of
 ‘ conspirators at the intercession of one of their for-
 ‘ mer comrades, or of any other obscure character,
 ‘ even though he might be a worthy man, would
 ‘ convey a very diminutive idea of the evil of the
 ‘ offence.’

A fourth remarked, that ‘ he must possess a *ten-*
 ‘ *der compassion* towards the unhappy offenders, or
 ‘ he would not cordially interest himself on their
 ‘ behalf.’

Finally, It was suggested by a fifth, that ‘ for the
 ‘ greater fitness of the proceeding, it would be pro-
 ‘ per that some *relation* or *connexion* should subsist
 ‘ between the parties. We feel the propriety,’ said
 he, ‘ of forgiving an offence at the intercession of
 ‘ a father, or a brother ; or if it be committed by
 ‘ a soldier, of his commanding officer. Without
 ‘ some kind of previous relation or connexion, a
 ‘ mediation would have the appearance of an arbi-
 ‘ trary and formal process, and prove but little in-
 ‘ teresting to the hearts of the community.’

Such were the reasonings of the king’s friends ;
 but where to find the character in whom these qua-
 lifications were united, and what particular expedi-
 ent could be devised by means of which, pardon,
 instead of relaxing, should strengthen just authori-
 ty, were subjects too difficult for them to resolve.

Meanwhile the king and his son, whom he great-
 ly loved, and whom he had appointed Generalissimo
 of all his forces, had retired from the company,
 and were conversing about the matter which at-
 tracted the general attention.

‘ My son !’ said the benevolent Sovereign, ‘ what

‘ can be done in behalf of these unhappy men? To
‘ order them for execution, violates every feeling
‘ of my heart: Yet to pardon them is dangerous.
‘ The army, and even the empire would be under
‘ a strong temptation to think lightly of rebellion.
‘ If mercy be exercised, it must be through a me-
‘ diator; and who is qualified to mediate in such a
‘ cause? And what expedient can be devised by
‘ means of which pardon shall not relax, but
‘ strengthen just authority? Speak, my son, and
‘ say what measures can be pursued?’

‘ My Father!’ said the prince, ‘ I feel the in-
‘ sult offered to your person and government, and
‘ the injury thereby aimed at the empire at large.
‘ They have transgressed without cause, and deserve
‘ to die without mercy. Yet I also feel for them.
‘ I have the heart of a soldier. I cannot endure to
‘ witness their execution. What shall I say? On
‘ me be this wrong! Let me suffer in their stead.
‘ Inflict on me as much as is necessary to impress
‘ the army and the nation with a just sense of the
‘ evil, and of the importance of good order, and
‘ faithful allegiance. Let it be in their presence,
‘ and in the presence of all assembled. When this
‘ is done, let them be permitted to implore and re-
‘ ceive your majesty’s pardon in my name. If any
‘ man refuse so to implore, and so to receive it, let
‘ him die the death!’

‘ My Son!’ replied the king, ‘ You have ex-
‘ pressed my heart! The same things have occu-
‘ pied my mind; but it was my desire that you
‘ should be voluntary in the undertaking. It shall
‘ be as you have said. I shall be satisfied; justice
‘ itself will be satisfied; and I pledge my honour
‘ that you also shall be satisfied, in seeing the hap-

‘py effects of your disinterested conduct. Propriety requires that I stand aloof in the day of your affliction; but I will not leave you utterly, nor suffer the beloved of my soul to remain in that condition. A temporary affliction on your part will be more than equivalent to death on theirs. The dignity of your person and character will render the sufferings of an hour of greater account as to the impression of the public mind, than if all the rebellious had been executed: and by how much I am known to have loved you, by so much will my compassion to them, and my displeasure against their wicked conduct be made manifest. Go, my son, assume the likeness of a criminal, and suffer in their place!’

The gracious design being communicated at court, all were struck with it. Those who had reasoned on the qualifications of a mediator saw that in the prince all were united, and were filled with admiration: but that he should be willing to suffer in the place of rebels was beyond all that could have been asked or thought. Yet seeing he himself had generously proposed it, would survive his sufferings, and reap the reward of them, they cordially acquiesced. The only difficulty that was started was amongst the Judges of the realm. They, at first, questioned whether the proceeding were admissible. ‘The law,’ said they, ‘makes provision for the transfer of debts, but not of crimes. Its language is, *The soul that sinneth shall die.*’ But when they came to view things on a more enlarged scale, considering it as an expedient on an extraordinary occasion, and perceived that the *spirit* of the law would be preserved, and all

the *ends* of good government answered, they were satisfied. 'It is not a measure,' said they, 'for which the law provides: yet it is not contrary to the law, but above it.'

The day appointed arrived. The prince appeared, and suffered as a criminal. The hearts of the king's friends bled at every stroke, and burned with indignation against the conduct which rendered it necessary. His enemies however, even some of those for whom he suffered, continuing to be disaffected, added to the affliction, by deriding and insulting him all the time. At a proper period, he was rescued from their outrage. Returning to the palace, amidst the tears and shouts of the loyal spectators, the suffering hero was embraced by his royal Father; who, in addition to the natural affection which he bore to him as a son, loved him for his singular interposition at such a crisis. 'Sit thou,' said he, 'at my right hand! Though the threatenings of the law be not literally accomplished, yet the spirit of them is preserved. The honour of good government is secured, and the end of punishment more effectually answered than if all the rebels had been sacrificed. Ask of me what I shall give thee! No favour can be too great to be bestowed, even upon the unworthiest, nor any crime too aggravated to be forgiven, in thy name. I will grant thee according to thine own heart! Ask of me my Son, what I shall give thee!'

He asked for the offenders to be introduced as supplicants at the feet of his Father, for the forgiveness of their crimes, and for the direction of affairs till order and happiness should be perfectly restored.

A proclamation addressed to the conspirators was now issued, stating what had been their conduct, what the conduct of the King, and what of the prince. Messengers also were appointed to carry it, with orders to read it publicly, and to expostulate with them individually, beseeching them to be reconciled to their offended Sovereign, and to assure them that if they rejected this, there remained no more hope of mercy.

A spectator would suppose that in mercy so freely offered, and so honourably communicated, every one would have acquiesced; and if reason had governed the offenders, it had been so: but many amongst them continued under the influence of disaffection, and disaffection gives a false colouring to every thing.

The time of the respite having proved longer than was at first expected, some had begun to amuse themselves with idle speculations, flattering themselves that their fault was a mere trifle, and that it would certainly be passed over. Indeed the greater part of them had turned their attention to other things, concluding that the king was not in good earnest.

When the proclamation was read, many paid no manner of attention to it; some insinuated that the messengers were interested men, and that there might be no truth in what they said; and some even abused them as impostors. So, having delivered their message, they withdrew: and the rebels finding themselves alone, such of them as paid any attention to the subject expressed their minds as follows—

‘My heart,’ says one, ‘rises against every part of this proceeding. Why all this ado about a

‘ few words spoken one to another ? Can such a
‘ message as this have proceeded from the King ?
‘ What have we done so much against him, that so
‘ much should be made of it ? No petition of
‘ ours, it seems, would avail any thing ; and no-
‘ thing that we could say or do could be regarded,
‘ unless presented in the name of a third person.
‘ Surely if we present a petition in our own names,
‘ in which we beg pardon, and promise not to re-
‘ peat the offence, this might suffice. Even this
‘ is more than I can find in my heart to comply
‘ with ; but every thing beyond it is unreasonable ;
‘ and who can believe that the king can desire it ?’

‘ If a third person,’ says another, ‘ must be con-
‘ cerned in the affair, what occasion is there for
‘ one so high in rank and dignity ? To stand in
‘ need of *such* a mediator must stamp our characters
‘ with everlasting infamy. It is very unreasonable :
‘ who can believe it ? If the king be just and good,
‘ as they say he is, how can he wish thus publicly
‘ to expose us ?’

‘ I observe,’ says a third, ‘ that *the mediator is*
‘ *wholly on the king’s side* ; and one whom, though
‘ he affects to pity us, we have from the outset
‘ considered as no less our enemy than the king
‘ himself. If indeed he could compromise mat-
‘ ters, and would allow that we had our provoca-
‘ tions, and would promise us redress, and an ea-
‘ sier yoke in future, I should feel inclined to
‘ hearken : but if he have no concessions to offer,
‘ I can never be reconciled.’

‘ I believe,’ says a fourth, ‘ that the king knows
‘ very well that we have not had justice done us,
‘ and therefore this mediation business is intro-
‘ duced to make us amends for the injury. It is

‘ an affair settled somehow betwixt him and his
 ‘ son. They call it *grace*; and I am not much
 ‘ concerned what they call it, so that my life is
 ‘ spared: but this I say, If he had not made this
 ‘ or some kind of provision, I should have thought
 ‘ him a tyrant.’

‘ You are all wrong,’ says a fifth: ‘ I compre-
 ‘ hend the design, and am well pleased with it.
 ‘ I hate the government as much as any of you :
 ‘ but I love the mediator; for I understand it is
 ‘ his intention to deliver me from its tyranny.
 ‘ He has paid the debt, the king is satisfied, and
 ‘ I am free. I will sue out my right, and demand
 ‘ my liberty!’

In addition to this, one of the company observed, he did not see what the greater part of them had to do with the proclamation, unless it were to give it a hearing, which they had done already. ‘ For,’ said he, ‘ pardon is promised
 ‘ only to them who are *willing* to submit, and it
 ‘ is well known that many of us are unwilling;
 ‘ nor *can* we alter our minds on this subject.’

After a while, however, some of them were brought to relent. They thought upon the subject matter of the proclamation, were convinced of the justness of its statements, reflected upon their evil conduct, and were sincerely sorry on account of it. And now the mediation of the prince appeared in a very different light. They cordially said *Amen* to every part of the proceeding. The very things which gave such offence while their hearts were disaffected, now appeared to them fit, and right, and glorious. ‘ It is fit,’ say they, ‘ that the king should be honoured, and
 ‘ that we should be humbled; for we have *transf-*

‘ *grieved without cause.* It is right that no regard
‘ should be paid to any petition of ours for its
‘ own sake; for we have done deeds worthy of
‘ death. It is glorious that we should be saved
‘ at the intercession of so honourable a personage.
‘ The dignity of his character, together with his
‘ surprising condescension and goodness, impresses
‘ us more than any thing else, and fills our hearts
‘ with penitence, confidence, and love. That
‘ which in the proclamation is called grace is
‘ grace; for we are utterly unworthy of it; and
‘ if we had all suffered according to our sentence,
‘ the king and his throne had been guiltless. We
‘ embrace the mediation of the prince, not as a
‘ reparation for an injury, but as a singular in-
‘ stance of mercy. And far be it from us that
‘ we should consider it as designed to deliver us
‘ from our original and just allegiance to his ma-
‘ jesty’s government! No, rather it is intended to
‘ restore us to it. We love our intercessor, and
‘ will implore forgiveness in his name; but we also
‘ love our sovereign, and long to prostrate our-
‘ selves at his feet. We rejoice in the satisfaction
‘ which the prince has made, and all our hopes of
‘ mercy are founded upon it: but we have no no-
‘ tion of being freed by it previously to our acqui-
‘ escence in it. Nor do we desire any other kind
‘ of freedom than that which, while it remits the
‘ just sentence of the law, restores us to his majes-
‘ ty’s government. O that we were once clear of
‘ this hateful and horrid conspiracy, and might be
‘ permitted to serve him with affection and fidelity
‘ all the days of our life! We cannot suspect the
‘ *sincerity* of the invitation, or acquit our compa-
‘ nions on the score of *unwillingness*. Why should

‘ we ? We do not on this account acquit ourselves.
 ‘ On the contrary, it is the remembrance of our un-
 ‘ willingness that now cuts us to the heart. We well
 ‘ remember to what it was owing that we *could not*
 ‘ be satisfied with the just government of the king,
 ‘ and afterwards *could not* comply with the invita-
 ‘ tions of mercy: it was because we were under the
 ‘ dominion of a *disaffected spirit*; a spirit which,
 ‘ wicked as it is in itself, it would be more wicked
 ‘ to justify. Our counsel is, therefore, the same
 ‘ as that of his majesty’s messengers, with whom
 ‘ we now take our stand. Let us lay aside this
 ‘ cavilling humour, repent, and sue for mercy in
 ‘ the way prescribed, ere mercy be hid from our
 ‘ eyes !’

The reader, in applying this supposed case to the Mediation of Christ, will do me the justice to remember that I do not pretend to have perfectly represented it. Probably there is no similitude fully adequate to the purpose. The distinction between the Father and the Son is not the same as that which subsists between a father and a son amongst men: the latter are two separate beings; but to assert this of the former would be inconsistent with the divine unity. And with respect to the innocent voluntarily suffering for the guilty, in a few extraordinary instances this principle may be adopted; but the management and application of it generally require more wisdom and more power than mortals possess. We may by the help of a machine collect a few sparks of the electrical fluid, and produce an effect somewhat resembling that of lightning: but we cannot cause it to blaze like the Almighty, nor *thunder with a voice like Him.*

Imperfect, however, as the foregoing similitude

may appear in some respects, it is sufficient to shew the fallacy of Mr. Paine's reasoning. "The doctrine of Redemption," says this writer, "has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me in prison, another person can take the debt upon himself, and pay it for me. But if I have committed a *crime*, every circumstance of the case is changed. Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice to do this, is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself. It is then no longer justice: but is indiscriminate revenge."* This objection, which is the same for substance as has been frequently urged by Socinians as well as deists, is founded in misrepresentation. It is not true that Redemption has for its basis the idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. That sin is called a *debt*, and the death of Christ a *price*, a *ransom* &c., is true; but it is no unusual thing for moral obligations and deliverances to be expressed in language borrowed from pecuniary transactions. The obligations of a son to a father are commonly expressed by such terms as owing and paying: he *owes* a debt of obedience, and in yielding it he *pays* a debt of gratitude. The same may be said of an obligation to punishment. A murderer *owes* his life to the justice of his country; and when he suffers, he is said to *pay* the awful debt. So also if a great character by suffering death could deliver his country, such deliverance would be spoken of as ob-

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 20.

tained by the *price* of blood. No one mistakes these things by understanding them of pecuniary transactions. In such connexions, every one perceives that the terms are used not literally but metaphorically; and it is thus that they are to be understood with reference to the death of Christ. As sin is not a pecuniary, but a moral debt; so the atonement for it is not a pecuniary, but a moral ransom.

There is doubtless a sufficient analogy between pecuniary and moral proceedings to justify the use of such language, both in scripture and in common life: and it is easy to perceive the advantages which arise from it; as besides conveying much important truth, it renders it peculiarly impressive to the mind. But it is not always safe to reason from the former to the latter; much less is it just to affirm that the latter has for its basis every principle which pertains to the former. The deliverance effected by the prince in the case before stated might with propriety be called a *redemption*; and the recollection of it under this idea would be very impressive to the minds of those who were delivered. They would scarcely be able to see or think of their Commander in Chief, even though it might be years after the event, without being reminded of the *price* at which their pardon was obtained, and dropping a tear of ingenuous grief over their unworthy conduct on this account. Yet it would not be just to say that this redemption had for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. It was moral justice which in this case was satisfied; not however in its ordinary form, but as exercised on an extraordinary occasion; not the letter, but the spirit of it.

The scripture doctrine of atonement being con-

veyed in language borrowed from pecuniary transactions, is not only improved by unbelievers into an argument against the truth of the gospel, but has been the occasion of many errors amongst the professors of Christianity. Socinus on this ground attempts to explain away the necessity of a satisfaction. "God," says he, "is our *Creditor*. Our sins are *debts* which we have contracted with him; but every one may yield up his right, and more especially God, who is the supreme Lord of all, and extolled in the scriptures for his liberality and goodness. Hence then it is evident that God can pardon sins without any satisfaction received."* *Others*, who profess to embrace the doctrine of satisfaction, have on the same ground perverted and abused it; objecting to the propriety of humble and continued applications for mercy, and presuming to claim the forgiveness of their sins, past, present, and to come, as their legal right, and what it would be unjust in the Supreme Being, having received complete satisfaction, to withhold.

To the reasoning of Socinus, Dr. Owen judiciously replies by distinguishing between right as it respects *debts*, and as it respects *government*. The former he allows may be given up without a satisfaction, but not the latter. "Our sins," he adds, "are called debts, not properly, but metaphorically."† This answer equally applies to those who pervert the doctrine, as to those who deny it: for though in matters of debt and credit a full satisfaction from a surety excludes the idea of *free* pardon on the part of the creditor, and admits of a *claim*

* *Treatise of Jesus Christ the Saviour*, Pt. III. Ch. I.

† *Dissertation on Divine Justice*, Ch. IX. § vii, viii.

on the part of the debtor, yet it is otherwise in relation to crimes. In the interposition of the prince as stated above, an honourable expedient was adopted, by means of which the sovereign was satisfied, and the exercise of mercy rendered consistent with just authority: but there was no less grace in the act of forgiveness than if it had been without a satisfaction. However well pleased the king might be with the conduct of his son, the freeness of pardon was not at all diminished by it; nor must the criminals come before him as claimants, but as supplicants, imploring mercy in the mediator's name.

Such are the leading ideas which the scriptures give us of Redemption by Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul especially teaches this doctrine with great precision—*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.** From this passage we may remark, First, That the *grace* of God, as taught in the scriptures, is not that kind of liberality which Socinians and deists ascribe to him, which sets aside the necessity of a satisfaction. Free grace according to Paul, requires a *propitiation*, even the shedding of the Saviour's *blood*, as a medium through which it may be honourably communicated. Secondly, Redemption by Jesus Christ was accomplished, not by a satisfaction that should preclude

* Rom. iii. 24—26.

the exercise of grace in forgiveness, but in which the displeasure of God against sin being manifested, mercy to the sinner might be exercised without any suspicion of his having relinquished his regards for righteousness. In *setting forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation*, he declared his righteousness for the remission of sins. Thirdly, The righteousness of God was not only declared when Christ was made a propitiatory sacrifice ; but continues to be manifested in the acceptance of believers through his name. He appears as *Just* while acting the part of a *justifier* towards every one that *believeth in Jesus*. Fourthly, that which is here applied to the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance with God, is applicable to all other spiritual blessings : all, according to the scriptures, are freely communicated through the same distinguished medium. See Ephes. i.*

* The Christian reader, it is presumed, may from hence obtain a clear view of the ends answered by the death of Christ, a subject which has occupied much attention amongst divines. Some have asserted that Christ by his satisfaction accomplished this only, "that God now, consistently with the honour of his justice, may pardon (returning) sinners if he willeth so to do." This is doubtless true as far as it goes : but it makes no provision for the return of the sinner. This scheme therefore leaves the sinner to perish in impenitence and unbelief, and the Saviour without any security of seeing of the travail of his soul. For how can a sinner return without the power of the Holy Spirit ? And the Holy Spirit, equally with every other spiritual blessing, is given in consideration of the death of Christ.—Others, to remedy this defect, have considered the death of Christ as *purchasing* repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings, on behalf of the elect ; and upon this ground have maintained that " God is bound in strict justice, in respect of Jesus Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for whom he died."* The writer of these pages acknowledges he never could

* See Dr. Owen's Dissertation on Divine Justice, Ch. XII. Sec. v, vi, vii.

These remarks may suffice to shew, not only that Mr. Paine's assertion has no truth in it, but that all those professors of Christianity who have adopted his principle, have so far deviated from the doctrine of Redemption as it is taught in the Scriptures.

perceive that any clear or determinate idea was conveyed by the term purchase in this connexion, nor does it appear to him to be a doctrine taught in the scriptures. The notion of grace being bestowed *on account of value received* appears to him inconsistent with the freeness of grace itself, and with the perfection of the Divine Being, to whom nothing can be added or given which can lay him under obligation. If the salvation of sinners had been a commercial transaction, he might possibly have been bound in strict right, with respect to Christ, to bestow grace and glory; but in that case there would have been no room for free remission, with respect to the Father. If sin be what Dr. Owen very justly contends it is, not a *debt*, but a *crime*; and if the satisfaction of Christ was not a reimbursement of lost property, but an expedient devised for the preserving of the divine character in the exercise of mercy, no such consequence will follow. God will be under no other obligation to save any sinner than that which spontaneously arises from his own nature, and the promise made to his Son.

If we say, A WAY WAS OPENED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR THE FREE AND CONSISTENT EXERCISE OF MERCY, IN ALL THE METHODS WHICH SOVEREIGN WISDOM SAW FIT TO ADOPT, perhaps we shall include every material idea which the Scriptures give us of that important event.

There are *three* kinds of blessings in particular, which God out of regard to the death of his Son bestows upon men. First, He sends forth the gospel of salvation, accompanied with a free and indefinite invitation to embrace it, and an assurance that whosoever complies with the invitation, (for which there is no ability wanting in any man who possesses an honest heart) shall have everlasting life. This favour is bestowed ON SINNERS AS SINNERS. God *giveth the true bread from heaven* in this way to many who never receive it. He inviteth those to the gospel supper who refuse and *make light of it*. John vi. 32, 36. Matt. xxii. 4, 5.

