

THE
GOSPEL 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."*

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Contents.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	9
<i>PART THE FIRST;</i>	
In which the holy Nature of the Christian Religion is contrasted with the Immorality of Deism.	
CHAP. I.	
Christianity reveals a God, glorious in Holiness; but Deism, though it acknowledges a God, yet denies or overlooks his moral character,	18
CHAP. 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,	23
CHAP. 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,	29
CHAP. IV.	
Christianity furnishes motives to a virtuous life, which Deism either rejects, or attempts to undermine,	42
CHAP. V.	
The lives of those who reject the Gospel will not bear a comparison with theirs who embrace it,	54
CHAP. 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,	75

CHAP. VII.		PAGE
Christianity is a source of happiness to individuals and to society : but Deism leaves both the one and the other without hope,	- - - - -	96

PART THE SECOND ;

In which the Harmony of the Christian Religion is considered as an Evidence of its Divinity.

CHAP. I.	
The harmony of Scripture with historic fact, evinced by the fulfilment of prophecy,	- - - 111

CHAP. 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,	121

CHAP. III.	
The harmony of Scripture with its own professions, argued from the spirit and style in which it is written,	130

CHAP. IV.	
The consistency of the Christian doctrine, particularly that of salvation through a Mediator, with sober Reason,	141

CHAP. V.	
The consistency of the Scripture doctrine of Redemption with the modern opinion of the magnitude of Creation,	- - - 161

CONCLUDING ADDRESSES.

To Deists,	- - - - -	185
To the Jews,	- - - - -	195
To Christians,	- - - - -	200

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 frequently 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 condescend-*

* 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.

ing 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.

KETTERING,
October 10, 1799.

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 to 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 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 Democrates, a famous physician; and that it was afterwards translated by Galen, from whom we have it."‡ A modern cavalier might take it into his head to object to the an-

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

† Lardner, Simpson, and others.

‡ Chambers' Dict. *Mithridate*.

authenticity of this history; he might allege that the preparation has passed through so many hands, and that there is so much hear-say and uncertainty attending it, that no dependence 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 evidence 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 profess to be, as that it might with equal reason be doubted whether the world was created by the power of God, as whether they were written by the inspiration of his Spirit; and if so, our dependence is not upon mere tradition.

It is true, the Scriptures having been conveyed 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

* Human Und. B. IV. Chap. xviii.

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 fleshy 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 choose 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; 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 doubt 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,

* 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.

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, &c.

P A R T I.

IN WHICH THE HOLY NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN
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 *wo* 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.

CHAP. 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 subtilty, 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 shamed 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 inquiries: 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 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*;

* See Leland’s Review, Let. xxiii.

† Ignor. Philos. Nos. xv. xvi. xviii.

‡ Age of Reason, Part I. p. 1. § Ibid, p. 16.

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 splendour, and take pleasure in visiting them, that we may inspect their curiosities : but in such cases the more 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.

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* Characteristics, Vol. I. § V.

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

* *Characteristics*, Vol. I. § III.

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.

CHAP. 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 expense. 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 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 mercy* : 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 non-conductor 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 Deity. Some of this may be true ; but not

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

† Ibid, Part I. p. 21.

the whole. The latter part is only a piece of religious gasconade. If Mr. Paine really thinks so well of his situation as he pretends, the belief of an 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 choose to rest upon this foundation, he must abide the consequence: but he had better have borne 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 Almighty? *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 which 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 then 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 inquiry. 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 uncorruptible 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 after 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

* Rom. i.

† 2 Kings, xvii.

they have not the face to practise or defend their 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 proper-
“ties, 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 weariness is ‘it! O that it were no more! since however we cannot introduce the worship of the gods, we will neglect all worship, and celebrate the praises of our favourite deities in another form.’ In a country where deism has gained the ascendancy, this principle is carried still farther. Its language there is, ‘Seeing we cannot, for shame, worship any other than the one

* Ignor. Philos. No. XXIV.

‘living and true God, let us abolish the day of worship, and substitute in its place one day in ten, which shall be devoted chiefly to theatrical entertainments, in which we can introduce as much heathenism as we please.’