Secondly, He bestows his Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the

As to what Mr. Paine alledges, that the innocent suffering for the guilty, even though it be with his own consent, is contrary to every principle of moral justice, he affirms the same of God's *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.** But this is a truth evident by universal experience. It is seen every day, in every part of the world. If Mr. Paine indulge in intemperance, and leave children behind him, they may feel the consequences of his misconduct when he is in his grave. The sins of the father may thus be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. It would however be their *affliction* only, and not their punishment. Yet such visitations are wisely ordered as a motive to sobriety. Nor is it between parents and children only that such a connexion exists, as that the happiness of one depends upon the conduct of others: a slight survey of society, in its various relations, must convince us that the same principle pervades creation. To call this injustice, is to fly in the face of the Creator.

soul: gives a new heart, and a right spirit, and takes away the heart of stone. *Christ is exalted to give repentance, Acts v. 31. Unto us it is given in behalf of Christ, to believe in Him, Phil. i. 29. We have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 1. This favour is conferred on ELECT SINNERS. See Acts xiii. 48. Rom. viii. 28—30.*

Thirdly, Through the same medium is given the free pardon of all our sins, acceptance with God, power to become the sons of God, and the promise of everlasting life. *Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake, 1 John ii. 12. God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, Ephes. iv. 32. We are accepted in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. By means of his death we receive the promise of eternal inheritance, Heb. ix. 15. This kind of blessings is conferred on BELIEVING SINNERS.*

* *Age of Reason, Part I. p. 4. Note.*

With such an objector I have nothing to do: *He that reproveth God, let him answer it.*

If the idea of the innocent suffering in the room of the guilty were in all cases inadmissible, and utterly repugnant to the human understanding, how came the use of *expiatory sacrifices* to prevail as it has, in every age and nation? Whether the idea first proceeded from a divine command, as Christians generally believe, or whatever was its origin, it has approved itself to the minds of men; and not of the most uncultivated part of mankind only, but of the most learned and polite. The sacrifices of the Gentiles it is true were full of superstition, and widely different, as might be expected, from those which were regulated by the Scriptures; but the general principle is the same: All agree in the idea of the displeasure of Deity being appeasable by an innocent victim being sacrificed in the place of the guilty. The idea of expiatory sacrifices, and of a mediation founded upon them, is beautifully expressed in the book of Job; a book not only of great antiquity, but which seems to have obtained the approbation of Mr. Paine, having, as he supposes, been written by a Gentile.—*And it was so, that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eli-*

*phaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went, and did according as the Lord commanded them : the Lord also accepted Job.**

The objections which are now made to the sacrifice of Christ, equally apply to all expiatory sacrifices; the offering up of which, had not the former superseded them, would have continued to this day.

If an innocent character offer to die in the room of a guilty fellow-creature, it is not ordinarily accepted, nor would it be proper that it should. For he may have no just right to dispose of his life; or if he have, he has no power to resume it: there may likewise be no such relation between the parties, as that the suffering of the one should express displeasure against the conduct of the other. Besides this, there may be no great and good end accomplished by such a substitution, to society: the loss sustained by the death of the one might be equal if not superior to the gain from the life of the other. If the evil to be endured might be survived; if the relation between the parties were such, that in the sufferings of the one mankind would be impressed with the evil of the other; and if by such a proceeding great advantage would accrue to society, instead of being accounted inadmissible, it would be reckoned right, and wise, and good. If a dignified individual, by enduring some temporary severity from an offended nation, could appease their displeasure, and thereby save his country from the destroying sword, who would not admire his disinterested conduct? And if the offended, from motives of humanity, were con-

* Chap. xlii. 7--9.

tented with expressing their displeasure by transferring the effect of it from a whole nation to an individual who thus stepped forward on their behalf, would their conduct be censured as “indiscriminate revenge?” The truth is, the atonement of Christ affords a display of justice on too large a scale, and on too humbling a principle, to approve itself to a contracted, selfish, and haughty mind.

C H A P. V.

The consistency of the Scripture Doctrine of Redemption with the modern opinion of the Magnitude of Creation.

IT is common for Deists to impute the progress of their principles to *the prevalence of true philosophy*. The world, they say, is more enlightened; and a great number of discoveries are progressively making, which render the credibility of the scriptures more and more suspicious. It is now a commonly-received opinion, for instance, among men of science, that this world is but a point in creation; that every planet is a world, and all the fixed stars so many suns in the centres of so many systems of worlds; and that as every part of creation within our knowledge teems with life, and as God hath made nothing in vain, it is highly probable that all these worlds are inhabited by intelligent beings, who are capable of knowing and adoring their Creator. But if this be true, how incredible is it that so great a portion of regard should be exercised by the Su-

preme Being towards man as the scriptures represent; how incredible especially it must appear to a thinking mind that Deity should become incarnate, should take human nature into the most intimate union with himself, and thereby raise it to such singular eminency in the scale of being, though compared with the whole of creation, if we comprehend even the whole species, it be less than a nest of insects compared with the unnumbered millions of animated beings which inhabit the earth.

This objection, there is reason to think has had a very considerable influence on the speculating part of mankind. Mr. Paine in the First part of his *Age of Reason*,* has laboured after his manner to make the most of it, and thereby to disparage Christianity. “ Though it is not a direct article of
 “ the Christian system, he says, that this world
 “ which we inhabit is the whole of the habitable
 “ creation; yet it is so worked up therewith from
 “ what is called the Mosaic account of the creation,
 “ the story of Eve and the apple, and the counter-
 “ part of that story, the death of the Son of God,
 “ that to believe otherwise, that is, to believe that
 “ God created a plurality of worlds, at least as nu-
 “ merous as what we call stars, renders the Chris-
 “ tian system of faith at once little and ridiculous,
 “ and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the
 “ air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in
 “ the same mind; and he who thinks he believes
 “ both has thought but little of either.”†

Again, Having discoursed on the vast extent of creation, he asks, “ But in the midst of these re-
 “ flections, what are we to think of the Christian

* p. 40—47.

† p. 40.

“ system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of
 “ only one world, and that of no greater extent than
 “ twenty-five thousand miles ?” “ From whence
 “ could arise the solitary and strange conceit that
 “ the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equal-
 “ ly dependant on his protection, should quit the
 “ care of all the rest, and come to die in our
 “ world, because they say one man, and one wo-
 “ man had eaten an apple ? And on the other
 “ hand, are we to suppose that every world in the
 “ boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a ser-
 “ pent, and a Redeemer ? In this case, the person
 “ who is irreverently called the Son of God, and
 “ sometimes God himself, would have nothing else
 “ to do than to travel from world to world, in an
 “ endless succession of death, with scarcely a mo-
 “ mentary interval of life.”*

To animadvert upon all the extravagant and of-
 fensive things even in so small a part of Mr. Paine’s
 performance as the above quotation, would be an
 irksome task. A few remarks however may not be
 improper.

First, Though Mr. Paine is pleased to say in his
 usual style of naked assertion, that “ the two beliefs
 “ cannot be held together ; and that he who thinks
 “ he believes both, has thought but little of either ;”
 yet he cannot be ignorant that many who have ad-
 mitted the one, have at the same time held fast the
 other. Mr. Paine is certainly not overloaded with
 modesty when comparing his own abilities and ac-
 quisitions with those of other men ; but I am in-
 clined to think, that, with all his assurance, he will
 not pretend that BACON, or BOYLE, or NEWTON,

to mention no more, had thought but little of philosophy or Christianity. I imagine it would be within the compass of truth were I to say, they bestowed twenty times more thought upon both these subjects than ever Mr. Paine did. His extreme ignorance of Christianity, at least, is manifest, by the numerous gross blunders of which he has been detected.

Secondly, Supposing the scripture account of the Creation to be inconsistent with the ideas which modern philosophers entertain of its extent; yet it is not what Mr. Paine represents it. It certainly does not teach "that this world which we inhabit" is the whole of the habitable creation." Mr. Paine will not deny that it exhibits a world of happiness, and a world of misery, though in the career of his extravagance he seems to have overlooked it.

Thirdly, If the two beliefs, as Mr. Paine calls them, cannot be consistently held together, we need not be at a loss to determine which to relinquish. All the reasoning in favour of a multiplicity of worlds, inhabited by intelligent beings, amounts to no more than a *strong probability*. No man can properly be said to believe it: it is not a matter of faith, but of opinion. It is an opinion too that has taken place of other opinions, which in their day were admired by the philosophical part of mankind as much as this is in ours. Mr. Paine seems to wish to have it thought, that the doctrine of a multiplicity of inhabited worlds is a matter of *demonstration*: but the existence of a number of heavenly bodies, whose revolutions are under the direction of certain laws, and whose returns therefore are the objects of human calculation, does not prove that they are all inhabited by intelligent beings. I do not deny that

from other considerations the thing may be highly probable; but it is no more than a probability. Now before we give up a doctrine, which, if it were even to prove fallacious, has no dangerous consequences attending it; and which, if it should be found a truth, involves our eternal salvation, we should endeavour to have a more solid ground than mere opinion on which to take our stand.

But I do not wish to avail myself of these observations, as I am under no apprehensions that the cause in which I engage requires them. ADMITTING THAT THE INTELLIGENT CREATION IS AS EXTENSIVE AS MODERN PHILOSOPHY SUPPOSES, THE CREDIBILITY OF REDEMPTION IS NOT THEREBY WEAKENED; BUT ON THE CONTRARY, IN MANY RESPECTS IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED. I shall offer a few observations on each of the branches of the above position.

The scripture doctrine of Redemption, it is acknowledged, supposes that man, mean and little as he is in the scale of being, has occupied a peculiar portion of the divine regard. It requires to be noticed, however, that the enemies of revelation, in order, it should seem, to give the greater force to their objection, diminish the importance of man as a creature of God beyond what its friends can admit. Though Mr. Paine expresseth his "hope of happiness beyond this life;" and though some other deistical writers have admitted the immortality of the soul; yet this is more than others of them will allow. The hope of a future state, as we have seen, is objected to by many of them as a *selfish* principle; and others of them have attempted to hold it up to ridicule. But the immortality of man is a doctrine which Redemption supposes; and if this be allow-

ed, man is not so insignificant a being as they might wish to consider him. A being that possesses an immortal mind, a mind capable of increasing knowledge, and consequently of increasing happiness, or misery, in an endless duration, cannot be insignificant. It is no exaggeration to say that the salvation of one soul, according to the scriptural account of things, is of inconceivably greater moment than the temporal salvation of a nation, or of all the nations in the world, for ten thousand ages. The eternal salvation, therefore, of a number of lost sinners, which no man can number, however it may be a matter of infinite condescension in the great Supreme to accomplish, is not an object for creatures, even the most exalted, to consider as of small account.

Having premised thus much, I shall proceed, in the First place, to offer a few observations in proof that THERE IS NOTHING IN THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION WHICH IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MODERN OPINION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

I. *Let creation be as extensive as it may, and the number of worlds be multiplied to the utmost boundary to which imagination can reach, there is no proof that any of them, except men and angels, have apostatized from God.—*

If our world be only a small province, so to speak, of God's vast empire, there is reason to hope that it is the only part of it where sin has entered, except among the fallen angels; and that the endless myriads of intelligent beings in other worlds are all the hearty friends of virtue, of order, and of God.

If this be true, (and there is nothing in philosophy or divinity, I believe to discredit it,) then Mr. Paine need not have supposed, if he could have

suppressed the pleasure of the witticism, that the Son of God should have to travel from world to world in the character of a Redeemer.

II. *Let creation be ever so extensive, there is nothing inconsistent with reason in supposing that some one particular part of it should be chosen out of the rest, as a theatre on which the great author of all things would perform his most glorious works.—*

Every empire that has been founded in this world has had some one particular spot where those actions were performed from whence its glory has arisen. The glory of the Cæsars was founded on the event of a battle fought near a very inconsiderable city: and why might not this world, though less than “twenty-five thousand miles in circumference,” be chosen as the theatre on which God would bring about events that should fill his whole empire with glory and joy? It would be as reasonable to plead the insignificance of *Actium* or *Agincourt* as an objection to the competency of the victories there obtained (supposing them to have been on the side of righteousness) to fill the respective empires of Rome and Britain with glory, as that of our world to fill the whole empire of God with matter of joy and everlasting praise. The truth is, the comparative dimension of our world is of no account. If it be large enough for the accomplishment of events which are sufficient to occupy the minds of all intelligences, that is all that is required.

III. *If any one part of God’s creation rather than another possessed a superior fitness to become a theatre on which he might display his glory, it should seem to be that part where the greatest efforts had been made to dishonour him.—*

A rebellious province in an empire would be the

fittest place in it to display the justice, goodness, and benignity of a government. Here would naturally be erected the banner of righteousness; here the war would be carried on; here pardons and punishments to different characters would be awarded; and here the honours of the government would be established on such a basis, that the remotest parts of the empire might hear and fear, and learn obedience. The part that is diseased whether in the body natural or the body politic, is the part to which the remedy is directed. Let there be what number of worlds there may, full of intelligent creatures; yet if there be but one world which is guilty and miserable, thither will be directed the operations of mercy. The good shepherd of the sheep will leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and seek and save that which is lost.

IV. *The events brought to pass in this world, little and insignificant as it may be, are competent to fill all, and every part of God's dominions with everlasting and increasing joy.—*

Mental enjoyment differs widely from corporeal: the bestowment of the one upon a great number of objects is necessarily attended with a division of it into parts; and those who come in for a share of it diminish the quantity remaining for others that come after them; but not so the other. An intellectual object requires only to be known, and it is equally capable of affording enjoyment to a million as to an individual, to a world as to a million, and to the whole universe, be it ever so extensive, as to a world. If as the Scriptures inform us, *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory*; if there be enough in this

mysterious transaction to fill with joy the hearts of all who believe it ; if it be so interesting that the most exalted intelligences become comparatively indifferent to every other object, *desiring to look into it* ; then is it sufficient to *fill all things*, and to exhibit the divine glory *in all places of his dominion*.*

Mr. Paine allows that it is not a direct article of the Christian system that there is not a plurality of inhabited worlds ; yet he affirms it is so *worked up* with the scripture account, that to believe the latter, we must relinquish the former, as little and ridiculous.

The scriptures, it is true, do not teach the doctrine of a multitude of inhabited worlds ; but neither do they teach the contrary. Neither the one nor the other forms any part of their design. The object they keep in view, though Mr. Paine may term it “ little and ridiculous,” is infinitely superior to this, both as to utility and magnitude. They were not given to teach us astronomy, or geography, or civil government, or any science which relates to the present life only ; therefore they do not determine upon any system of any of these sciences. These are things upon which reason is competent to judge, sufficiently at least for all the purposes of human life, without a revelation from heaven. The great object of Revelation is, to instruct us in things which pertain to our everlasting peace ; and as to other things, even the rise and fall of the mightiest empires, they are only touched in an incidental manner, as the mention of them might be necessary to higher purposes. The great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are predicted and

* 1 Pet. i. 12. Ephes. iv. 10. Psal. ciii. 22.

described in the scriptures by the rising and ravaging of so many *beasts* of prey. Speaking of the European part of the earth, which was inhabited by the posterity of Japhet, they do not go about to give an exact, geographical description of it: but, by a *synecdoche*, call it *the isles of the Gentiles*;^{*} and this, as I suppose, because its eastern boundary, the *Archipelago*, or *Grecian Islands*, were situated contiguous to the Holy Land. And thus when speaking of the whole creation, they call it *the heavens and the earth*, as being the whole that comes within the reach of our senses.

It is no dishonour to the scriptures that they keep to their professed end. Though they give us no system of astronomy; yet they urge us to study the works of God, and teach us to adore him upon every discovery. Though they give us no system of geography; yet they encourage us to avail ourselves of observation and experience to obtain one, seeing the whole earth is given in prophecy to the Messiah, and is marked out as the field in which his servants are to labour. Though they determine not upon any mode or system of civil government; yet they teach obedience, in civil matters, to all. And though their attention be mainly directed to things which pertain to the life to come; yet by attending to their instructions, we are also fitted for the labours and sufferings of the present life.

The scriptures are written in a *popular* style, as best adapted to their great end. If the salvation of philosophers only had been their object, the language might possibly have been somewhat different; though even this may be a matter of doubt, since

* Gen. x. 5. Isai. xlix. 1.

the style is suited to the subject, and to the great end which they had in view: But being addressed to men of every degree, it was highly proper that the language should be fitted to every capacity, and suited to their common modes of conception. 'They speak of *the foundations of the earth, the ends of the earth, the greater and lesser lights in the heavens, the sun rising, standing still, and going down,* and many other things in the same way. If deists object to these modes of speaking as conveying ideas which are inconsistent with the true theory of the heavens and the earth, let them, if they can, substitute others which are consistent: let them in their common conversation, when describing the revolutions of evening and morning, speak of the earth as rising and going down instead of the Sun, and the same with regard to the revolutions of the planets, and see if men in common will better understand them, or whether they would be able even to understand one another. The constant use of such language, even by philosophers themselves, in common conversation, sufficiently proves the futility and unfairness of their objecting to Revelation on this account. The popular ideas on these subjects are as much "worked up" in the common conversation of philosophers as they are in the scriptures.

By the drift of Mr. Paine's writing he seems to wish to convey the idea, that so contracted were the views of the scriptural writers, that even the *globularity* of the earth was unknown to them. If, however, such a sentence as that of Job, *He hangeth the earth upon nothing,** had been found in any

* Chap. xxvi. 7.

of the old heathen writers, he would readily have concluded that "this idea was familiar to the ancients." Or if a heathen poet had uttered such language as that of Isaiah, *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before HIM are as nothing; and they are counted to HIM less than nothing and vanity*, he might have been applauded as possessing a mind as large, and nearly as well informed as the geniuses of modern times. But the truth is, the scriptural writers were not intent on displaying the greatness of their own conception, nor even of creation itself; but rather of the glory of HIM *who filleth all in all.*

The foregoing observations may suffice to remove Mr. Paine's objection; but if in addition to them it can be proved that upon the supposition of a great number of inhabited worlds, Christianity, instead of appearing "little and ridiculous," is the more enlarged, and that some of its difficulties are the more easily accounted for, this will be still more satisfactory. Let us therefore proceed, Secondly, to offer evidence that THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED BY THE SUPPOSED MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

1. *The scripture teaches that God's regard to man is an astonishing instance of condescension, and that on account of the disparity between him and the celestial creation.—*

When I consider thy heavens, saith David, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that thou visitest

him? Will God in very deed, saith Solomon, dwell with men upon the earth?*

The divine condescension towards man is a truth upon any system; but upon the supposition of the heavenly bodies being so many inhabited worlds, it is a truth full of amazement, and the foregoing language of David and Solomon is forcible beyond all conception. The idea of HIM, who *upholds* a Universe of such extent *by the word of his power*, becoming incarnate, residing with men, and setting up his kingdom amongst them, that he might raise them to eternal glory, as much surpasseth all that philosophy calls great and noble, as the Creator surpasseth the work of his hands.

II. *The scriptures inform us that before creation was begun, our world was marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations.—*

This idea is forcibly expressed in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: *Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth—while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was dai-*

* Pf. viii. 3, 4. 2 Chr. vi. 18. In this part of the subject considerable use is made of the scriptures; but it is only for the purpose of ascertaining *what the Christian doctrine of redemption is*: and this is undoubtedly consistent with every rule of just reasoning, as, whether they be true or false, they are the standard by which this doctrine is to be measured.

ly his delight, rejoicing always before him ; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ; and my delights were with the sons of men.

On this interesting passage I shall offer a few remarks. First, Amongst the variety of objects which are here specified as the works of God, *the earth* is mentioned as being in a sort his peculiar property. Doubtless the whole creation is the Lord's; but none of his other works are here claimed as his own, in the manner that the earth is. It is called *his earth*. And this seems to intimate a design of rendering it the grand theatre on which his greatest work should be performed; a work that should fill all creation with joy and wonder. Secondly, The wisdom of God is described as *rejoicing* in the contemplation of this part of the creation. Whether *wisdom* in this passage be understood of the promised Messiah, or of a divine attribute personified, it makes no difference as to the argument. Allow it to mean the latter; and that the rejoicing of wisdom is a figurative mode of speaking, like that of *mercy rejoicing against judgment* ;* still Redemption by Jesus Christ is the object concerning which it was exercised. Nothing less can be intimated than this, that the earth was the place marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations. Thirdly, The *habitable part* of the earth was more especially the object of wisdom's joyful contemplation. The abodes of men, which through sin had become scenes of abomination, by the interposition of the Mediator, were to become the abodes of righteousness. Here the Serpent's head was to be

* James ii. 13.

bruised, his schemes confounded, and his works destroyed: and that by the *Woman's seed*, the human nature, which he had despised and degraded. Here a trophy was to be raised to the glory of sovereign grace, and millions of souls, delivered from everlasting destruction, were to present an offering of praise to HIM *that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.* Here, in a word, the peculiar glory of the Godhead was to be displayed in such a manner as to afford a lesson of joyful amazement to the whole creation, *throughout all ages of time, yea world without end!** Lastly, Not only were the abodes of man contemplated with *rejoicing*, but the *sons of men* themselves regarded with *delight.* The operations of Eternal Wisdom were directed to their salvation; and their salvation was appointed to become in return a mirror in which the whole creation should behold the operations of Eternal Wisdom. This expressive passage contains a fulness of meaning, let the extent of the intelligent creation be what it may: but if it be of that extent which modern philosophy supposes, it contains a greater fulness still. It perfectly accords with all those ideas suggested of this earth being the chosen theatre, upon which events should be brought to pass that shall fill creation with everlasting joy; and well they may, if the prospect of them even rejoiced the heart of God!

III. *The mediation of Christ is represented in Scripture as bringing the whole creation into union with the Church or people of God.—*

In the dispensation of the fulness of times, it is

* Ephes. iii. 21.

said that God would *gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.** Again, *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether things in earth, or things in heaven.†*

The language here used supposes that the introduction of sin has effected a disunion between men and the other parts of God's creation. It is natural to suppose it should be so. If a province of a great empire rise up in rebellion against the lawful government, all communication between the inhabitants of such provinces, and the faithful adherents to order and obedience must be at an end. A line of separation would be immediately drawn by the sovereign, and all intercourse between the one and the other prohibited. Nor would it less accord with the inclination than with the duty of all the friends of righteousness to withdraw their connexion from those who were in rebellion against the supreme authority, and the general good: It must have been thus with regard to the holy angels on man's apostacy. Those who at the creation of our world had *sung together*, and even *shouted for joy*, would now retire in disgust and holy indignation.

But through the mediation of Christ a re-union is effected. By the blood of the cross we have peace with God; and, being reconciled to him, are united to all who love him throughout the whole extent of creation. If Paul could address

* Ephes. i. 10.

† Col. i. 19, 20.

the Corinthians concerning one of their excluded members, who had been brought to repentance, *To whom ye forgive any thing, I also*; much more would the friends of righteousness say in their addresses to the great Supreme, concerning an excluded member from the moral system, *To whom THOU forgiveest any thing, we also!* Hence angels acknowledge Christians as *brethren*, and become ministering spirits to them while inhabitants of the present world.*

There is another consideration which must tend to cement the holy part of God's creation to the church; which is, their being *all united under one head*. A central point of union has a great effect in cementing mankind. We see this every day in people who sit under the same ministry, or serve under the same commander, or are subjects of the same prince: whether minister, general, or prince, if they *love* him, they will be more or less united together under him.

Now it is a part of the reward of our Redeemer, for his great humiliation, that he should be exalted as head over the whole creation of God. *Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly beings, of earthly, and of those under the earth.—He is the head of all principality and power—God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and*

* Rev. xix. 10. Heb. i. 14.

*every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : and put all things under his feet ; and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

These passages, it is true, represent the dominion of Christ as extending over the whole creation, enemies as well as friends, and things as well as persons. But if the very enemies of God are caused to subserve the purposes of Redemption, much more his friends : what the others do by constraint, these do willingly ; and the consideration of their having *one head* must make them feel, as it were, nearer akin. And as Christ is *head over all things to the church, which is his body*, it is hereby intimated that the happiness of the church is by these means abundantly enlarged.

To what extent creation reaches I do not pretend to know : be that however what it may, the foregoing passages teach us to consider the influence of Redemption as commensurate with it ; and in proportion to the magnitude of the one, such must be the influence of the other as to the accomplishment of re-union, and the restoration of happiness.

IV. *Through the Mediation of Christ not only is the whole creation represented as augmenting the blessedness of the Church ; but the Church as augmenting the blessedness of the whole creation.—*

As one member, be it ever so small, cannot suffer, without the whole body in some degree suffering with it ; so if we consider our world as a member of the great body or system of being, it

* Phil. ii. 8—10. Col. ii. 10. Ephes. i. 20—22.

might naturally be supposed that the ill or well-being of the former would in some measure affect the happiness of the latter. The fall of a planet from its orbit in the solar system would probably have a less effect upon the other planets, than that of man from the moral system upon the other parts of God's intelligent creation. And when it is considered that man is a member of the body distinguished by sovereign favour, as possessing a nature which the Son of God delighted to honour, by taking it upon himself, the interest which the Universe at large may have in his fall and recovery may be greatly augmented. The leprosy of *Miriam* was an event that affected the whole camp of Israel; nor did they proceed on their journies till she was restored to her situation: and it is not unnatural to suppose, that something analogous to this would be the effect of the fall and recovery of man on the whole creation.

The happiness of the redeemed is not the ultimate end of Redemption; nor the only happiness which will be produced by it. God is represented in the scriptures as conferring his favours in such a way as that no creature shall be blessed *merely for his own sake*, but that he might communicate his blessedness to others. With whatever powers, talents, or advantages we are endued, it is not merely for our gratification, but that we may contribute to the general good. God gives discernment to the eye, speech to the tongue, strength to the arm, and agility to the feet; not for the gratification of these members, but for the accommodation of the body. It is the same in other things. God *blessed Abraham*; and wherefore? That he might *be a blessing*. He blessed his posterity after

him; and for what purpose? That *in them all the nations of the earth might be blessed.** Though Israel was a nation *chosen and beloved* of God; yet it was not for their righteousness, nor merely with a view to their happiness that they were thus distinguished, but that he *might perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers;†* the substance of which was, that the true religion should prosper amongst them, and be communicated by them to all other nations. The ungodly part of the Jewish nation viewed things, it is true, in a different light: they valued themselves as the favourites of heaven, and looked down upon other nations with contemptuous dislike. But it was otherwise with the godly: they entered into the spirit of the promise made to their fathers. Hence they prayed that *God would be merciful to them, and bless them, and cause his face to shine upon them; to the end THAT HIS WAY MIGHT BE KNOWN UPON EARTH, AND HIS SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS.‡*

The same spirit was manifested by the apostles and primitive Christians. They perceived that all that rich measure of gifts and graces by which they were distinguished, was given them with the design of their communicating it to others; and this was their constant aim. Paul felt himself *a debtor* both to Jews and Greeks, and spent his life in diffusing the blessings of the gospel, though in return he was continually treated as an evil-doer; and the same might be said of the other apostles.

Nor is this social principle confined to the pre-

* Gen. xii. 2. xxii. 18.

† Deut. ix. 5. vii. 7, 8.

‡ Psal. lxvii.

sent life. According to scripture representations the happiness of saints in glory will be conferred on them, not that it may stop there, but be communicated to the whole moral system. The redemption of the church has already added to the blessedness of other holy intelligences. It has furnished a new medium by which the glory of the divine perfections is beheld and admired. To explore the wisdom of God in his works is the constant employment of holy angels, and that in which consists a large proportion of their felicity. Prior to the accomplishment of the work of redemption they contemplated the divine character through the medium of creation and providence; but now *unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, is known BY THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God.** And so much does this last display of divine glory exceed all that have gone before it, that those who have once obtained a view of it through this medium, will certainly prefer it to every other: *Which things the angels desire to look into.†* They do not however become indifferent to any of the divine operations: Creation and providence continue to attract their attention, and are abundantly more interesting: they now study them according to the order in which they exist in the divine mind, that is, in subserviency to Redemption.‡

But that which is already accomplished is but small in comparison of what is in reserve. At the final judgment, when all the faithful will be collected together, they will become a medium thro' which the Lord Jesus will be *glorified and admired*

* Ephes. iii. 10.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

‡ Col. i. 16. *by him, and for him.*

by the whole creation. *He shall come to be glorified IN his saints; and to be admired IN all them that believe—in that day.** It is a truth that the saints of God will themselves glorify and admire their great Deliverer, but not the truth of this passage; the design of which is to represent them as a medium through which he shall be glorified by all the friends of God in the universe. The great physician will appear with his recovered millions; every one of whom will afford evidence of his disinterested love, and efficacious blood, to the whole admiring Creation.

Much the same ideas are conveyed to us by those representations in which the whole creation are either called upon to rejoice on account of our Redemption, or described as actually rejoicing and praising the Redeemer. Thus David having spoken of God's mercy which was *from everlasting to everlasting towards the children of men; addresses ALL HIS WORKS, IN ALL PLACES OF HIS DOMINION, to bless his name.†* John also informs us, saying, *I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.‡*

* 2 Thef. i. 10.

† Pf. ciii. 17—22.

‡ Rev. v. 11—13.

The phraseology of these passages is such, that no one can reasonably doubt whether the writers intended by it to express the whole upright intelligent creation, be it of what extent it may : and if it be of that extent which philosophy supposes, the greater must be the influence and importance of the work of Redemption.

V. *The scriptures give us to expect that the earth itself, as well as its redeemed inhabitants, shall at a future period be purified, and reunited to the holy empire of God.—*

We are taught to pray, and consequently to hope, that when *the kingdom of God shall universally prevail, his will shall be done on earth as it is now in heaven* : * but if so, earth itself must become, as it were, a part of heaven.

That we may form a clear and comprehensive view of our Lord's words, and of this part of the subject, be it observed, that the scriptures sometimes distinguish between *the kingdom of God* and *that of Christ*. Though the object of both be the triumph of truth and righteousness, yet the mode of administration is different. The one is natural, the other delegated : the latter is in subserviency to the former, and shall be finally succeeded by it. Christ is represented as acting in our world by delegation : as if a King had commissioned his Son to go and reduce a certain rebellious province, and restore it to his dominion. The period allotted for this work extends from the time of the revelation of the promised Seed, to the day of judgment. The operations are *progressive*. If it had seemed good in his sight, he could have overturned the power of Sa-

* Matt. vi. 10.

tan in a short period; but his wisdom saw fit to accomplish it by degrees. Like the commander of an invading army, he first takes possession of one post, then of another, then of a third, and so on, till by and by the whole country falls into his hands. And as the progress of a conqueror would be more rapid after a few of the strongest fortresses had surrendered, (inasmuch as things would then approach fast to a crisis, to a breaking up as it were, of the power of the enemy,) so it has been with the kingdom of Christ, and such will be its progress before the end of time. In the early ages of the world but little was done. At one time true religion appears to have existed only in a few families. Afterwards it assumed a national appearance. After this it was addressed to *all nations*. And before the close of time all nations shall be subjected to the obedience of Christ. This shall be the *breaking up* of Satan's empire. Now as on the conquest of a rebellious province the delegated authority of the conqueror would cease, and the natural government of the empire resume its original form; so Christ is represented as *delivering up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be All in All*. This is the ultimatum of the Messiah's kingdom; and this appears to be the object for which he taught his disciples to pray.

As on the conquest of a rebellious province, some would be pardoned, and others punished; as every vestige of rebellion would be effaced, and law, peace, and order flow in their ancient channels; such a period might with propriety be termed a *restitution of all things*.* Such will be the event of the last judgment, which is described as the concluding exercise of the delegated authority of Christ.

And as on the conquest of a rebellious province,

* Acts iii. 10.

and the restitution of peace and order, that province, instead of being any longer separate from the rest of the empire, would become a component part of it, and the king's will would be done in it as it had been done without interruption in the loyal part of his territories ; such is the representation given with respect to our world, and the holy parts of God's dominions. A period will arrive when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is now done in heaven. This, however, will never be the case while any vestige of moral evil remains. It must be after the general conflagration ; which, though it will destroy every kind of evil, root and branch, that now prevails upon the face of the earth, and will terminate the generations of Adam, who have possessed it ; yet will not so destroy the earth itself but that it shall survive its fiery trial, and, as I apprehend, become the everlasting abode of righteousness ; a part of the holy empire of God. Nor is it perhaps improbable that it may ever continue the resort, if not the frequent abode of those who are redeemed from it. An attachment to place we know is at present deeply implanted in our nature. The inhabitants of the most inhospitable regions generally love their native country, and would not change it for any other. Certain particular places where some of the most interesting events have been transacted, when visited at some distance of time become a considerable source of delight. Such was *Bethel* to Jacob, and *Taber*, no doubt, to the three disciples. And why may not a view of *Bethlehem*, of *Gethsemane*, of *Calvary*, and of a thousand other places where God has appeared for us, afford a source of everlasting enjoyment ?

However this may be, the scriptures give us to

understand, that though *the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, yet, according to promise, we are to look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.** By the *new heavens* here is plainly to be understood so much of the elements as shall have been affected by the general conflagration; and by the *new earth*, the earth after it is purified by it.

Much to the same purpose is the account given towards the close of the Revelation of John. After a description of the general judgment, it follows, *And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.— And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* When the earth shall have become a part of God's holy empire, heaven itself may then be said to be come down upon it; seeing all that is now ascribed to the one will be true of the other. *Behold, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall be passed away. And he that sat upon the Throne, said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.†*

If the great end of Redemption be the re-union of this world to the holy empire of God; and if

* 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13.

† Rev. xxi. 1—5.

such re-union be accompanied with a mutual augmentation of blessedness, then the importance of the one must bear some proportion to the magnitude of the other. Upon any system of philosophy, Redemption is great; but upon that which so amazingly magnifies intelligent creation, it must be great beyond expression.

VI. *The scriptures represent the punishment of the finally impenitent as appointed for an example to the rest of the creation.—*

Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth FOR AN EXAMPLE, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And her smoke (the smoke of Babylon) rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the Throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.†

The miseries of the damned are never represented as inflicted upon them from such a kind of wrath or vengeance as bears no relation to the general good. *God is love*; and in none of his proceedings does he violate this principle, or lose sight of the well-being of creation in general. The manifestation of his glory is not only inseparably connected with this object, but consists in accomplishing it.

It is necessary for the general good that God's abhorrence of moral evil should be marked by some strong and durable expression of it; so that no one subject of his empire can overlook it. Such an expression was the death of Christ, his only-begotten Son; and this availeth on behalf of all

† Jude vii. Rev. xix. 3, 4.

who acquiesce in his salvation: but all who do not, or who profess not such a temper of heart as would acquiesce in it if it were presented to them, must themselves be made sacrifices to his justice; and so, like enemies and traitors to a human government, must be made to answer such an end by their death as shall counteract the ill example afforded by their life. What is said of the barren vine is applicable to the finally impenitent: *It is not fit for any work—it is good for nothing but to be burned!** The only way in which they promote the general good is by their overthrow: Like the censers of Korah and his company which were made into *broad plates for a covering to the altar: that they might be a sign to the children of Israel* in future generations; † or like Lot's wife, who was converted into a *pillar of salt*, or a lasting monument of divine displeasure!

If the grand end of future punishment be *example*, this must suppose the existence of an intelligent creation, who shall profit by it; and it should seem of a creation of magnitude; as it accords with the conduct of neither God nor man to punish a great number for an example to a few.

This truth affords a satisfactory idea of the divine government, whether there be a multiplicity of inhabited worlds or not: but if there be, it is still more satisfactory; as on this supposition the number of those who shall be finally lost may bear far less proportion to the whole of the intelligent creation, than a single execution to the inhabitants of a great empire. It is true, the loss to those who are lost will be nothing abated by this considera-

* Ezek. xv. 2—5.

† Numb. xvi. 38.

tion; perhaps, on the contrary, it may be augmented; and to them the divine government will ever appear gloomy: but to those who judge of things impartially, and upon an extensive scale, it will appear to contain no more of a disparagement to the government of the universe, than the execution of a murderer, once in a hundred years, would be to the government of a nation.

And now I appeal to the intelligent, the serious, and the candid reader, whether there be any truth in what Mr. Paine asserts, that to admit “that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air.” On the contrary, it might be proved that every system of philosophy is little in comparison of Christianity. Philosophy may expand our ideas of creation; but it neither inspires a love to the *moral* character of the Creator, nor a well-grounded hope of eternal life. Philosophy at most can only place us upon the top of Pisgah: there, like Moses, we must die. It gives us no possession of the good land: it is the province of Christianity to add, ALL IS YOURS! When you have ascended to the height of human discovery, there are things, and things of infinite moment too, that are utterly beyond its reach. Revelation is the medium, and the only medium, by which, standing, as it were, “on nature’s Alps,” we discover things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

CONCLUDING ADDRESSES,

TO

Deists, Jews, & Christians.

WHETHER the writer of these sheets can justly hope that what he advances will attract the attention of unbelievers, he does not pretend to say. If however it should fall into the hands of individuals amongst them, he earnestly entreats that for their own sakes they would attend to what follows with seriousness.

TO DEISTS.

Fellow-Men,

IT is hoped that nothing in the preceding pages can be fairly construed into a want of goodwill towards any of you. If I know my heart, it is not you, but your mischievous principles that are the objects of my dislike.

In the former part of this performance I have endeavoured to prove, that the system which you embrace overlooks the moral character of God, refuses to worship him, affords no standard of right and wrong, undermines the most efficacious motives to virtuous action, actually produces a torrent of vice, and leaves mankind, under all their miseries, to perish without hope; in fine, that it is

an immoral system, pregnant with destruction to the human race. Unless you be able to overturn what is there advanced, or, at least, be conscious that it is not true with regard to yourselves, you have reason to be seriously alarmed. To embrace a system of immorality is the same thing as to be enemies to all righteousness; neither to fear God, nor regard man; and what good fruit can you expect to reap from it, in this world or another, it is difficult to conceive. But alas, instead of being alarmed at the immorality of your principles, is there no reason to suspect that it is on this very account you cherish them? You can occasionally praise the morality of Jesus Christ; but are you sincere? Why then do you not walk by it? However you may magnify other difficulties, which you have industriously laboured to discover in the Bible, your actions declare that it is the holiness of its doctrines and precepts, that more than any thing else offends you. The manifest object at which you aim, both for yourselves and the world, is an exemption from its restraints. Your general conduct, if put into words, amounts to this; *Come, let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us.*

Circumstances of late years have much favoured your design. Your party has gained the ascendancy in a great nation, and has been consequently increasing in other nations. Hence it is, perhaps, that your spirits are raised, and that a higher tone is assumed in your speeches and writings than has been usual on former occasions. You are *great*, you are *enlightened*; yes, you have found out the secret, and have only to rid the world of Christianity in order to render it happy. But be

not too confident. You are not the first who have set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed. You have overthrown superstition; but vaunt not against Christianity. Of a truth you have destroyed the gods of Rome, for they were no gods; but let this suffice you. It is hard to kick against the pricks.

Whatever success may attend your cause, if it be an immoral one, and espoused *on that very account*, it cannot possibly stand. It must fall, and you may expect to be buried in its ruins. It may be thought sufficient for me to reason on the system itself, without descending to the *motives* of those who imbibe it; but where motives are manifested by actions, they become objects of human cognizance. Nor is there any hope of your unbelief being removed, but by something that shall reach the *cause* of it. My desire is neither to insult nor flatter, but seriously to expostulate with you; if God peradventure may give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Three things in particular I would earnestly recommend to your serious consideration.

How it was that you first imbibed your present principles; How it is that almost all your writers, at one time or other, bear testimony in favour of Christianity; and, How it comes to pass that your principles fail you, as they are frequently known to do, in a dying hour.

First, **HOW WAS IT THAT YOU FIRST RENOUNCED CHRISTIANITY, AND IMBIBED YOUR PRESENT PRINCIPLES?** Retrace the process of your minds, and ask your consciences as you proceed whether all was fair and upright. Nothing is more common than for persons of relaxed mo-

rals to attribute their change of conduct to a change of sentiments, or views relative to those subjects. It is galling to one's own feelings, and mean in the account of others, to *act against principle*: but if a person can once persuade himself to think favourably of those things which he has formerly accounted sinful, and can furnish a plea for them, which at least may serve to parry the censures of mankind, he will feel much more at ease, and be able to put on a better face when he mingles in society. Whatever inward stings may annoy his peace under certain occasional qualms, yet he has not to reproach himself, nor can others reproach him with that inconsistency of character as in former instances. *Rousseau* confesses he found in the reasonings of a certain lady, with whom he lived in the greatest possible familiarity, all those ideas *which he had occasion for*—: Have you not found the same in the conversation and writings of deists? Did you not, previous to your rejection of Christianity, indulge in vicious courses; and, while indulging in these courses, did not its holy precepts, and awful threatenings gall your spirits? Were you not like persons gathering forbidden fruit amidst showers of arrows; and had you not recourse to your present principles for a shield against them? If you cannot honestly answer these questions in the negative, you are in an evil case. You may flatter yourselves for a while that perhaps there may be no hereafter, or at least no judgment to come; but you know the time is not far distant when you must go and see; and then if you should be mistaken, What will you do?

Many of you have descended from godly pa-

rents, and have had a religious education. Has not your infidelity arisen from the dislike which you conceived in early life to religious exercises? Family worship was a weariness to you; and the cautions, warnings, and counsels, which were given you, instead of having any proper effect, only irritated your corruptions. You longed to be from under the yoke. Since that time your parents, it may be, have been removed by death; or if they live, they may have lost their controul over you. So, now you are free. But still something is wanting to erase the *prejudices* of education, which in spite of all your efforts, will accompany you, and embitter your present pursuits. For this purpose a friend puts into your hands *The Age of Reason*, or some production of the kind. You read it with avidity. This is the very thing you wanted. You have long suspected the truth of Christianity; but had not courage to oppose it. Now then you are a philosopher; yes, a philosopher! ‘Our fathers, say you, might be well-meaning people, but they were imposed upon by priests. The world gets more *enlightened* now-a-days. There is no need of such rigidity. The Supreme Being, (if there be one) can never have created the pleasures of life, but for the purpose of enjoyment. Avaunt, ye self-denying casuists! Nature is the law of man!’