Mr. Hume acknowledges the *justice* of considering 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 human mind into the lowest submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility, and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable 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 inferior rank, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them, and may even without profaneness aspire sometimes to a rivalry and emulation of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggrandize a people.”*

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.

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

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 outcast, 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 through 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 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.

CHAP. 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,

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

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 acceptation 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 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 thyself.* 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-rising, sullenness, 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-reachings in trade; no tyranny, venality, haughtiness, nor oppression among the great; no envy, discontent, disaffection, cabals, nor evil-devisings 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

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

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,” says he, “ 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.

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

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

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 regarded 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 overset 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.*

* Works, Vol. V. p. 90.

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 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.

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

† Emilius, Vol. I. p. 166—168.

But that on which our opponents insist the most, and with the greatest shew 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 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

* Rom. ii. 12—16. i. 20.

† Ps. xix.

that he ought to do the same to them; and wherein 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 19th 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 dexterous 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, apologizes for lewdness, in certain cases, as resembling thirst in a dropsy, 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

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

† Leland's *Review*, &c. Vol. I. Lct. I.

‡ Works, Vol. V. p. 167.

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, descend 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 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 choose 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 convenience 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 accounts which these writers give of morality, it should seem that they know not what it is. Every new speculator is dissatisfied 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 doctrine 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*

* Law of Nature, p. 17.

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

without knowledge?—Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty 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.

CHAP. 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 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 improveable 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

* Works, Vol. V. p. 188.

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 acknowledgment of one living and true God, may be thought sufficient for all the purposes of morality.

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

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, 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 expense of truth and uprightness. 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 ridicule, 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 aught he knows, be a good reasoner.‡

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,” says he, “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.”§

* *Age of Reason*, Pt. I. p. 1. Pt. II. p. 100, 101.

† *Works*, Vol. V.

‡ *Philosophical Essays*, p. 231.

§ *Characteristics*, Vol. I. p. 18.

Lord Shaftesbury's wit may very well be passed by as being what it is: it suffices, in connexion 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 observable 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 maintain 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 apostasy 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

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

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 connexion with the general good, seeks it as he ought to do. No man is required directly to oppose his own welfare, though 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 Shaftesbury 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

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

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 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 of the gospel are attainable, faith in Christ, secures

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

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 devoutness 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 ;

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

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 accompanied 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 choose to do otherwise, should not disobey their masters, children their parents, and private indi-

viduals 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 " 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."§

* Page 17. † P. 20. ‡ P. 6.

§ *Characteristics*, Vol. I. p. 98, 99.

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 expense 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, 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 our 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.

CHAP. 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, of 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

* Hume's Essays, Moral and Political, Essay XXIV.

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 21.

“desirous of making men better.”* This is a very favourable report; and, if well founded, the writer of the first chapter 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.

“Epictetus 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 Brutus, 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 bottom of it: that little tree? freedom hangs upon it: thy own neck, thy own throat may be a refuge to thee, from such servitude; yea, every vein of thy body.”||

* Ignorant Philosopher, p. 60.

† Enchiridion, Cap. 38. pag. m. 56.

‡ Diog. Laertius.

§ Plutarch's Life of Cato, near the end.

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

“ We may find in the heathen philosophers custom-
 “ ary 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 man-
 “ ner we see the unnatural love of boys recommend-
 “ ed.”* “ 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 illit-*
 “ *erate 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 he meant such dispositions of the mind as are right, 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 expense 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.

* Juvenal Satyr II. Ver. 10.

† Diog. Laertius, Vol. I. pag. m. 165, 166. See in Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 63, 64, 65.

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 alleging 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 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 over 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

* 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.

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 tyger.* 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

* 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. *Evang. Mag.* Vol. IV, p. 405.

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 question. 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 *Characteristicks*, and indeed of the generality of the 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 "weak and obstinate men."

* Essay on Parties in general.

† Ignorant Philosopher, p. 82, 83.

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, until 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 *con-*

*siften*cy 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 inquiries.

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 adversaries 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 among the nobility and gentry of every nation consider religion as suited only to vulgar minds ; and therefore either wholly absent themselves from public 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.