Was not this, or something nearly resembling it, the process of your minds? And are you now satisfied? I do not ask whether you have been able to defend your cause against assailants, nor whether you have gained converts to your way of thinking: you may have done both; but are you satisfied with yourselves? Do you really believe

yourself to be in the right way? Have you no misgivings of heart? Is there not something within you which occasionally whispers, 'My parents were righteous, and I am wicked: O that my soul were in their souls stead!'

Ah young men! If such be the occasional revoltings of your mind, what are you doing in labouring to gain others over to your way of thinking? Can you from experience honestly promise them peace of mind? Can you go about to persuade them that there is no hell, when, if you would speak the truth, you must acknowledge that you have already an earnest of it kindled in your bosoms? If counsels were not lost upon you, I would intreat you to be contented with destroying your own souls. Have pity on your fellow-creatures, if you have none upon yourselves! Nay, spare yourselves so much, at least, as not to incur the everlasting execrations of your most intimate acquaintance. If Christianity should prove, what your consciences in your most serious moments tell you it is, you are doing this every day of your lives.

Secondly, Consider HOW IT IS THAT ALMOST ALL YOUR WRITERS, AT ONE TIME OR OTHER, BEAR TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF CHRISTIANITY. It were easy to collect from those very writings which were designed to undermine the Christian Religion hundreds of testimonies in its favour. *Voltaire* and *Rousséau*, as we have seen already,* have in their fits gone far towards contradicting all which they have written against it. *Bolingbroke* has done the same. Such

* Part II. Ch. III. pp. 149, 150.

sentences as the following may be found in his publications: "Supposing Christianity to have been a human invention, it has been the most amiable invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good—Christianity as it came out of the hand of God, if I may use the expression, was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship, and manners, which is the true notion of a religion—The gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity."* *Paine* perhaps has said as little in this way as any of your writers, yet he has professed a respect for the character of Jesus Christ. "He was, says he, a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind."†

In what manner will you go about to account for these concessions? Christian writers, those at least who are sincerely attached to the cause, are not seized with these fits of inconsistency. How is it that yours, like the worshippers of Baal, should thus be continually cutting themselves with knives? You must either give up your leaders as a set of men, who, while they were labouring to persuade the world of the hypocrisy of priests, were themselves the most infamous of all hypocrites; or, which will be equally fatal to your cause, you must attribute it to occasional convictions, which they felt and expressed, though contrary to the general strain of their writings. Is it not an unfavourable character of your cause, that in this particular it exactly resembles that of vice itself? Vicious men

* Works, Vol. IV. pp. 394, 395. Vol. V. pp. 188, 189.

† *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 5.

will often bear testimony in favour of virtue, especially on the near approach of death; but virtuous men never return the compliment by bearing testimony in favour of vice. We are not afraid of Christians thus betraying their cause; but neither your writers nor your consciences are to be trusted in a serious hour.

Thirdly, Consider HOW IT COMES TO PASS THAT YOUR PRINCIPLES FAIL YOU, AS THEY ARE FREQUENTLY KNOWN TO DO, IN A DYING HOUR? It is a rule with wise men, *so to live as they shall wish they had when they come to die.* How do you suppose you shall wish you had lived in that day? Look at the deaths of your greatest men, and see what their principles have done for them at last. Mark the end of that apostle and high priest of your profession *Voltaire*; and try if you can find in it either integrity, or hope, or any thing that should render it an object of envy.†

† The following particulars among many others are recorded of this writer by his Biographer CONDORCET, a man after his own heart. First, That he conceived the design of overturning the Christian Religion, and that by his own hand. "I am wearied, said he, of hearing it repeated that twelve men were sufficient to establish Christianity; and I wish to prove there needs but one to destroy it." Secondly, That in pursuit of this object he was threatened with a persecution, to avoid which he received the sacrament, and publicly declared his respect for the church, and his disdain of his detractors, namely, those who had called in question his Christianity! Thirdly, That in his last illness, in Paris, being desirous of obtaining what is called Christian burial, he sent for a priest to whom he declared that he "died in the Catholic faith, in which he was born." Fourthly, That another priest (Curate of the parish) troubled him with questions. Among other things he asked, "Do you believe the divinity of Jesus Christ?" "In the name of God, Sir, replied Voltaire, speak to me no more of that man, but let me die in peace."

Why is it that so many of you faint in the day of trial? If your cause were good, you would defend it with uprightnes, and die with inward satisfaction. But is it so? Mr. *Paine* flatters himself that his principles will bear him up in the prospect of death;* and it is possible that he may brave it out in some such manner as David Hume did.—Such instances however are rare. For one unbeliever that maintains his courage, many might be produced whose hearts have failed them, and who have trembled for the consequences of their infidelity.

On the other hand, you cannot produce a single instance of a Christian, WHO AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH WAS TROUBLED, OR TERRIFIED IN HIS CONSCIENCE FOR HAVING BEEN A CHRISTIAN. Many have been afraid in that day lest their faith in Christ should not prove genuine; but who that has put his trust in him was ever known to be apprehensive lest he should at last deceive him? Can you account for this difference? If you have discovered the true religion, and ours be all fable and imposture, how comes it to pass that the issue of things is what it is? Do gold and silver and precious stones perish in the fire? and do wood and hay and stubble endure it?

I have admitted that Mr. *Paine* may possibly brave it out till the last; but if he does, his courage *may be* merely assumed. Pride will induce men to disguise the genuine feelings of their hearts, on more occasions than one. We hear much of courage among duellists; but little credit is due to what they say, if while the words proceed from their lips, we see them approach each other with

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. Pref.

paleness and trembling.—Yea more, If Mr. Paine's courage in death be not different from what it already is in the prospect of it, it *certainly will be* merely assumed. He has given full proof of what his courage amounts to in what he has advanced on the certainty of a future state. He acknowledges the possibility of a future judgment: yea, he admits it to be rational to believe that there will be one. "The power, he says, that called us into being, can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and therefore, without seeking any further motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know beforehand that he can."* I shall not stop to enquire into the justness of Mr. Paine's reasoning from what God can do to what he will do: it is sufficient for me that he admits it to be "rational to believe that God will call men to account for the manner in which they have lived here." And can he admit this truth, and not tremble? Mark his firmness. After acknowledging that a future judgment is the object of rational *belief*, he retracts what he has said by reducing it to only a *probability*, which is to have the influence of belief: Yea, and as if that were too terrible an idea, he brings it down to a mere *possibility*. The reason which he gives for these reductions is, that "If we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere *slaves of terror*." Indeed? But wherefore? Christians believe in a judgment to come, and they are not the slaves of terror. They have an *advocate* as well as a judge, by believing in whom the terror of judgment is removed. And though Mr. Paine

* *Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 100.

rejects this ground of consolation, yet if things be as he has represented them, I do not perceive why he should be terrified. He writes as though he stood on a very respectable footing with his Creator; he is not "an outcast, a beggar, or a worm;" he needs no mediator: no indeed! He "stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand since man existed."* Very well; of what then is he afraid? "God is good, and will exceed the very best of us in goodness." On this ground Lord *Shaftesbury* assures us, "Deists can have no dread or suspicion to render them uneasy: for it is malice only, and not goodness, which can make them afraid."† Very well, I say again, of what then is Mr. Paine afraid? If a Being full of goodness will not hurt him, he will not be hurt. Why should he be terrified at a *certain* hereafter? Why not meet his Creator with cheerfulness, and confidence? Instead of this, he knows of no method by which he may be exempted from *terror* but that of reducing future judgment to a mere *possibility*; leaving room for some faint hope at least that what he professes to believe as true, may in the end prove false. Such is the courage of your blustering hero. Unhappy man! Unhappy people! Your principles will not support you in death, nor so much as in the contemplation of a hereafter.

Let Mr. Paine's hypothesis be admitted, and that in its lowest form, that there is only a *possibility* of a judgment to come, this is sufficient to evince your folly, and if you thought on the subject, to destroy your peace. This alone has in-

* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 21. † *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. § 5.

duced many of you in your last moments to wish that you had lived like Christians. If it be possible that there may be a judgment to come, why should it not be equally possible that Christianity itself may be true? And if it should, on what ground do you stand? If it be otherwise, Christians have nothing to fear. While they are taught to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, whatever may prove true with respect to another, it is presumed they are safe: but if that Saviour whom you have despised should be indeed the Son of God; if that name which you have blasphemed should be the only one given under heaven and among men by which you can be saved; what a situation must you be in! You may wish at present not to be told of him; yea, even in death, it may be a vexation, as it was to *Voltaire*, to hear of him; but hear of him you must, and what is more, you must appear before him.

I cannot conclude this address without expressing my earnest desire for your salvation; and, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, reminding you that our Redeemer is merciful. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and them who are out of the way. The door of mercy is not yet shut. At present you are invited, and even intreated to enter in. But if you still continue hardened against him, you may find to your cost that the abuse of mercy gives an edge to justice; and that to be crushed to atoms by falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of mountains, were rather to be chosen than an exposure to the wrath of the Lamb.

TO THE JEWS.

Beloved for the fathers' sakes !

HE whom you have long rejected, looked upon Jerusalem and wept over it. With tears he pronounced upon that famous city a doom, which according to your own writer, Josephus, was soon afterwards accomplished. In imitation of our Lord and Saviour we also could weep over your present situation. There are thousands in Britain, as well as in other nations, whose daily prayer is, that you may be saved. Hear me patiently, and candidly. Your present and everlasting good is the object of my desire.

It is not my design in this brief address to go over the various topics in dispute between us. Many have engaged in this work, and I hope to some good purpose. The late addresses to you, both from the pulpit and the press, as they were dictated by pure benevolence, certainly deserve, and I trust have gained in some degree, your candid attention. All that I shall say will be comprised in a few suggestions, which I suppose to arise from the subject of the preceding pages.

You have long sojourned among men who have been called Christians. You have seen much evil in them; and they have seen much in you. The history of your own nation, and that of every other, confirms one of the leading doctrines of both your and our Scriptures, *the depravity of hu-*

man nature. But in your commerce with mankind, you must have had opportunity of distinguishing between nominal and serious Christians. Great numbers in your nation, even in its best days, were wicked men; and great numbers in every nation, at present, are the same. But can you not perceive a people scattered through various denominations of Christians, who fear God, and regard man; who instead of treating you with a haughty contempt, as being strangers scattered among the nations, discover a tender regard towards you on that very account; who, while they are grieved for the hardness of your hearts, and hurt at your scornful rejection of Him whom their soul loveth, are nevertheless ardently desirous of your salvation? Are you not acquainted with Christians whose utmost revenge, if they could have their will of you, for all your hard speeches, would be to be instrumental in turning you from what they believe to be the power of Satan, unto God?

Let me farther appeal to you, Whether Christians of this description be not the true children of Abraham, the true successors of your patriarchs and prophets, rather than those of an opposite spirit, though literally descended from their loins. You must be aware that even in the times of David, a genuine Israelite was *a man of a pure heart*; and in the times of the prophets, apostate Israelites were accounted as *Ethiopians*.* Your ancestors were men of whom the world was not worthy: but where will you now look for such characters among you as *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; as *Samuel, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah*; as *Daniel, Ez-*

* Psa. lxxiii. 1. Amos ix. 7.

ra, Nehemiah, and many others? While you garnish their sepulchres, have you not manifestly lost their spirit? This is a fact that ought to alarm you, and lead you seriously to examine whether you have not forsaken their faith. There is one thing which has particularly struck my mind, and which I would earnestly recommend to your consideration, namely *the temper of modern infidels towards your fathers, towards you, and towards us.*

You need not be told that deistical writers invariably treat your fathers with scorn and dislike. Just as Appion and other Greek writers poured contempt upon your nation; just as the more ancient *Moabites* reproached, and *proudly magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of Hosts*;* so do all our modern infidels. But from the time that your fathers rejected Him in whom we believe as the Lord Messiah, though you have been exposed to the chastisements of heaven, and to much injurious treatment from pretended Christians; yet deists, the common enemies of revelation, have been, comparatively speaking, reconciled to you. So however it appears to me. I do not recollect to have met with a single reflection upon you in any of their writings. On the contrary, they seem to feel themselves near akin to you. Your enmity to Jesus seems to be the price of their forgiveness: like Herod and Pontius Pilate, you became friends in the day of his crucifixion. Mr. *Paine*, tho' his writings abound in sneers against your nation, prior to its rejection of Christ, yet appears to be well reconciled to you, and willing to admit your lame account of the body of Jesus being stolen away.† Ought you not to be alarmed at these things?

* Zeph. ii. 10.

† *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 6, 7.

Seriously examine whether you have not forsaken the God of your fathers, and become the friends and allies of men who hate both Him and them.

The hatred of infidels has long been transferred from you to us. Whether, in the language of the New Testament, we be the true *children of Abraham*, or not, we inherit that reproach and dislike from unbelievers which was heretofore the portion of the godly Israelites. On what account were your fathers hated by the practical atheists of their day? Was it not because of their *devotedness to God*? It was this in David that provoked the resentment of the children of Belial, and rendered them his determined enemies. They were continually jeering at his *prayers*, his *tears*, and his *trust* in Jehovah; turning that which in reality was his *glory into shame*; and afflicting him in his affliction by scornfully enquiring *Where is thy God?** Such is the treatment which the *godly* part of your nation received in all ages, both from heathens abroad, and impious characters at home;† and such is the treatment which serious Christians continue to receive from ungodly men to this day: but are you hated and reproached *on this account*?

Of late years it has been frequently pleaded, that the principal objections to your embracing the Christian religion are found in the doctrines of the trinity, the deity of Christ, and atonement by his death; doctrines which the greater part of Christians hold to be taught in the New Testament. But those who impute your conduct to these causes, must have nearly as mean an opinion of your rationality, as they have of ours; with whom they

* Psl. xxii. 8. iv. 2. xlii. 3. xxxi. 18. xl. 15.

† Psl. lxxix. 10. cxv. 2. Joel ii. 17. Mic. vii. 8, 9, 10. Isa. lxvi. v.

say “ there is no reasoning ; and that we are to
 “ be pitied, and considered as under debility of
 “ mind in one respect, however sensible and ration-
 “ al in others.” † What have the principles, which
 in our judgment are taught in the New Testament,
 to do with your acknowledging Jesus to be the
 Messiah, and the Christian Religion to be of God ?
 Let these positions be admitted, and examine the
 New Testament for yourselves. If you were not
 considered as possessing a sufficient degree of good
 sense to distinguish between Christianity and the
 creed of any particular party of Christians, it is
 surprising that *rational Christians* should think of
 writing addresses to you. For our parts we could
 almost be satisfied that you should decide the con-
 troversy, whether the doctrines before-mentioned
 be taught in the New Testament, or not ? As to
 removing these stumbling-blocks, as some call them,
 out of your way, we have no inclination to attempt
 it. Only imbibe the spirit of your ancestors, and
 they will presently cease to be stumbling-blocks.
 Believe Moses, and you will believe Jesus ; and
 believing Jesus, neither his claiming to be the *Son*
of God, and consequently *equal with God*, nor his
 insisting upon his *flesh being the life of the world*,
 will offend you. On the contrary, whenever the
 spirit of grace and of supplications is poured out
 upon you, and you come to look on him whom
 you have pierced, and mourn, you will join in the
 worship of him ; and the doctrine of atonement
 by his death will be to you a fountain set open for
 sin and uncleanness.*

† Lindsey's *Catechists*, Inquiry 6.

* Zech. xii. 10—14. xiii. 1.

You live in expectation of being restored to your own land. We expect the same thing, and rejoice in the belief of it. The Old and the New Testament agree in predicting it.† But the same prophets that have foretold your return to Canaan, have also foretold that you must be brought to *repent of your sins, and to seek Jehovah your God, and David your king.*‡ Your holy land will avail you but little, unless you be a holy people.

Finally, You admit, I suppose, that though we should err in believing Jesus to be the Messiah; yet while we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, it is an error that may not affect our eternal salvation: but if the error be on your side, on what ground do you stand? Your fathers, in this case, were murderers of the prince of life; and by adopting their principles, you make the deed your own. His blood lies upon you, and upon your children. The terrible destruction of your city by the Romans, and the hardness of heart to which you have been given up, are symptoms of that wrath which is come upon you to the uttermost. Repent and believe the gospel, that you may escape the wrath to come!

† Ezek. xxxvii. Luke xxi. 24.

‡ Hof. iii. 5.

TO CHRISTIANS.

Beloved Brethren!

IT is witnessed of David that he *served the will of God in his generation.* Every generation has its peculiar work. The present age is distinguished you know by the progress of infidelity. We have long been exempted from persecution; and he whose fan is in his hand, perceiving his floor to stand in need of purging, seems determined by new trials to purge it. The present is a winnowing time. If we wish to serve the will of God in it, we must carefully attend to those duties which such a state of things imposes upon us.

In the first place, Let us *look well to the sincerity of our hearts; and see to it that our Christianity is vital, practical, and decided.* An army called to engage after a long peace, requires to be examined, and every one should examine himself. Many become soldiers when danger is at a distance. The mighty host of Midianites were overcome by a selected band. A proclamation was issued through the army of Israel, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return:" and after a great diminution from cowardice, the rest must be brought down to the water, to be tried. Such, or nearly such, may be the trials of the Church: those who overcome may be reduced to a small company in comparison of those who have borne the Christian name. So indeed the Scriptures inform us: They

that obtain the victory with Christ are *called, and chosen, and faithful.**

The manner in which things of late ages have moved on in the religious world has been such as to admit of a large outer-court, if I may so speak, for a sort of half-worshippers. A general religious reputation has been hitherto obtained at a small expense. But should infidelity prevail throughout Christendom, as it has in France, the nominal extent of the Christian Church will be greatly reduced. In taking its dimensions, the outer-court will, as it were, be left out, and given to the gentiles. In this case, you must come in, or keep out; be one thing, or another; a decided friend of Christ, or an avowed infidel. It is possible that the time may come when all parties will be reduced, in effect, to two, *believers and unbelievers.*

“Never,” says a late masterly and moving writer “were times more eventful and critical,” than at present; “never were appearances more singular and interesting, in the political or in the religious world. You behold on the one hand, infidelity, with dreadful irruption, extending its ravages far and wide; and on the other, an amazing accession of zeal and activity to the cause of Christianity. Error in all its forms is assiduously and successfully propagated; but the progress of evangelical truth is also great. The number of the apparently neutral party daily diminishes; and men are now either becoming worshippers of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or receding fast through the mists of scepticism into the dreary regions of speculative and practical atheism. It seems as if Christianity and infi-

* Rev. xvii. 14.

“ delity were mustering each the host of the battle,
“ and preparing for some great day of God. The
“ enemy is come in like a flood : But the spirit of
“ the Lord hath lifted up a standard against him.
“ Who, then, is on the Lord’s side ? Who ?—Let
“ him come forth to the help of the Lord, to the
“ help of the Lord against the mighty !”*

Secondly, *Let a good understanding be cultivated among sincere Christians of different denominations.* Let the friends of Christ know one another ; and let not slighter shades of difference keep them at variance. The enemies of Christianity know how to avail themselves of our discords. The union which is here recommended, however, is not a merely nominal one, much less one that requires a sacrifice of principle. Let us unite so far as we can act in concert, in promoting the interest of Christ ; and hold ourselves open to conviction with regard to other things. Let not the free discussion of our differences be laid aside, or any such connexion formed as shall require it : only let them be conducted with modesty, frankness, and candour, and the godly will find their account in them. Let it be the great concern of all, not so much to maintain their own peculiarities, as to know and practise the truth ; not so much to yield, and come nearer to other denominations, as to approximate towards the mind of Christ. *The mind of Christ*, as expressed in his doctrines and precepts, must be the central point in which we meet : as we approach this ; we shall come nearer to each other. So much agreement as there is amongst us, so much is there of union ; and so much agreement as there is in the mind of Christ, so much of Christian union.

* *Ferrier’s Two Discourses* at Pailley, in June 1798.

Finally, *Let not the heart of any man fail him, on account of the high tone and scornful airs assumed by infidels.* The reign of infidelity may be extensive, but it must be short. It carries in it the seeds of its own dissolution. Its immoralities are such, that the world cannot long sustain them. Scripture prophecy has clearly foretold all the great governments of the world, from the time of the Jewish Captivity to this day: the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman; together with the ten kingdoms into which the last of these empires has been divided, and the papal government which sprang up from amongst them; but it makes no explicit mention of this. It has no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a *beast*; but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast; an excrescence which, though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it. *The beast and all which pertains to him goeth into perdition.** There is no space of time allowed for this government: no sooner is it said, *Babylon is fallen*, than voices are heard in heaven declaring that *the marriage of the Lamb is come.†* No sooner does *the judgment sit, to take away the dominion of the little horn, to consume and to destroy it unto the end*, than it follows, *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.‡*

* Rev. xvii. 8, 11.

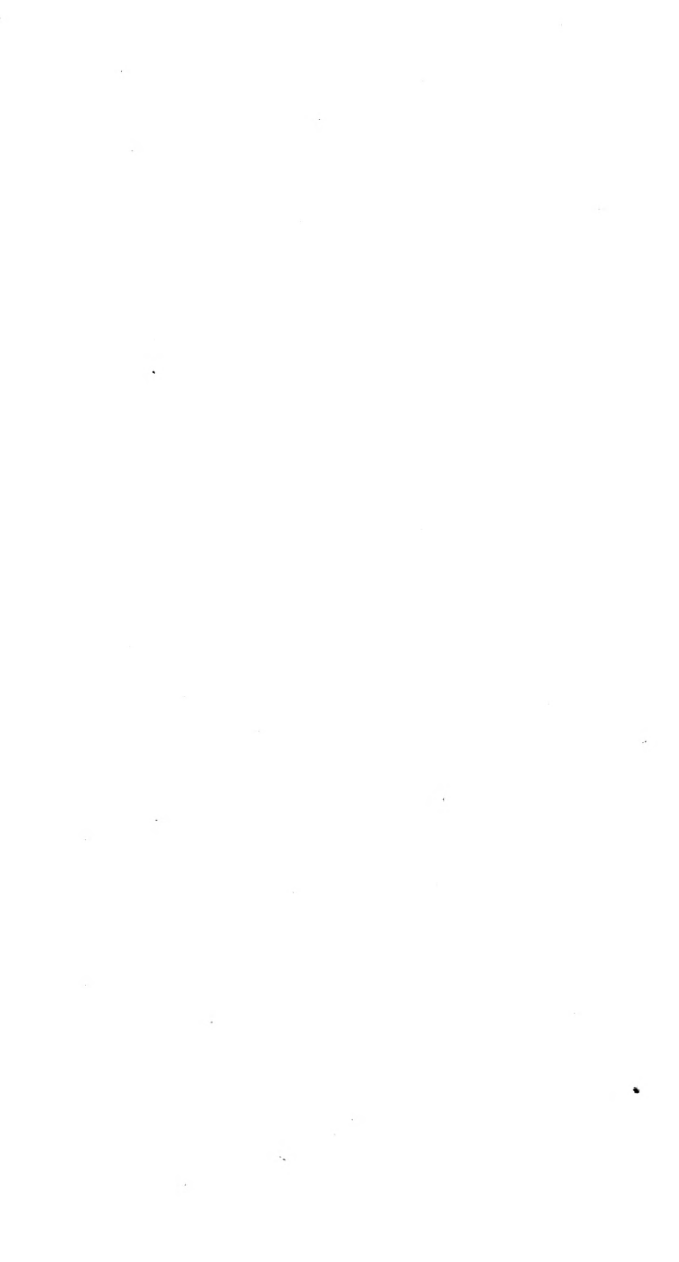
† Rev. xviii. xix.

‡ Dan. vii. 26, 27. The writer has since read a very able discourse by Mr. Nathan Strong, of Hertford, Connecticut, entitled *Political instruction from the prophecies of God's word*; in which the above sentiments are stated with great force of evidence.

Popery is not yet destroyed, though it has received a deadly blow; and from what is said of the little horn, that they shall take away his dominion, *to consume, and to destroy it unto the end*, it should seem that its overthrow will be gradual. While this is accomplishing, the reign of infidelity may continue, with various success; but no longer. Only let us *watch, and keep our garments clean*, a caution given, it is probable, with immediate reference to the present times,† and we have nothing to fear. It is a source of great consolation that the last of the four Beasts, which for more than two thousand years have persecuted the Church, and oppressed mankind, is drawing near to its end. The government that shall next prevail will be that of Christ, *whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Even so, amen. Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; amen, and amen!*

† Rev. xvi. 15.

F I N I S.





S U M M A R Y

OF THE

PRINCIPAL EVIDENCES

FOR THE

TRUTH, AND DIVINE ORIGIN,

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

DESIGNED CHIEFLY

FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS;

More particularly of those who have lately been confirmed in

THE DIOCESE OF LONDON.

By BEILBY, LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

The Third Edition.

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P R E F A C E.



FOR Readers of a mature age and judgment, there are so many excellent Treatises on the Evidences of the Christian Religion already published, that it is perfectly needless to add to their number; but it appeared to me, that there was still wanting something in a shorter, a cheaper, a more methodical and familiar form, for those who have just received Confirmation. This seems to be the properest period for communicating to young people the chief grounds of their faith, and laying the foundations of a firm belief in the Christian Revelation; leaving it to themselves to add to these primary evidences which reason furnishes in favour of Christianity, those further proofs of its truth, which I trust they will hereafter derive from still higher and better sources; from an intimate acquaintance with the Sacred Writings; from the illuminating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit upon their understandings and their hearts; and from the experimental conviction, which I hope they will hereafter have, of the divine efficacy of the gospel in purifying their affections, in remedying the disorders of their corrupt nature, and in communicating to them those two invaluable blessings, Peace of Conscience, and Holiness of Life.

In a concern of such infinite importance, no species of evidence ought to be discouraged, depreciated, or withheld. And at this time more particularly, when new Compendiums of Infidelity, and new Libels on Christianity are dispersed continually, with indefatigable industry, through every part of the kingdom, and every class of the community, it seems highly expedient to meet these hostile attempts with publications of an opposite tendency, and to fortify the minds of those who are just entering into the world, by plain and concise statements of the principal arguments in favour of Christianity, against the efforts that will be made to mislead their judgments, corrupt their principles, and shake their belief in the Gospel of Christ.*

With a view therefore of fulfilling this duty towards the youth more immediately under my care, I have drawn up the following little Treatise, for the use of those principally who have been lately confirmed in the Diocese of London. My chief object has been to collect together into one view, and to compress together in a narrow compass, all the most forcible arguments for the truth of our religion, which are to be found in our best writers, with the addition of such observations of my own as occurred to me in the prosecution of the Work. All these I have classed under a few short, clear, distinct Propositions; an arrangement which I have always found most convenient for the instruction of youth, and best calculated to assist their memories, to make strong and durable impressions on their understandings, and to render the important truths of religion most easy to be comprehended and retained in their minds. After this, I would recommend it to my young Readers, as they advance in life, to have recourse to one or more of the well-known Treatises of Grotius, Addison, Clarke, Leslie, Lardner, Beattie, and Paley, on the Evidences of

* See the Report of the Committee of the House of Lords, respecting Treasonable Societies, &c.

Christianity ; to some of whom I am myself much indebted, and to whose masterly writings on that subject, this little Work was meant only as a kind of elementary introduction.

I must however warn my young disciples, that when they have, by the course of reading here suggested, arrived at a full conviction of the divine Origin of the Christian Religion, they must not imagine that their task is finished, and that nothing more is required at their hands. The most important part of their business still remains to be accomplished. After being satisfied that the Christian Religion comes from God, their next step is to enquire carefully what that religion is, what the doctrines are which it requires to be believed, and what the duties which it requires to be performed. For this purpose it may be useful for them to begin with Gastrell's Christian Institutes, and Archbishop Secker's Lectures on the Church Catechism. In the first they will find the Doctrines and Duties of the Christian Religion ranged under their proper heads in the very words of Scripture, and in the other they will see most of them clearly and concisely explained by a most able, pious, and judicious divine. After this they may proceed to study the Scriptures themselves, and more particularly the New Testament, with the assistance of Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor, to which they should add some of the Sermons of our best divines, Bishop Taylor, Barrow, Sherlock, and Secker.

When they have thus learnt what Christianity is, and what it demands from them, they will feel it to be their indispensable duty (as it is unquestionably their truest interest) to believe implicitly all the doctrines, and obey with cheerfulness all the commands of their Maker and Redeemer ; to sacrifice to them, and to their own future eternal welfare, all their corrupt passions and irregular desires, to preserve themselves unspotted.

from the world, and to implore the assistance of Divine Grace, co-operating with their own most earnest endeavours, to render their belief in the Gospel effectual to the sanctification of their hearts, the regulation of their lives, and the salvation of their souls.

I have only to add, that although this little Treatise is designed principally for the instruction of Youth, yet considered as a kind of recapitulation of the Evidences of Christianity, it may be found of some use to persons of a more mature age, by refreshing their memories, and bringing back to their recollection those proofs of their religion which they have formerly read in larger and more elaborate works, and which they will here see brought together into one point of view.

A

S U M M A R Y

OF THE

P R I N C I P A L E V I D E N C E S

F O R T H E

T R U T H, A N D D I V I N E O R I G I N,

O F T H E

C H R I S T I A N R E V E L A T I O N.



THE method I intend to pursue in this Treatise, is to present to my young Readers the following series of propositions, and then to prove distinctly the truth of each.

I. From considering the state of the heathen world, before the appearance of our Lord upon earth, it is evident that there was an absolute necessity for a revelation of God's will, and, of course, a great probability beforehand that such a revelation would be granted.

II. At the very time when there was a general expectation in the world of some extraordinary personage making his appearance in it, a person called Jesus Christ did actually appear upon earth, asserting that he was the son of God, and that he was sent from heaven to teach mankind true religion and he did accordingly found a religion,

which from him was called the Christian Religion, and which has been professed by great numbers of people from that time to the present.

III. The books of the New Testament were written by those persons to whom they are ascribed, and contain a faithful history of Christ and his religion: and the account there given of both, may be securely relied upon as strictly true.

IV. The Scriptures of the Old Testament (which are connected with those of the New) are the genuine writings of those whose names they bear; and give a true account of the Mosaic dispensation, of the historical facts, the divine commands, the moral precepts, and the prophecies which they contain.

V. The character of Christ, as represented in the gospels, affords very strong ground for believing that he was a divine person.

VI. The sublimity of his doctrines and the purity of his moral precepts confirm this belief.

VII. The rapid and successful propagation of the gospel by the first teachers of it, through a large part of the world, is a proof that they were favoured with divine assistance and support.

VIII. A comparison betwixt Christ and Mahomet and their respective religions, leads us to conclude, that as the religion of the latter was confessedly the invention of man, that of the former was derived from God.

IX. The predictions delivered by the ancient prophets, and fulfilled in our Saviour, show that he was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and that he came into the world by divine appointment, to be the great deliverer and redeemer of mankind.

X. The prophecies delivered by our Saviour himself, prove that he was endued with the foreknowledge of future events, which belongs only to God and to those inspired by him.

XI. The miracles performed by our Lord, demonstrate him to have possessed divine power.

XII. The resurrection of our Lord from the dead, is a fact fully proved by the clearest evidence, and is the seal and confirmation of his divinity and of the truth of his religion.

These are the several points I shall undertake to prove in the following pages: and if these are clearly made out, there can be nothing more wanting to satisfy every reasonable man, that the Christian Religion is a true revelation from God.

PROPOSITION I.

FROM CONSIDERING THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD, BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF OUR LORD UPON EARTH, IT IS EVIDENT THAT THERE WAS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR A DIVINE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL, AND, OF COURSE, A GREAT PROBABILITY BEFOREHAND, THAT SUCH A REVELATION WOULD BE GRANTED.

THEY who are acquainted with ancient history, know perfectly well that there is no one fact more certain and more notorious than this: That for many ages before our Saviour appeared upon earth, and at the time he actually did appear, the whole heathen world, even the politest and most

civilized, and most learned nations, were, with a very few exceptions, sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of every thing relating to God and to religion; in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and in the most abominable corruption and depravity of manners. They neither understood the true nature of God, nor the attributes and perfections which belong to him, nor the worship that was acceptable to him, nor the moral duties which he required from his creatures; nor had they any clear notions or firm belief of the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments in another life. They believed the world to be under the direction of a vast multitude of gods and goddesses, to whom they ascribed the worst passions and the worst vices that ever disgraced human nature. They worshipped also dead men and women, birds and beasts, insects and reptiles, (especially that most odious and disgusting reptile the serpent) together with an infinite number of idols, the work of their own hands, from various materials, gold, silver, wood, and stone. With respect to their own conduct, they were almost universally addicted to the most shocking and abominable vices; even many of their solemn religious ceremonies and acts of devotion were scenes of the grossest sensuality and licentiousness. Others of them were attended with the most savage and cruel superstitions, and sometimes even with human sacrifices.

The description given of the ancient Pagans by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is strictly and literally true.—“ They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, uncleanness, malicious-

ness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

These are not the mere general declamations of a pious man against the wickedness of the times; they are faithful and exact pictures of the manners of the age, and they are fully and amply confirmed by contemporary heathen writers. They are applied also to a people, highly civilized, ingenious, learned, and celebrated for their proficiency in all liberal arts and sciences. What, then, must have been the depravity of the most barbarous nations, when such were the morals of the most polite and virtuous?

There were, it is true, among all the ancient nations, and especially among the Greeks and Romans, some wise and comparatively good men, called philosophers, who had juster notions of morality and religion than the rest of the world, and preserved themselves to a certain degree unpolluted by the general corruption of the times. But these were few in proportion to the great bulk of mankind, and were utterly unable to produce any considerable change in the prevailing principles and manners of their countrymen. They themselves had but very imperfect and erroneous notions respecting the nature and attributes of God, the worship he required, the duties and obligations of morality, the method of God's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the state of corruption and depravity into which it afterwards fell; the particular mode of divine interposition necessary for the recovery of the

human race; the means of regaining the favour of their offended Maker, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them. Even with respect to those great and important doctrines above-mentioned, the immortality of the soul, the reality of a future state, and the distribution of rewards and punishments hereafter, they were full of doubt, uncertainty, and hesitation; and rather ardently wished and hoped for, than confidently expected and believed them. But even what they *did* know with any degree of clearness and certainty, they either would not condescend, or wanted the ability, to render plain and intelligible to the lower orders of the people. They were destitute also of proper authority to enforce the virtues they recommended; they had no motives to propose powerful enough to overrule strong temptations and corrupt inclinations: their own example, instead of recommending their precepts, tended to counteract them; for it was generally (even in the very best of them) in direct opposition to their doctrines; and the detestable vices to which many of them were addicted, entirely destroyed the efficacy of what they taught.

Above all, they were destitute of those awful sanctions of religion, which are the most effectual restraints on the passions and vices of mankind, and the most powerful incentives to virtue, the rewards and punishments of a future state, which form so essential and important a part of the Christian dispensation.

There was, therefore, a plain and absolute necessity for a divine revelation, to rescue mankind from that gulph of ignorance, superstition, idolatry, wickedness, and misery, in which they were almost

universally sunk ; to teach them in what manner, and with what kind of external service, God might most acceptably be worshipped, and what expiation he would accept for sin ; to give them a full assurance of a future state and a future judgment ; to make the whole doctrine of religion clear and obvious to all capacities ; to add weight and authority to the plainest precepts, and to furnish men with extraordinary and supernatural assistance, to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature. And since it was also plainly worthy of God, and consonant to all our ideas of his goodness, mercy, and compassion to the work of his own hands, that he should thus enlighten, and assist and direct the creatures he had made, there was evidently much ground to expect that such information and assistance would be granted ; and the wisest of the ancient heathens themselves thought it most natural and agreeable to right reason to hope for something of this nature.

You may give over, says Socrates, all hopes of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you ;* and Plato declares, that whatever is right, and as it should be in the present evil state of the world, can be so only by the *particular interposition of God*.† Cicero has made similar declarations ; and Porphyry, who was a most inveterate enemy to the Christian religion, yet confesses, that there was wanting *some universal method of delivering men's souls, which no sect of philosophy had ever yet found out*.‡

* Plato in Apolog. Socratis. † Plato de Rep.

‡ Augustin. de Civitate Dei, l. 10. c. 32.

These confessions of the great sages of antiquity, infinitely outweigh the assertions of our modern infidels, "that human reason is fully sufficient to teach man his duty, and enable him to perform it; and that, therefore, a divine revelation was perfectly needless." It is true, that, in the present times, a Deist may have tolerably just notions of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being, of the worship due to him, of the ground and extent of moral obligation, and even of a future state of retribution. But from whence does he derive these notions? Not from the dictates of his own unassisted reason, but (as the philosopher Rousseau himself confesses*) from those very scriptures which he despises and reviles, from the early impressions of education, from living and conversing in a Christian country, where those doctrines are publicly taught, and where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious knowledge which the sacred writings have every where diffused and communicated to the *enemies* as well as the friends of the gospel. But they who are destitute of these advantages, they who had nothing but reason to direct them, and therefore knew what reason is capable of doing, when left to itself, much better than any modern infidel (who never was, and never can be, precisely in the same predicament;) these men uniformly declare, that the mere light of nature was *not* competent to conduct them into the road of happiness and virtue; and that the only *sure and certain guide* to carry men well through this life *was a divine discovery of the truth.*† These considerations may serve to shew, that, instead of entertaining any unreasonable pre-

* Vol. ix. p. 72, 12mo. 1764.

† Plato in Phædore.

judices beforehand against the possibility or probability of any divine revelation whatever, we ought, on the contrary, to be previously prepossessed in favour of it, and to be prepared and open to receive it with candour and fairness, whenever it should come supported with sufficient evidence; because, from considering the wants of man and the mercy of God, it appears highly probable that such a revelation would *some time or other* be vouchsafed to mankind.

PROPOSITION II.

AT THE VERY TIME WHEN THERE WAS A GENERAL EXPECTATION IN THE WORLD OF SOME EXTRAORDINARY PERSONAGE MAKING HIS APPEARANCE IN IT, A PERSON CALLED JESUS CHRIST DID ACTUALLY APPEAR UPON EARTH, ASSERTING THAT HE WAS THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT HE CAME FROM HEAVEN TO TEACH MANKIND TRUE RELIGION; AND HE DID ACCORDINGLY FOUND A RELIGION, WHICH FROM HIM WAS CALLED THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND WHICH HAS BEEN PROFESSED BY GREAT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE FROM THAT TIME TO THE PRESENT.

IT was necessary just to state this Proposition, as the foundation of all the reasoning that is to follow: but the truth of it is so universally acknowledged, that it requires but very few words to be said in support of it.

That there was, about the time of our Saviour's birth, a general expectation spread over the eastern part of the world, that some very extraordinary person would appear in Judæa, is evident both from the sacred history and from Pagan writers. St. Matthew informs us, that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, there came wise men (probably men of considerable rank and learning in their own country) from the East, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews; for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him?" In confirmation of this, two Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, assert, that there prevailed at that time, over the whole East, an ancient and fixed opinion, that there should arise out of Judæa a person who should obtain dominion over the world.

That at this time, when Augustus Cæsar was emperor of Rome, a person called Jesus Christ was actually born in Judæa; that he professed to come from heaven to teach mankind true religion, and that he had a multitude of followers; the sacred historians unanimously affirm, and several heathen authors also bear testimony to the same facts. They mention the very name of Christ, and acknowledge that he had a great number of disciples, who from him were called Christians. The Jews, though professed enemies to our religion, acknowledge these things to be true; and none even of the earliest Pagans who wrote against Christianity, ever pretended to question their reality. These things, therefore, are as certain and undeniable as ancient history, both sacred and profane, and the concurrent testimony both of friends and enemies, can possibly make them.

PROPOSITION III.

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WERE WRITTEN BY THOSE PERSONS TO WHOM THEY ARE ASCRIBED, AND CONTAIN A FAITHFUL HISTORY OF CHRIST AND HIS RELIGION: AND THE ACCOUNT THERE GIVEN OF BOTH, MAY BE SECURELY RELIED UPON AS STRICTLY TRUE.

THE books which contain the history of Christ and of the Christian religion, are the four Gospels and the acts of the Apostles. That the Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there is no more reason to doubt, than that the histories which we have under the names of Xenophon, Livy, or Tacitus, were written by those authors.

A great many passages are alluded to or quoted from the Evangelists, exactly as we read them now, by a regular succession of Christian writers, from the time of the Apostles down to this hour; and at a very early period their names are mentioned as the authors of their respective gospels; which is more than can be said for any other ancient historian whatever.*

These books have always been considered by the whole Christian world, from the Apostolic age, as containing a faithful history of their religion, and therefore they ought to be received as such; just as we allow the Koran to contain a

* Lardner's Credibility, b. i. and Paley's Evidences, vol. i.

genuine account of the Mahometan religion, and the sacred books of the Bramins to contain a true representation of the Hindoo religion.

That all the facts related in these writings, and the accounts given of every thing our Saviour said and did, are also strictly true, we have the most substantial grounds for believing :

For, in the first place, the writers had the very best means of information, and could not possibly be deceived themselves.

And, in the next place, they could have no conceivable inducement for imposing upon others.

St. Matthew and St. John were two of our Lord's Apostles ; his constant companions and attendants throughout the whole of his ministry. They were actually present at the scenes which they describe ; eye-witnesses of the facts, and ear-witnesses of the discourses, which they relate.

St. Mark and St. Luke, though not themselves Apostles, yet were the contemporaries and companions of Apostles, and in habits of society and friendship with those who had been present at the transactions which they record. St. Luke expressly says this in the beginning of his gospel, which opens with these words : " For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed amongst us ; even as *they* delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were *eye-witnesses and ministers of the word*, it seemed good to me also, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." St. Luke also being the

author of the Acts of the Apostles, we have, for the writers of these five books, persons who had the most *perfect knowledge* of every thing they relate, either from their own personal observation, or from immediate communications with those who saw and heard every thing that passed.

They could not therefore be themselves deceived; nor could they have the least inducement, or the least inclination, to deceive others.

They were plain, honest, artless, unlearned men, in very humble occupations of life, and utterly incapable of inventing or carrying on such a refined and complicated system of fraud, as the Christian Religion must have been if it was not true. There are, besides, the strongest marks of fairness, candour, simplicity, and truth, throughout the whole of their narratives. Their greatest enemies have never attempted to throw the least stain upon their characters; and how then, can they be supposed capable of so gross an imposition as that of asserting and propagating the most impudent fiction? They could gain by it neither pleasure, profit, nor power. On the contrary, it brought upon them the most dreadful evils, and even death itself. If, therefore, they were cheats, they were cheats without any motive, and without any advantage; nay, contrary to every motive and every advantage that usually influence the actions of men. They preached a religion which forbids falsehood under pain of eternal punishment, and yet, on this supposition, they supported that religion by falsehood; and whilst they were guilty of the basest and most useless knavery themselves, they were taking infinite pains, and going through the

greatest labour and sufferings, in order to teach honesty to all mankind.

Is this credible? Is this possible? Is not this a mode of acting so contrary to all experience, to all the principles of human nature, and to all the usual motives of human conduct, as to exceed the utmost bounds of belief, and to compel every reasonable man to reject at once so monstrous a supposition.

The facts, therefore, related in the Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles, even those evidently miraculous, *must* be true; for the testimony of those who *die* for what they assert is evidence sufficient to support *any* miracle whatever. And this opinion of their veracity is strongly confirmed by the following considerations.

There are, in all the sacred writings of the New Testament, continual allusions and references to things, persons, places, manners, customs and opinions, which are found to be perfectly conformable to the real state of things, at that time, as represented by disinterested and contemporary writers. Had their story been a forgery, they would certainly have been detected in some mistake or other concerning these incidental circumstances, which yet they have never once been.

Then, as to the facts themselves which they relate, great numbers of them are mentioned and admitted both by Jewish and Roman historians; such as the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth, the journey of the wise men to Bethlehem, Herod's murder of the infants under two years old, many particulars concerning John the Baptist and Herod, the crucifixion of our Lord under Pontius Pilate, and the earthquake and miraculous dark-

ness which attended it. Nay, even many of the miracles which Jesus himself wrought, particularly the curing the lame and blind, and casting out devils, are, as to the *matters of fact*, expressly owned and admitted by several of the earliest and most implacable enemies of Christianity. For though they ascribed these miracles to the assistance of evil spirits, yet they allowed that the miracles themselves were actually wrought.*

This testimony of our adversaries, even to the miraculous parts of the sacred history, is the strongest possible confirmation of the truth and authority of the whole.

It is also certain, that the books of the New Testament have come down to the present times without any material alteration or corruption; and that they are, in all essential points, the same as they came from the hands of their authors.

That in the various transcripts of these writings, as in all other ancient books, a few letters, syllables, or even words, may have been changed, we do not pretend to deny; but that there has been any designed or fraudulent corruption of any considerable part, especially of any doctrine, or any important passage of history, no one has ever attempted, or been able, to prove. Indeed it was absolutely impossible. There can be no doubt but that, as soon as any of the original writings came out of the hands of their authors, great numbers of copies were immediately taken, and sent to all the different Christian churches. We know that they were publicly read in the religious assemblies of the first Christians. We know, also, that they

* Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.

were very soon translated into a variety of foreign languages, and these ancient versions (many of which still remain) were quickly dispersed into all parts of the known world; nay even several of the original manuscripts remained to the time of Tertullian, at the end of the second century.* There are numberless quotations from every part of the New Testament by Christian writers, from the earliest ages down to the present, all which substantially agree with the present text of the sacred writings. Besides which a variety of sects and heresies soon arose in the Christian Church, and each of these appealed to the Scriptures for the truth of their doctrines. It would, therefore, have been utterly impossible for any one sect to have made any material alteration in the sacred books, without being immediately detected and exposed by all the others.† Their mutual jealousy and suspicion of each other would effectually prevent any gross adulteration of the sacred volumes; and with respect to lesser matters, the best and most able critics have, after the most minute examination, asserted and proved, that the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament have suffered less from the injury of time, and the errors of transcribers, than any other ancient writings whatsoever.‡

* Grotius de Ver. l. 3. f. 2.

† Beattie, vol. 1. p. 183.

‡ The style, too, of the Gospel (says the amiable and elegant author of the *Minstrel*) bears intrinsic evidence of its truth. We find there no appearance of artifice or of party spirit; no attempt to exaggerate on the one hand, or depreciate on the other; no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative: all is fair, candid, and firm-

PROPOSITION IV.

THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH THOSE OF THE NEW, ARE THE GENUINE WRITINGS OF THOSE WHOSE NAMES THEY BEAR, AND GIVE A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION, AS WELL AS OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS, THE DIVINE COMMANDS, THE MORAL PRECEPTS, AND THE PROPHECIES WHICH THEY CONTAIN.

THAT part of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament, contains a great variety of very different compositions, some historical, some poetical, some moral and preceptive, some prophetical; written at different times, and by different persons, and collected into one volume by the care of the Jews.

That these books were all written by those whose names they bear, there is not the least reasonable ground to doubt; they have been always considered as the writings of those persons by the whole Jewish nation (who were most interested in their authenticity, and most likely to know the truth,) from the earliest times down to the present: and no proof to the contrary has ever yet been produced.

That these writings have come down to us in

ple. The historians make no reflexions of their own, but confine themselves to matter of fact, that is, to what they heard and saw; and honestly record their own mistakes and faults, as well as the other particulars of the story. *Beattie's Evidence*, v. 1. p. 89.

the same state in which they were originally written, as to all essential points, there is every reason to believe. The original manuscripts were long preserved among the Jews. A copy of the book of the law was preserved in the ark; it was ordered to be read publicly every seven years, at the feast of the tabernacles, as well as privately, and frequently, in every Jewish family.

There is a copy still extant, of the five books of Moses (which are called the Pentateuch,) taken by the Samaritans, who were bitter enemies to the Jews, and always at variance with them; and this copy agrees, in every material instance, with the Jewish copy.

Near three hundred years before Christ, these scriptures were translated into Greek, and this version (called the Septuagint) agrees also in all essential articles with the Hebrew original. This being very widely spread over the world, rendered any considerable alteration extremely difficult: and the dispersion of the Jews into all the different regions of the globe, made it next to impossible.

The Jews were always remarkable for being most faithful guardians of their sacred books, which they transcribed repeatedly, and compared most carefully with the originals, and of which they even numbered the words and letters. That they have not corrupted any of their prophetic writings appears from hence; that we prove Jesus to be the Messiah from many of those very prophecies which they have themselves preserved; and which (if their invincible fidelity to their sacred books had not restrained them) their hatred to Christianity would have led them to alter or to suppress. And their credit is still further established by this

circumstance, that our Saviour, though he brings many heavy charges against the Scribes and Pharisees, yet never once accuses them of corrupting or falsifying any one of their sacred writings.

It is no less certain that these writings give a true and faithful account of the various matters which they contain. Many of the principal facts and circumstances related in them, are mentioned by the most ancient heathen authors. The first origin and creation of the world out of chaos, as described by Moses; the formation of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and afterwards of man himself; the dominion given him over other animals; the completion of this great work in six days; the destruction of the world by a deluge; the circumstances of the ark and the dove; the punishment of Sodom by fire; the ancient rite of circumcision; many particulars relating to Moses, the giving of the law, and the Jewish ritual; the names of David and Solomon, and their leagues with the Tyrians; these things and many others of the same sort, are expressly mentioned, or plainly alluded to, in several Pagan authors of the highest antiquity and the best credit. And a very bitter enemy of the Jews as well as Christians, the Emperor Julian, is, by the force of evidence, compelled to confess, that there were many persons among the Jews divinely inspired; and that fire from heaven descended on the sacrifices of Moses and Elijah. Add to this, that the references made to the Books of the Old Testament, and the passages quoted from them by our Saviour and his apostles, is a plain proof, that they acknowledged the authority of those writings, and the veracity of their authors.

It is true, indeed, that in the historical Books

of the Old Testament, there are some bad characters and bad actions recorded, and some very cruel deeds described; but these things are mentioned as mere historical facts, and by no means approved or proposed as examples to others. And excepting these passages, which are comparatively few in number, the rest of those sacred books, more especially Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Prophets, are full of very sublime representations of God and his attributes; of very excellent rules for the conduct of life, and examples of almost every virtue that can adorn human nature. And these things were written at a time when all the rest of the world, even the wisest, and most learned, and most celebrated nations of the earth, were sunk in the grossest ignorance of God and religion; were worshipping idols and brute beasts, and indulging themselves in the most abominable vices. It is a most singular circumstance, that a people in a remote, obscure corner of the world, very inferior to several heathen nations in learning, in philosophy, in genius, in science, and all the polite arts, should yet be so infinitely their superiors in their ideas of the Supreme Being, and in every thing relating to morality and religion. This can no otherwise be accounted for, than on the supposition of their having been instructed in these things by God himself, or by persons commissioned and inspired by him; that is, of their having been really favoured with those divine revelations, which are recorded in the Books of the Old Testament.

With respect to the prophecies which they contain, the truth of a great part of these has been infallibly proved by the exact fulfilment of them

in subsequent ages, such as those relating to our Saviour, (which will be hereafter specified) to Babylon, to Egypt, to Edom, to Tyre and Sidon. But those which refer more particularly to the dispersion of the Jews are so very numerous and clear, and the accomplishment of them, in the present state of the Jews, is a fact which obtrudes itself, at this moment, so irresistibly upon our senses, that I cannot forbear presenting to the reader some of the most remarkable of those predictions, as they are drawn together by a most able writer.

It was foretold by Moses, that when the Jews forsook the true God, “ they should be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, should be scattered among the heathen, among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; should become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations; and, that among those nations they should find no ease, neither should the sole of their foot have rest; but the Lord should give them a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and send a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies; so that the sound of a shaken leaf should chase them.”* The same things are continually predicted through all the following prophets: “ That God would disperse them through the countries of the heathen; that he would sift them among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; that in all the kingdoms of the earth, whither they should be driven, they should be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, and an astonish-

* Deut. 28. 25; Lev. 26. 33; Deut. 4. 27; Deut. 28. 64; Deut. 28. 37; Deut. 28. 65; Lev. 26. 36.

ment and a hissing; and that they should abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphim."†

Had any thing like this, in the time of Moses or of the Prophets, ever happened to any nation in the world? Or was there in nature any probability that any such thing should ever happen to any people? That when they were conquered by their enemies, and led into captivity, they should neither continue in the place of their captivity, nor be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but be scattered among all the nations of the world, and hated and persecuted by all nations for many ages, and yet continue a distinct people? Or could any description of the Jews, written at this day, be a more exact and lively picture of the state they have now been in for many ages, than these prophetic descriptions, especially that of Moses, given more than 3,000 years ago.*

PROPOSITION V.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST, AS REPRESENTED IN THE GOSPELS, AFFORDS VERY STRONG GROUND FOR BELIEVING THAT HE WAS A DIVINE PERSON.

WHOEVER considers with attention the character of our blessed Lord, as it may be collected from the various incidents and actions of his life,

† Ezek. 20. 13; 11. 15; Amos, 9. 9; Jer. 24. 9; 29. 18; Hosea, 3. 4.

* Clarke's Evidences, p. 176, 277.

(for there are no laboured descriptions of it, no encomiums upon it, by his own disciples) will soon discover that it was, in every respect, the most perfect that ever was made known to mankind. If we only say of him what even Pilate said of him, and what his bitterest enemies cannot and do not deny, *that we can find no fault in him*, and that the whole tenor of his life was entirely blameless throughout, this is more than can be said of any other person that ever came into the world. But this is going a very little way indeed in the excellence of his character. He was not only free from every failing, but possessed and practised every imaginable virtue. Towards his heavenly Father he expressed the most ardent love, the most fervent yet rational devotion, and displayed in his whole conduct the most absolute resignation to his will and obedience to his commands. His manners were gentle, mild, condescending, and gracious: his heart overflowed with kindness, compassion, and tenderness to the whole human race. The great employment of his life was to do good to the bodies and souls of men. In this all his thoughts and all his time were constantly and almost incessantly occupied. He went about dispensing his blessings to all around him in a thousand different ways; healing diseases, relieving infirmities, correcting errors, removing prejudices, promoting piety, justice, charity, peace, harmony, among men, and crowding into the narrow compass of his ministry more acts of mercy and compassion than the longest life of the most benevolent man upon earth ever yet produced. Over his own passions he had obtained the most complete command; and though his patience was continu-

ally put to the severest trials, yet he was never once overcome, never once betrayed into any intemperance or excess in word or deed, "never once spake unadvisedly with his lips." He endured the cruelest insults from his enemies with the utmost composure, meekness, patience, and resignation; displayed the most astonishing fortitude under a most painful and ignominious death; and, to crown all, in the very midst of his torments on the cross, implored forgiveness for his murderers in that divinely charitable prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Nor was his wisdom inferior to his virtues. The doctrines he taught were the most sublime and the most important that were ever before delivered to mankind, and every way worthy of that God, from whom he professed to derive them, and whose son he declared himself to be.

His precepts inculcated the purest and most perfect morality; his discourses were full of dignity and wisdom, yet intelligible and clear; his parables conveyed instruction in the most pleasing, familiar, and impressive manner; and his answers to the many insidious questions that were put to him, shewed uncommon quickness of conception, soundness of judgment, and presence of mind, completely baffled all the artifices and malice of his enemies, and enabled him to elude all the snares that were laid for him. It appears then, even from this short and imperfect sketch of our Saviour's character, that he was, beyond comparison, the wisest and most virtuous person that ever appeared; and even his bitterest enemies allow that he was so. If, then, he was confessedly so great and so good a man, it unavoidably fol-

lows that he must be, what he pretended to be, a divine person, and of course his religion also must be divine; for he certainly laid claim to a divine original. He asserted, that he was the son of God; that he and his religion came from heaven; and that he had the power of working miracles. If this was not the case, he must, in a matter of infinite importance, have asserted what had no foundation in truth. But is such a supposition as this in the smallest degree credible? Is it probable, is it conceivable, is it consistent with the general conduct of man, is it reconcileable with the acknowledged character of our Lord, to suppose, that any thing *but* truth could proceed from him whom his very enemies allow to have been in *every* respect (and of course in point of veracity) the best and most virtuous of men? Was it ever known, is there a single instance to be produced in the history of mankind of any one so unblemished in morals as Christ confessedly was, persisting for so great a length of time as he did in assertions, which if untrue, would be repugnant to the clearest principles of morality, and most fatal in their consequences to those he loved best, his followers and his friends? Is it possible, that the pure, the upright, the pious, the devout, the meek, the gentle, the humane, the merciful Jesus, could engage multitudes of innocent and virtuous people in the belief and support of a religion which he knew must draw on them persecution, misery and death, unless he had been authorized by God himself to establish that religion; and unless he was conscious that he possessed the power of amply recompensing those who preferred his religion to every other consideration? The common sense and

common feelings of mankind must revolt at such a preposterous idea.

It follows, then, that Christ was, in truth, a divine teacher, and his religion the gift of God.

PROPOSITION VI.

THE SUBLIMITY OF OUR LORD'S DOCTRINES AND THE PURITY OF HIS MORAL PRECEPTS CONFIRM THE BELIEF OF HIS DIVINE MISSION.

THERE is no where to be found such important information, and such just and noble sentiments concerning God and Religion, as in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

They teach us, in the first place, that there is one Almighty Being, who created all things, of infinite power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness; that he is the governor and preserver of this world, which he has made; that his providential care is over all his works; and that he more particularly regards the affairs and conduct of men. They teach us, that we are to worship this great Being in spirit and in truth; and that the love of him is the first and great commandment, the source and spring of all virtue. They teach us, more particularly, how to pray to him, and for that purpose supply us with a form of prayer, called the Lord's Prayer, "which is a model of calm and rational devotion, and which, for its conciseness, its clearness, its suitability to every condition, and for the weight, solemnity, and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival."* They

* Paley.

teach us, moreover, what we all feel to be true, that the human heart is weak and corrupt; that man is fallen from his original innocence; that he is restored, however, to the favour of God, and the capacity of happiness, by the death and mediation and atonement of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and that he will be assisted in his sincere, though imperfect endeavours after holiness, by the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

They assure us, in fine, that the soul does not perish with the body, but shall pass, after death, into another world; that all mankind shall rise from the grave, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who shall reward the virtuous, and punish the wicked, in a future and eternal state of existence, according to their deserts.

These are great, and interesting, and momentous truths, either wholly unknown, or but very imperfectly known to the world before; and they render the meanest peasant in this country better acquainted with the nature of the Supreme Being, and the relation in which we stand to him, than were any of the greatest sages of ancient times.

Equally excellent, and superior to all other rules of life, are the moral precepts of the Gospel.

Our divine Master, in the first place, laid down two great leading principles for our conduct, love to God, and love to mankind; and thence deduced (as occasions offered, and incidents occurred, which gave peculiar force and energy to his instructions) all the principal duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

With respect to God, we are commanded to love, fear, worship, and obey him; to set him always before us; to do all things to his glory; to

seek first his kingdom and his righteousness; to resign ourselves wholly to his pleasure, and submit, with patience, cheerfulness, and resignation, to every thing he thinks fit to bring upon us.

With regard to our neighbour, we are to exercise towards him the duties of charity, justice, equity, and truth; we are to love him as ourselves, and to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us; a most admirable rule, which comprehends the sum and substance of all social virtue, and which no man can mistake.

As to those duties which concern ourselves, we are commanded to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to be temperate in all things, to keep our body under, and bring it into subjection, to preserve an absolute command over all our passions, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

These are the general directions given for our conduct in the various situations and relations of life. More particular injunctions are given in various parts of Scripture, especially in our Saviour's admirable sermon from the mount, where we find a multitude of most excellent rules of life, short, sententious, solemn, and important, full of wisdom and dignity, yet intelligible and clear. But the principal excellence of the gospel morality, and that which gives it an infinite superiority over all other moral instructions, is this; that it prefers a meek, yielding, complying, forgiving temper, to that violent, overbearing, inflexible, imperious disposition, which prevails so much in the world; that it regulates not merely our actions, but our affections and our inclinations; and places the check to licentiousness exactly where it ought to

be, that is, on the heart; that it forbids us to covet the praise of men in our devotions, our alms, and all our other virtues; that it gives leading rules and principles for all the relative duties of life; of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their disciples, of governors and subjects; that it commands us to be, as it were, lights in the world, and examples of good to all; to injure no man, but to bear injuries patiently; never to seek revenge, but return good for evil: to love our very enemies, and to forgive others as we hope to be forgiven; to raise our thoughts and views above the present life, and to fix our affections principally on that which is to come.

But besides all this, the *manner* in which our Lord delivered all his doctrines and all his precepts; the concise, sententious, solemn, weighty maxims into which he generally compressed them; the easy, familiar, natural, pathetic parables in which he sometimes clothed them; that divine authority, and those awful sanctions with which he enforced them; these circumstances give a weight, and dignity, and importance to the precepts of Holy Writ, which no other moral rules can boast.

If now we ask, as it is very natural to ask, who that extraordinary person could be, that was the author of such uncommonly excellent morality as this? the answer is, that he was, to all outward appearance, the reputed son of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote and obscure corner of the world, till the time that he assumed his public character. "Whence, then, had this man these things, and what wisdom is this that was given unto him?" He had evident-

ly none of the usual means or opportunities of cultivating his understanding or improving his mind. He was born in a low and indigent condition, without education, without learning, without any ancient stores from whence to draw his wisdom and his morality, that were at all likely to fall into his hands. You may, perhaps, in some of the Greek or Roman writers, pick out a few of his precepts, or something like them. But what does this avail? Those writers he had never read. He had never studied at Athens or at Rome; he had no knowledge of orators or philosophers. He understood, probably, no language but his own, and had nothing to give him juster notions of virtue and religion than the rest of his countrymen and persons in his humble rank of life usually had. His fellow-labourers in this undertaking, the persons who assisted him during his life, and into whose hands his religion came after his death, were a few fishermen on the Lake of Tiberias, as unlearned and uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Is it possible, then, that such men as these could, without any assistance whatever, produce such perfect and incomparable rules of life as those of the gospel; so greatly superior in purity, solidity, perspicuity, and universal usefulness, to all the moral lessons of all the philosophers upon earth put together? Every man of common sense must see that this is absolutely impossible; and that there is no other conceivable way of accounting for this, than by admitting what these persons constantly affirmed, that their doctrines and their precepts came from the fountain of all perfection, that is from God himself.

PROPOSITION VII.

THE RAPID AND SUCCESSFUL PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL BY THE FIRST TEACHERS OF IT, THROUGH A LARGE PART OF THE WORLD, IS A PROOF THAT THEY WERE FAVOURED WITH DIVINE ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

WE find in the Acts of the Apostles, and in their Epistles, that the number of converts to the Christian Religion began to increase considerably, almost immediately after our Saviour's ascension, and continued increasing to an astonishing degree through every age till the final establishment of Christianity by Constantine. The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of 120.* About a week after this, 3000 were added in one day;† and the number of Christians publicly baptized, and publicly associating together, were very soon increased to 5000.‡ In a few years after this, the converts were described as increasing in great numbers, in great multitudes, and even in myriads, tens of thousands:§ and multitudes both of men and women continued to be added daily; so that within about thirty years after our Lord's death, the gospel was spread, not only throughout almost all parts of the Roman Empire, but even to Parthia and India. It appears from the Epistles written to several churches by the Apostles, that there were

* Acts i. 15. † Acts ii. 41. ‡ Acts iv. 4. § Acts xxi. 20.

large congregations of Christians, both at Rome and in all the principal cities of Greece and Asia. This account is confirmed by contemporary Roman historians; and Pliny, about eighty years after the Ascension, complains that this *superstition*,* as he calls it, had seized not cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country; that the Pagan temples were almost deserted, the sacred solemnities suspended, and scarce any purchasers to be found for the victims. About twenty years after this, Justin Martyr, a Christian writer, declares, that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or barbarians, not excepting even those savages that wandered in clans from one region to another, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Father and Maker of all, in the name of Jesus, who was crucified. And thus the Church of Christ went on increasing more and more, till, under Constantine, the empire became Christian; at which time there is every reason to believe that the Christians were more numerous and more powerful than the Pagans.

In what manner, now, can we account for this wonderful and unexampled progress of the Christian Religion?

If this religion had set out with flattering the corrupt passions of mankind, and held up to them the prospect of power, wealth, rank, or pleasure as the rewards of their conversion; if it had soothed their vices, humoured their prejudices, and encouraged their ancient superstitions; if the persons who taught it had been men of

* The very name by which *makes* Pagans, as well as their predecessors, the ancient Heathens, describe the Christian Religion.

brilliant talents, or commanding eloquence; if they had first proposed it in times of darkness and ignorance, and among savage and barbarous nations; if they had been seconded by all the influence and authority of the great potentates of the earth, or propagated their doctrines at the head of a victorious army, one might have seen some reason for their extraordinary success.

But it is well known that the very reverse of all this was the real truth of the case. It is well known, that the first preachers of the Gospel declared open war against all the follies, the vices, the interests, the inveterate prejudices, and favourite superstitions of the world; that they were (with few exceptions) men of no abilities, no learning, no artificial rhetoric or powers of persuasion; that their doctrines were promulgated in an enlightened age, and to the most polished nations, and had all the wit and learning, and eloquence and philosophy of the world to contend with: and that, instead of being aided by the authority and influence of the civil powers, they were opposed, and harassed, and persecuted by them, even to death, with the most unrelenting cruelty; and all those who embraced their doctrines were exposed to the same hardships and sufferings.

Is it now credible, that, under these circumstances, twelve poor illiterate fishermen of Galilee should be able, merely by their own natural powers, to spread their new religion in so short a space, over so large a part of the then known world, without any assistance or co-operation from any quarter whatever? Did any thing of the kind ever happen in the world, before or since? It is

plainly unprecedented and impossible. As, therefore, all *human* means of success were against them, what else but *supernatural* means were left for them? It is clear almost to demonstration, that they must have been endowed with those miraculous powers, and favoured with that divine assistance to which they pretended, and which of course proved them to be the messengers of Heaven.

PROPOSITION VIII.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN CHRIST AND MAHOMET, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE RELIGIONS, LEADS US TO CONCLUDE, THAT AS THE RELIGION OF THE LATTER IS CONFESSEDLY THE INVENTION OF MAN, THAT OF THE FORMER IS DERIVED FROM GOD.

THERE is a religion in the world, called the Mahometan, which is professed in one part of Europe, and most parts of Asia and Africa. The founder of this religion, Mahomet, pretended to be a prophet sent from God; but it is universally allowed, by all who are not Mahometans, and who have searched very carefully into the pretensions of this teacher, that he was an enthusiast and an impostor, and that his religion was a contrivance of his own. Even those persons who reject Christianity, do not think Mahometanism to be true; nor do we ever hear of a Deist embracing it from conviction.

Here, then, we have two religions co-existing

together in the world, and both pretending to be revelations from Heaven; one of these we know to be a fraud, the other we affirm and believe to be true. If this be so, upon comparing them and their authors together, we may expect to find a most marked and essential difference between them, such a difference as may naturally be supposed to exist between an impostor and a divine teacher, between truth and falsehood. And this, I apprehend, will appear to be actually the case with respect to Christ and Mahomet, and their respective religions.

Mahomet was a man of considerable rank in his own country; he was the grandson of a man of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca, and, though not born to a great fortune, he soon acquired one by marriage. These circumstances would of themselves, without any supernatural assistance, greatly contribute to the success of his religion. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himself the character of a religious teacher in an age of ignorance and barbarism, could not fail of attracting attention and followers.

Christ did not possess these advantages of rank and wealth, and powerful connections. He was born of parents in a very mean condition of life. His relations and friends were all in the same humble situation; he was bred up in poverty, and continued in it all his life, having frequently no place where he could lay his head. A man so circumstanced was not likely, by his own personal influence, to force a new religion, much less a false one, upon the world.

Mahomet indulged himself in the grossest pleasures. He perpetually transgressed even those licentious rules which he had prescribed to himself. He made use of the power he had acquired, to gratify his passions without controul, and he laid claim to a special permission from heaven to riot in the most unlimited sensuality.

Jesus, on the contrary, preserved throughout life the most unblemished purity and sanctity of manners. He did no sin, but was perfectly holy and undefiled. Not the least stain was ever thrown on his moral character by his bitterest enemies.

Mahomet was violent, impetuous, and sanguinary.

Christ was meek, gentle, benevolent, and merciful.

Mahomet pretended to have secret communications with God, and with the angel Gabriel, which no other person ever saw or heard.

Jesus was repeatedly declared to be the Son of God by voices from heaven, which were plainly and distinctly heard and recorded by others.

The appearance of Mahomet was not foretold by any ancient prophecies, nor was there at the time any expectation of such a person in that part of the world.

The appearance of Christ upon earth was clearly and repeatedly predicted by several ancient prophecies, which most evidently applied to him and to no other; and which were in the keeping of those who were professed enemies to him and his religion. And there was at the time of his birth a general expectation over all the East, that some great and extraordinary personage would then manifest himself to the world.

Mahomet never presumed to foretel any future events, for this plain reason, because he could not foresee them; and had he foretold any thing which did not come to pass, it must have entirely ruined his credit with his followers.

Christ foretold many things which did actually come to pass, particularly his own death and resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Mahomet never pretended to work miracles; on the contrary, he expressly disclaimed any such power, and makes several laboured and awkward apologies for not possessing it.

Jesus, we all know, worked a great number of the most astonishing miracles in the open face of day, and in the sight of great multitudes of people. He made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, the blind to see, and even the dead to rise from the grave.

Mahomet, during the first twelve years of his mission, made use only of argument and persuasion, and in consequence of that gained very few converts. In three years he made only fourteen profelytes, and in seven only eighty-three men and eighteen women.

In the same space of time our Saviour and his apostles converted thousands and tens of thousands, and spread the Christian Religion over a great part of Asia.

Mahomet told the Jews, the Christians, and the Arabs, that he taught no other religion than that which was originally taught to their forefathers, by Abraham, Ismael, Moses, and Jesus. This would naturally prejudice them in favour of his religion.

Christ preached a religion which directly opposed the most favourite opinions and prejudices of

the Jews, and subverted, from the very foundation, the whole system of Pagan superstition.

Mahomet paid court to the peculiar weaknesses and propensities of his disciples. In that warm climate, where all the passions are ardent and violent, he allowed them a liberal indulgence in sensual gratifications: no less than four wives to each of his followers, with the liberty of divorcing them thrice.*

In the same climate, and among men of the same strong passions, Jesus most peremptorily restrained all his followers from adultery, fornication, and every kind of impurity. He confined them to one wife, and forbade divorce, except for adultery only. But what was still more, he required them to govern their eyes and their thoughts, and to check the very first rising of any criminal desire in the soul. He told them, that whoever looked upon a woman, to lust after her, had committed adultery with her already in his heart; and he assured them, that none but the pure in heart should see God. He declared open war, in short, against all the criminal passions, and evil inclinations of mankind, and expressly required all his followers to renounce those favourite sins that did most easily beset them; nay, even to leave father, mother, brethren, sisters, houses, lands, and every thing that was most dear to them, and take up their cross and follow him.

With the same view above-mentioned of bribing men to embrace his religion, Mahomet promised to reward his followers with the delights of a most voluptuous paradise, where the objects of their af-

* Koran c. 4. p. 42. Ib. c. 2. p. 41.

fection were to be almost innumerable, and all of them gifted with transcendent beauty and eternal youth.*

Christ entirely precluded his disciples from all hopes of sensual indulgences hereafter, assuring them that in heaven they should neither marry nor be given in marriage, and promising them nothing but pure, celestial, spiritual joys, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

Besides the powerful attractions of sensual delights, Mahomet had another still more efficacious mode of producing conviction, and gaining profelytes; and that was, force, violence, and arms. He propagated his religion by the sword; and, till he made use of that instrument of conversion, the number of his profelytes was a mere nothing. He was at once a prophet, a warrior, a general, and a conqueror. It was at the head of his armies that he preached the Koran. His religion and his conquests went on together; and the former never advanced one step without the latter. He commanded in person in eight general engagements, and undertook, by himself and his lieutenants, fifty military enterprizes. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters, and tribute or conversion to Jews and Christians.

Jesus employed no other means of converting men to his religion, but persuasion, argument, exhortation, miracles, and prophecies. He made use of no other force but the force of truth; no other sword but the sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God. He had no arms, no legions to

* Koran, c. 56. p. 413.

fight his cause. He was the prince of peace, and preached peace to all the world. Without power, without support, without any followers but twelve poor humble men, without one circumstance of attraction, influence, or compulsion, he triumphed over the prejudices, the learning, the religion of his country; over the ancient rites, idolatry, and superstition; over the philosophy, wisdom, and authority of the whole Roman empire.

The great object of Mahomet was to make his followers soldiers, and to inspire them with a passion for violence, bloodshed, vengeance, and persecution. He was continually exhorting them to fight for the religion of God; and, to encourage them to do so, he promised them the highest honours, and the richest rewards, in paradise. "They who have suffered for my sake, and have been slain in battle, verily I will expiate their evil deeds from them, and I will surely bring them into a garden watered by rivers, a reward from God, and with God is most excellent reward."† This duty of warring against infidels is frequently inculcated in the Koran, and highly magnified by the Mahomedan divines, who call the sword *the key of heaven and hell*, and persuade their people that the least drop of blood spilt in the way of God, as it is called, is most acceptable unto him; and that the defending the territories of the Moslems for one night, is of more avail than a fast of two months.* It is easy to see to what a degree of fierceness this must raise all the furious vindictive passions of the soul, and what a horde of savages and barbarians it must let loose upon mankind.

† Koran, ch. 3. p. 91. and c. 9. p. 242.

* Sale's Prelim. Diss. f. 11. p. 187.

The directions of Christ to his disciples were of a different temper. He positively forbade them the use of any violence whatever. The sword that was drawn by one of them in his defence he ordered to be sheathed: "Put up thy sword within the sheath; they that use the sword shall perish by the sword."† He would not consent to bring down fire from Heaven on the Samaritans, who had refused to receive him: "The Son of man," he told them, "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Do violence to no man; resist not evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father in Heaven is merciful. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

The consequence was, that the first followers of Mahomet were men of cruelty and violence, living by rapine, murder, and plunder. The first followers of Jesus were men of meek, quiet, inoffensive, peaceable manners, and in their morals irreproachable and exemplary.

If now, after comparing together the authors of the two religions we have been considering, we take a short view of the sacred books of those religions, the Koran and the Gospel, we shall find a difference no less striking between them; no less strongly marking the truth of the one and the falsehood of the other.

The Koran is highly applauded, both by Mahomet himself and his followers, for the exquisite beauty, purity, and elegance of the language, which they represent as a standing miracle, greater than

† Matt. xxvi. 52; John xviii. 11.

* Luke ix. 56; John xiv. 27; Luke iii. 14; Matt. v. 39; Luke vi. 36; Mat. v. 7.

even that of raising the dead. But admitting its excellence (which yet has been questioned by several learned men) if beauty of style and composition is to be considered as a proof of divine inspiration, the writings of Plato and Xenophon, of Cicero and Cæsar, and a multitude of other inimitable writers in various languages, will have as just a claim to a miraculous origin as the Koran. But in truth, these graces of diction, so far from being a circumstance favourable to the Koran, create a strong suspicion of its being a human fabrication, calculated to charm and captivate men by the arts of rhetoric and the fascination of words, and thus draw off their attention from the futility of its matter, and the weakness of its pretensions. These are the artifices of fraud and falsehood. The Gospel wants them not. It disdains the aid of human eloquence, and depends solely on the force of truth and the power of God for its success. "I came not (as St. Paul sublimely expresses himself) with excellency of speech, nor with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."*

But, whatever may be the purity of the language, the matter and substance of the Koran cannot bear a moment's comparison with that of the Gospel. The narrative is dull, heavy, monotonous, uninteresting; loaded with endless repetitions, with senseless and preposterous fables, with trivial, disgusting, and even immoral precepts. Add to this, that it has very little novelty or originality to recommend

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 5.

it, the most material parts of it being borrowed from the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the New; and even these are so disguised and deformed by passing through the hands of the impostor, (who vitiates and debases every thing he touches) that you can hardly know them to be the same incidents or transactions that you read with so much delight in the Bible.

The Gospel, on the contrary, is every where concise, simple, original, animated, interesting, dignified; its precepts important, its morality perfect, its sentiments sublime, its views noble and comprehensive, its sanctions awful.

In the Koran, Mahomet is perpetually boasting of his own merits and achievements, and the supreme excellence of his book. In the Gospel, no encomiums are bestowed by the Evangelists, either on themselves or their writings. Even the virtues of their divine Master are not distinctly specified, or brought forward into a conspicuous point of view. It is from his actions only, and his discourses, not from the observations of his historians, that we can collect the various transcendent excellencies of his character. Here we plainly see the sober modesty of truth opposed to the ostentatious vanity of imposture.

In the description of future rewards and punishments, the Koran is minute, circumstantial, and extravagant, both in painting the horrors of the one and the delights of the other. It describes things which cannot, and ought not to be described, and enters into details too horrible, or too licentious, to be presented to the human mind.

In the Gospel the pains and the pleasures of a future life are represented concisely, in strong, but

general and indefinite terms, sufficient to give them a powerful, but not an overwhelming influence over the mind.

There is still another, and a very material mark of discrimination between the Koran and the Gospel. Mahomet shows throughout the utmost anxiety to guard against objections, to account for his working no miracles, and to defend his conduct, in several instances, against the charges which he suspects may be brought against him. This is always the case with imposture. It is always suspicious, afraid of being detected, alive to every appearance of hostility, solicitous to anticipate, and eager to repel the accusations of enemies.

Truth has no occasion for such precautions, and therefore never uses them. We see nothing of this sort in the Gospel. The sacred historians show not the smallest solicitude, nor take the least pains to obviate cavils or remove difficulties. They relate plainly and simply what they know to be true. They entertain no doubt of it themselves, and seem to have no suspicion that any one else can doubt it; they therefore leave the facts to speak for themselves, and send them unprotected into the world, to make their way (as they have done) by their own native force and incontrovertible truth.

Such are the leading features of Mahomet and his religion on the one hand, and of Christ and his religion on the other; and never was there a stronger or more striking contrast seen than in this instance. They are, in short, in every essential article, the direct opposites of each other. And as it is on all hands acknowledged that Mahomet was an impostor, it is fair to conclude that Christ,

who was the very reverse of Mahomet, was the reverse of an impostor, that is, a real messenger from heaven. In Mahomet we see every distinctive mark of fraud; in Jesus, not one of these is to be found; but, on the contrary, every possible indication and character of truth.

PROPOSITION IX.

THE PREDICTIONS DELIVERED BY THE ANCIENT PROPHETS, AND FULFILLED IN OUR SAVIOUR, SHOW THAT HE WAS THE MESSIAH EXPECTED BY THE JEWS, AND THAT HE CAME INTO THE WORLD BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT, TO BE THE GREAT DELIVERER AND REDEEMER OF MANKIND.

THE word MESSIAH signifies anointed; that is, a person appointed to some high station, dignity, or office; because originally among the eastern nations men so appointed (particularly kings, priests, and prophets) were anointed with oil. Hence the word Messiah means the person pre-ordained and appointed by God to be the great deliverer of the Jewish nation, and the Redeemer of all mankind. The word CHRIST means the same thing.

Now it was foretold concerning the Messiah, that he should come before the sceptre departed from Judah, that is, before the Jewish government was destroyed;* and accordingly Christ appeared

* Gen. xlix. 10.

a short time before the period when the Jewish government was totally overthrown by the Romans.

It was foretold, that he should come before the destruction of the second temple. "The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts; the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former."* Accordingly Christ appeared some time before the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans.

It was foretold by the Prophet Daniel, that he should come at the end of 490 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which had been laid waste during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and that he should be cut off; and that afterwards the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem should be destroyed and made desolate.† And accordingly, at what time soever the beginning of the 490 years can, according to any fair interpretation of the words, be fixed, the end of them will fall about the time of Christ's appearing: and it is well known how entirely the city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans some years after he was cut off and crucified.

It was foretold, that he should perform many great and beneficial miracles; that the eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; that the lame man should leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing;‡ and this we know was literally fulfilled in the miracles of Christ; the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard.

* Haggai, ii. 7. 9.

† Dan. ix. 26.

‡ Isaiah, xxxv. 5.

It was foretold, that he should die a violent death; that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him; and that with his stripes we should be healed; that God would lay on him the iniquity of us all.* All which was exactly accomplished in the sufferings of Christ, "who died for our sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."†

It was foretold, that to him should the gathering of the people be; and that God would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession,‡ which was punctually fulfilled by the wonderful success of the Gospel, and its universal propagation throughout the world.

Lastly, many minuter circumstances were told of the great Deliverer, or Redeemer, that was to come.

That he should be born of a virgin; that he should be of the tribe of Judah and the seed of David; that he should be born in the town of Bethlehem; that he should ride upon an ass in humble triumph into the city of Jerusalem; that he should be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver; that he should be scourged, buffeted, and spit upon; that he should be numbered with the transgressors (that is, should be crucified, as he was, between two thieves;) that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink; that they who saw him crucified should mock at him,

* Isaiah, liii. throughout, and Dan. ix. 26. † 1 Pet. iii. 18.

‡ Psalm, ii. 8.

and at his trusting in God to deliver him; that the soldiers should cast lots for his garments; that he should make his grave with the rich; and that he should rise again without seeing corruption.* All these circumstances, it is well known, were foretold, and, to the greatest possible exactness, fulfilled, in the person of Christ.

What now shall we say to these things? Here are upwards of twenty different particulars, many of them of a very extraordinary nature, which, it was foretold, 700 years before our Saviour was born, would all meet in him, and which did all actually meet in his person. Is not this a most extraordinary consideration? There are but three possible suppositions that can be made concerning it: either that this was a mere fortuitous coincidence, arising entirely from chance and accident, or that these prophecies were written after the events had taken place; or lastly, that they were real predictions, delivered many years before these events came to pass, and all fulfilled in Christ. That any one should by chance hit upon so many things, which should all prove true, and prove true concerning one and the same person, though several of them were of such a nature as were unlikely to happen *singly*, and by far the greatest part of which had never before happened *singly*, to *any person whatever*; this, I say, exceeds all bounds of credibility, and all power of conjecture or calculation.

That these prophecies were not written or delivered after the things predicted had happened is

* Isaiah, vii. 14; Mich. v. Zech. ix. 9; Isaiah, liii. 3. Zech. xi. 12; Isaiah, l. 6; Isaiah, liii. 12; Psalm lxix. 22; Psalm xxiv. 7. 18; Isaiah, liii. 9; Psalm xvi. 10.

most certain; because they are found in books which existed long before those events came to pass, that is, in the Books of the Old Testament; and the Jews themselves, the mortal enemies of Christ and his religion, acknowledge that these prophecies were in those Books exactly as we now see them many hundred years before Christ came into the world.

The books themselves were in their own keeping, in the keeping of our adversaries, who would undoubtedly take effectual care that nothing favourable to Christ should be fraudulently inserted into them. The Jews were our librarians. The prophecies were in their custody, and are read in all their copies of the Old Testament as well as in ours. They have made many attempts to *explain* them away, but none to question their authenticity.

It remains then that these are all real predictions, all centering in our Saviour, and in him only, and delivered many centuries before he was born. As no one but God has the foreknowledge of events, it is from him these prophecies must have proceeded; and they shew, of course, that Christ was the person whom he had for a great length of time predetermined to send into the world to be the great Deliverer, Redeemer, and Saviour of mankind.

PROPOSITION X.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED BY OUR SAVIOUR HIMSELF, PROVE THAT HE WAS ENDUED WITH THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF

FUTURE EVENTS; WHICH BELONGS ONLY TO GOD, AND TO THOSE INSPIRED BY HIM.

HE did very particularly, and at several different times, foretel his own death, and the circumstances of it: that the chief priests and scribes should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, that is to Pilate and the Roman soldiers, to mock, and scourge, and crucify him; that he should be betrayed into their hands; that Judas Iscariot was the person who should betray him; that all his disciples would forsake him, and flee; and that Peter would particularly thrice deny him in one night. He foretold further, that he would rise again the third day; that, after his ascension, he would send down the Holy Ghost on his apostles, which should enable them to work many miracles. He foretold, likewise, many particulars concerning the future success of the Gospel, and what should happen to several of his disciples; he foretold what opposition and persecution they should meet with in their preaching; he foretold what particular kind of death Peter should die; and intimated that St. John should live (as he did) till after the destruction of Jerusalem; he foretold that, notwithstanding all opposition and persecution, the Gospel should yet have such success as to spread itself over the world; and, lastly, he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, with such very particular and minute circumstances, in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, the 13th of St. Mark, and the 21st of St. Luke, that no one who reads the description of that event, in the historians of those times, can have the smallest doubt of our Saviour's divine foreknowledge. We

have a most authentic, exact, and circumstantial account of the siege and destruction of that city by the Romans, written by Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian; and the description he has given of this terrible calamity so perfectly corresponds with our Saviour's prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a Christian, on purpose to illustrate that prediction.

This power of foretelling future events is a plain proof that Christ came from God, and was endued with this power from above.

PROPOSITION XI.

THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY OUR LORD, DEMONSTRATE HIM TO HAVE POSSESSED DIVINE POWER.

ALTHOUGH the preceding propositions contain very convincing proofs of the divine mission of Christ, and the divine authority of his religion, yet, undoubtedly, the strongest evidence of this arises from the wonderful and well-attested miracles which he wrought from the beginning to the end of his ministry. He cured the most inveterate diseases; he made the lame to walk; he opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf; he cast out devils; he walked upon the sea; he fed five thousand persons with a few small loaves and fishes; and even raised the dead to life again. These miracles were all wrought in open day, in the sight of multitudes of witnesses, who could not be imposed upon in things which they saw plainly

with their own eyes, who had an opportunity of scrutinizing them as much as they pleased, and who did actually scrutinize them with a most critical exactness, as appears from the very remarkable instance of the blind man restored to sight by our Lord, in the ninth chapter of St. John, a transaction which I recommend very earnestly to the attention of my readers.

It is true, that miracles being very unusual and extraordinary facts, they require very strong evidence to support them ; much stronger, it must be owned, than common events, that are recorded in history : and accordingly the miracles of Christ *have* this very strong and extraordinary evidence to support them ; evidence such as is not to be equalled in any other instance, and such as is fully competent to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever was performed.

Besides a multitude of other persons, who were eye-witnesses to these miracles, and who were actually convinced and converted by them, there were twelve persons, called apostles, plain, honest, unprejudiced men, whom our Saviour chose to be his constant companions and friends, who were almost always about his person, accompanied him in his travels, heard all his discourses, saw all his miracles, and attended him through all the different scenes of his life, death, and resurrection, till the time of his ascension into Heaven. These persons were perfectly capable of judging whether the works which they saw Jesus perform were real miracles or not ; they could tell whether a person whom they had known to be blind all his life was suddenly restored to sight by our Saviour's only speaking a word or touching his eyes ; they could tell whe-

ther he did actually, in open day-light, walk upon the sea without sinking, and without any visible support ; whether a person called Lazarus, whom they were well acquainted with, and whom they knew to have been four days dead and buried, was raised to life again merely by Christ saying, *Lazarus, arise.*

In these, and other facts of this sort, they could not possibly be deceived. Now these, and many other miracles equally astonishing, they affirm that they themselves actually saw performed by our Saviour. In consequence of this, from being Jews, and of course strongly prejudiced against Christ and his outward appearance, which was the very reverse of every thing they expected in their Messiah, they became his disciples ; and on account of their conversion, and more particularly on account of their asserting the truth of his miracles and his resurrection, they endured for a long course of years the severest labours, hardships, sufferings, and persecution, that human nature could be exposed to, and at last submitted to the most cruel and excruciating deaths ; all which they might easily have avoided, if they would only have said that Christ was *not* the Son of God, that he never worked any miracles, and never rose from the dead. Yet this they refused to say, and were content to die rather than say it.*

Is not this giving the strongest proof of their sincerity, and of the reality of Christ's miracles, that human nature and human testimony are capable of giving. The concurrent and uncontradicted

* No man ever laid down his life for the honour of Jupiter, Neptune, or Apollo ; but how many thousands have sealed their Christian testimony with their blood ? *Beattie, v. 2.*

testimony of twelve such witnesses is, according to all the rules of evidence, sufficient to establish the truth of any one fact in the world, however extraordinary, however miraculous.

If there had been any powerful temptation thrown in the way of these men; if they had been bribed, like the followers of Mahomet, with sensual indulgences; or, like Judas Iscariot, with a sum of money, one should not have been much surprised at their persisting, for a time at least, in a premeditated falsehood. But when we know that, instead of any of these allurements being held out to them, their master always foretold to them, and they themselves soon found by experience, that they could gain nothing, and must lose every thing in this world, by embracing Christianity; it is utterly impossible to account for their embracing it on any other ground than their conviction of its truth from the miracles which they saw. In fact, must they not have been absolutely mad to have incurred voluntarily so much misery, and such certain destruction, for affirming things to be true which they knew to be false; more especially as their own religion taught them, that they would be punished most severely in another world, as well as in this, for so wicked a fraud? Is it usual for men thus to sport with their own happiness, and their very lives, and to bring upon themselves, with their eyes open, such dreadful evils, without any reason in the world, and without the least possible benefit, advantage, credit, or pleasure resulting from it? Where have you ever heard of any instance of this sort? Would any twelve men you ever knew, especially men of credit and character, take it into their heads to assert that a

person in the neighbourhood raised a dead man to life, when they knew that no such thing had ever happened; and that they would all, with one consent, suffer themselves to be put to death rather than confess that they had told a lie? Such a thing never happened since the world began. It is contrary to all *experience* and all credibility, and would be, in itself, a greater miracle than any of those that are recorded in the Gospel.

It is certain then (as certain as any thing can be that depends on human testimony) that real miracles were wrought by Christ; and as no miracles can be wrought but by the power of God, it is equally certain that Christ and his religion drew their origin from God.*

PROPOSITION XII.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD, IS A FACT FULLY PROVED BY THE CLEARTEST EVIDENCE, AND IS THE SEAL AND CONFIRMATION OF HIS DIVINITY AND OF THE TRUTH OF HIS RELIGION.

THE resurrection of Christ being one of those miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, the truth of it is, in fact, already proved by what has been advanced respecting those miracles in the

* On the clear and evident marks of discrimination between the real miracles of the Gospel and the pretended miracles of Paganism and of Popery, see Bishop Douglas's *Criterion*, and Dr. Paley's most masterly observations, in his *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, prop. i. ch. ii. b. i. p. 329.

preceding article. But it is an event so singular in its nature, and so infinitely important in its consequences, that it well deserves to be made the subject of a distinct Proposition.

After our Saviour's crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, we are told, laid the body in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. In order to secure themselves against any fraud, the Jews desired the Roman governor, Pilate, to grant them a band of soldiers to guard the sepulchre, lest, as they said, the disciples should come by night and steal the corpse away. Pilate's answer was in these words, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can: so they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."^{*} The Evangelist then proceeds to relate the great event of the resurrection with that ingenuous and natural simplicity which characterizes the sacred historians, and which carries upon the face of it every mark of sincerity and truth.

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the Angel of the Lord answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know

^{*} Matth. xxvii. 65, 66.

that ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him. Lo! I have told you. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail; and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me. Now, when they were going, behold some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all that was done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; and if this come to the governor's ear, we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day."*

Such is the relation of this wonderful fact given by St. Matthew, which comprehends not only his own account of it, but that also which was circulated in opposition to it by the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. Here then we have fairly before us the two different representations of this event by the friends and by the enemies of Christ; of which the former asserts that it was a real resurrection, the other that it was a fraud; and between these two we must form our opinions, for no third story has been set up, that we know of, by any one.

One thing is agreed on by both sides, viz. that

* Matth. xxviii. 1—16.

the body was not to be found in the sepulchre. It was gone; and the question is, by what means? The soldiers gave out that the disciples "came by night, while they slept, and stole it away." But it is not very easy to understand how the soldiers could depose to any thing that passed while they were fast asleep; they could not possibly tell in what manner the body was stolen away, or by whom. Nor, considering the extreme severity of the Roman military discipline, is it credible, that if they had been asleep, they would have confessed it. For it was certain death to a Roman soldier to be found sleeping upon guard. Nothing could have prevailed upon them to make such a declaration as that, but a previous promise of impunity and reward from the Jewish rulers; a plain proof that they had been tampered with, and that it was a concerted story.

In the next place, supposing the story true, of what use could the dead body be to the disciples? It could not prove to them, or to others, that their master was risen from the dead; on the contrary, it must have been a standing and a visible proof of the contrary. It must convince them that he, instead of being the deliverer they expected, was an impostor, and they most cruelly deceived. And why they should choose to keep in their possession, and to have continually before their eyes a lifeless corpse, which completely blasted all their hopes, and continually reminded them of their bitter disappointment, is somewhat difficult to be imagined.

The tale then, told by the soldiers, is, upon the very face of it a gross and clumsy forgery. The consequence is, that the account given by St.

Matthew is the true one. For if the body was actually gone (an acknowledged point on all sides) and if it was not as we have proved, stolen away by the disciples, there are but two possible suppositions remaining; either that it was taken away by the Jews and Romans, or that it was raised to life again by the power of God. If the former had been the case, it could only have been for the purpose of confronting and convicting the disciples of falsehood and fraud by the production of the dead body. But the dead body was *not* produced. It was, therefore, as the Gospel affirms, raised from the grave, and restored to life. There is no other conceivable alternative left.

And that this was actually the case, is proved by our Lord's appearing, after his resurrection, not only to the two women who came first to the sepulchre, but to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and to the disciples assembled together at two different times, and to all the apostles, and to above 500 brethren, at once. And he not only appeared to them silently, but he talked and ate with them; he showed them his hands and his feet; he made them handle him; he held several long conversations with them; and, at last, ascended up into heaven in their sight.

These were things of which the plainest and most ignorant men could judge. It was impossible for them to be deceived in an object with which they were well acquainted, and which presented itself to all their senses.

But there is another most decisive proof, arising from their own conduct, that they were perfectly convinced of the reality of our Lord's resurrection.

It appears that the apostles were far from being

men of natural courage and firmness of mind. When our Lord was apprehended, all his disciples, we are told, forsook him, and fled. Peter followed him afar off, and went into a hall in the palace of the high priests, where the servants warmed themselves, and being there charged with being a disciple of Jesus, he peremptorily denied it three times with vehemence and with oaths. It does not appear that any of his disciples attended in the judgment-hall to assist or to support him; and when he was crucified, the only persons that ventured to stand near his cross, were his mother, and two or three other women, and St. John. They all, in short, appeared dismayed and terrified with the fate of their master, afraid to acknowledge the slightest connexion with him, and utterly unable to face the dangers that seemed to menace them. But, immediately after the resurrection of their Lord, a most astonishing change took place in their conduct. From being the most timid of men, they suddenly became courageous, undaunted, and intrepid; they boldly preached that very Jesus whom but a short time before they had deserted in his greatest distress; and although his crucifixion was fresh before their eyes, and they had reason to expect the same or a similar fate, yet they persisted in avowing themselves his disciples, and told the Jews publicly, "that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ,"* and when they were brought before the rulers and elders to be examined respecting the lame man whom they had cured at the gate of the temple, "Be it known unto you all, (said they)

* Acts, ii. 36.

and to all the people of Israel, that, by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you all. This is the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head stone of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."†

And when a second time they were brought before the council, and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, their answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than man. And when they were again reprimanded, and threatened, and beaten, yet they ceased not in the temple, and in every house, to teach and to preach Jesus Christ; and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."*

In what manner now shall we account for this sudden and most singular change in the disposition, and as it were in the very constitution, of the apostles. If Christ had not risen from the grave, and his dead body was in the possession of his disciples; was this calculated to inspire them with affection for their leader, and with courage to preach a doctrine which they knew to be false? Would it not, on the contrary, have increased their *natural timidity*, depressed their spirits, extinguished all their zeal, and filled them with indignation and horror against a man who had so grossly deceived them, and robbed them, under false pretences, of every

† Acts, iv. 10, 11, 12.

* Acts, v. 29, 42.

— iv. 33.

thing that was dear and valuable to them in the world? Most unquestionably it would. Nor is it possible to account, in any rational way, for the strange revolution which took place in their minds, so soon after their master's death, but by admitting that they were fully persuaded and satisfied that he rose alive from the grave.

It may be said, perhaps, that this persuasion was the effect, not of irresistible evidence, but of enthusiasm, which made them fancy that some visionary phantom, created solely by their own heated imagination, was the real body of their Lord restored to life. But nothing could be more distant from enthusiasm than the character and conduct of these men, and the courage they manifested, which was perfectly calm, sober, collected, and cool. But what completely repels this suspicion is, that their bitterest adversaries never once accused them of enthusiasm, but charged them with a crime which was utterly inconsistent with it, fraud and theft; with stealing away the body from the grave. And if they did this, if that dead body was actually before their eyes, how was it possible for any degree of enthusiasm short of madness (which was never alleged against them) to mistake a dead body for a living man, whom they saw, and touched, and conversed with? No such instance of enthusiasm ever occurred in the world.

The resurrection of our Lord being thus established on the firmest grounds, it affords an unanswerable proof of the truth of our Saviour's pretensions, and, consequently, of the truth of his religion: for had he not been what he assumed to be, the Son of God, it is impossible that God should have raised him from the dead, and there-

by given his sanction to an imposture. But as he did actually restore him to life, he thereby set his seal to the divinity which he claimed, and acknowledged him, in the most publick and authoritative manner, to be "his beloved son, in whom he was well pleased."†

And this evidence of our Lord's divine mission is of the more importance, because our Saviour himself appealed to it as the grand proof of his being sent from heaven to instruct and to redeem mankind. For when he cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and the Jews required of him a sign, that is, a miraculous proof, that he had the authority of God for doing those things, his answer was, "Destroy this temple, (meaning his body) and in three days I will raise it up. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said;"* and they themselves constantly referred to the resurrection, more than to any other evidence, as the great foundation on which their faith was built.

The reason for this perhaps was, that this great event contained in itself, at once, the evidence both of miracle and of prophecy. It was certainly one of the most stupendous manifestations of divine power that could be presented to the observation of mankind; and it was, at the same time, the completion of two most remarkable prophecies; that of our Saviour's above mentioned, and that well-known one of king David's, which St. Peter

† Matt. iii. 17.

* John ii. 19. 22.

expressly applies to the resurrection of Christ :
 “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither
 wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.” †

† Psalm xvi. 10. Acts, ii. 27. On this subject of Christ’s resurrection I must again refer my young readers to Dr. Paley, vol. ii. ch. ix. p. 209. and also to the conclusion of his work ; the force of which it seems to me scarce possible for an unprejudiced reader to withstand.

CONCLUSION.

THESE are the principal proofs of the truth of the Christian Religion. Many others of a very satisfactory nature might be added ; but the question may be safely rested on those that have here been stated.

And when we collect them all together into one point of view ; when we consider the deplorable ignorance and inconceivable depravity of the heathen world before the birth of Christ, which rendered a divine interposition essentially necessary, and therefore highly probable ; the appearance of Christ upon earth, at the very time when his presence was most wanted, and when there was a general expectation throughout the East, that some great and extraordinary personage was soon to come into the world ; the transcendent excellence of our Lord’s character, so infinitely beyond that of every other moral teacher ; the calmness, the composure, the dignity, the integrity, the spotless

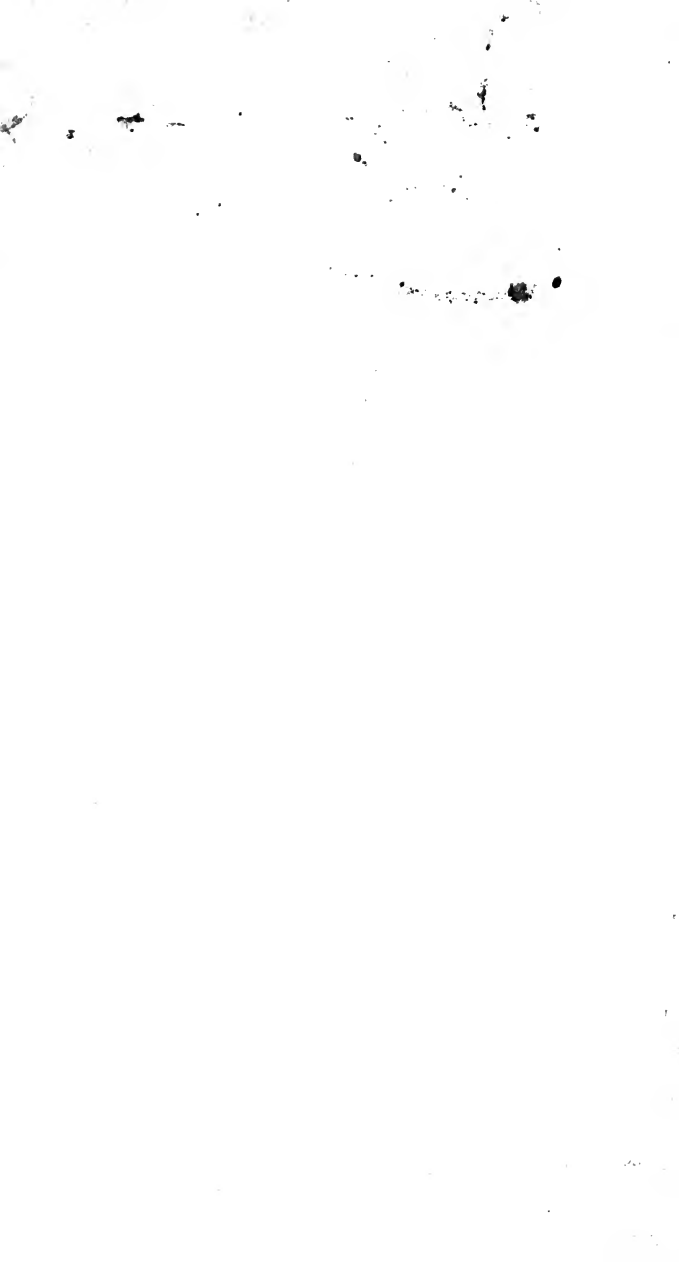
sanctity of his manners, so utterly inconsistent with every idea of enthusiasm or imposture; the sublimity and importance of his doctrines; the consummate wisdom and perfect purity of his moral precepts, far exceeding the natural powers of a man born in the humblest situation, and in a remote and obscure corner of the world, without learning, education, languages, or books; the rapid and astonishing propagation of his religion, in a very short space of time, through almost every region of the East, by the sole efforts of himself and a few illiterate fishermen, in direct opposition to all the power, the authority, the learning, the philosophy, the reigning vices, prejudices, and superstitions of the world; the complete and marked opposition, in every essential point, between the character and religion of Christ and the character and religion of Mahomet, exactly such as might be expected between truth and falsehood; the minute description of all the most material circumstances of his birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection, given by the ancient prophets many hundred years before he was born, and exactly fulfilled in him, and him only, pointing him out as the Messiah of the Jews and the Redeemer of mankind; the various prophecies delivered by Christ himself, which were all punctually accomplished, more especially the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; the many astonishing miracles wrought by Jesus, in the open face of day, before thousands of spectators, the reality of which is proved by multitudes of the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, and was even acknowledged by the earliest and most inveterate enemies of the Gospel; and,

lastly, that most astonishing and well-authenticated miracle of our Lord's resurrection, which was the seal and confirmation of his own Divine Origin, and that of his Religion; when all these various evidences are brought together, and impartially weighed, it seems hardly within the power of a fair and ingenuous mind to resist the impression of their united force. If such a combination of evidence as this is not sufficient to satisfy an honest enquirer into truth, it is utterly impossible that any event, which passed in former times, and which we did not see with our own eyes, can ever be proved to have happened, by any degree of testimony whatever. It may safely be affirmed, that no instance can be produced of any one fact or event, said to have taken place in past ages, and established by such evidence as that on which the Christian Revelation rests, that afterwards turned out to be false. We challenge the enemies of our faith to bring forward, if they can, any such instance. If they cannot, (and we know it to be impossible) we have a right to say, that a religion supported by such an extraordinary accumulation of evidence, must be true; and that all men, who pretend to be guided by argument and by proof, are bound, by the most sacred obligations, to receive the religion of Christ as a real revelation from God.

F I N I S.







Belonging to Benj. W.
- Franklin -

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