Fourthly : 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 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 benenevolent 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 secret they are as wicked as others, either such insinuations are not seriously believed, or, if they be, the party is consider-

ed 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 choose 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 religious, 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.

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; and with them they are habitual, and furnish employment in the work of palliation. The spots on the garment 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, interest 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?"†

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

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

“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, 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 min-

* In Sullivan's *Survey of Nature*.

isters "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 motive 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 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 predators 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 "*Clergy-men* 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

* Essay on National Characters, *Note*.

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

“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 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 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 corrupted Christian-
 ‘ ity. 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 Shaftes-
 bury, 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 pop-
 ulace, 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 cor-
 rupted Christianity.* Deists can distinguish between
 Christianity and its abuses, when an end is to be an-
 swered 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 reverence Chris-
 “ tianity, 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 desertions of principle and decency. Is
 “ it less infamous in themselves? All hypocrisy is de-
 “ testable; 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 completely un-
 “ derstood by all men of common sense. There can

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

“ be no haltings between uttering truth and falsehood ;
 “ no doubt, no mistakes, as between piety and enthu-
 “ siasm, frugality and parsimony, generosity and pro-
 “ fusion. Transgression therefore is always a known,
 “ definite, deliberate villany. In the sudden moment
 “ of strong temptation, in the hour of unguarded at-
 “ tack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected
 “ alarm, the best man may, perhaps, be surprised into
 “ any sin : but he who can coolly, of steady design, and
 “ with no unusual impulse, utter falsehood, and vend
 “ hypocrisy, 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 refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally
 “ a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant
 “ 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 mercy 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 unblushing-
 “ ly 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 writings in which he labours to destroy Chris-
 “ tianity. Voltaire in a letter now remaining, re-
 “ quested his friend D’Alembert to tell for him a di-
 “ rect and palpable lie, by denying that he was the
 “ author of the *Philosophical Dictionary*. D’Alem-
 “ bert, 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 professed to be-
 “ lieve 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 Lu-
 “cian’s Dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit,
 “concerning his interview with Charon the heathen
 “ferry-man of Hades.”*

Colins, 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 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

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

† See Trial of T. Paine, at Guildhall for a libel, &c. p. 43.

‡ Confessions, London Ed. 1796, Vol. I. p. 52, 55, 68.

“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 established, 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

* Confessions, Vol. I. p. 125, 126.

† Vol. II. p. 88, 89, 103—106.

‡ Vol. II. p. 127.

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 adopt it. I cheerfully determined upon it without the least scruple; and the only one I had to overcome was that of Theresa; whom with the greatest imaginable difficulty, I persuaded to comply." The year following, a similar inconvenience 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 error."*

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 openly 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 exclusive right of the sovereign power in every country to fix the mode of worship, and these unintelligible opinions; and that consequently it was the duty of a citizen to admit the one, and conform 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 of uprightness and honour which was to expiate for a theft which he had committed when a young man,

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

† Part II. Vol. I. p. 263, 264. ‡ Part II, Vol. I. p. 311, 328.

and laid it to a female servant, 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!"†

CHAP. 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 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

* Confessions, Vol. I. p. 155, 160.

† Vol. I. p. 1.

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 “sharpen their
“wits, to render them crafty and subtle, and to train
“them up in all sorts of wiles and cunning, watchfulness, and circumspection, whereby 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

* Plutarch's *Morals*, Vol. I. p. 26.

reckoned a singular thing among the Thebans, that the law forbade 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 Agesilaus, that being in love with a beautiful barbarian boy, he suffered it to go no farther than looking at him, and admiring him. Epictetus also praises Socrates in this manner: "Go to Socrates, and see him lying by Alcibiades, yet slighting his youth and beauty. Consider what a victory 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 flew, 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 genteelly, 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 among 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."†

From the foregoing facts we may form some judgment of the justice 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

* 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 and Science.

“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 re-
 “venge, but of whose profession of faith we are un-
 “acquainted. It appears to have been their custom
 “to personify both virtue and vice by statues and im-
 “ages, as is done now-a-days by statuary and paint-
 “ing: but it does not follow from this, that they wor-
 “shipped 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 era, they were, “I-
 “dolators, 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 being 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

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

† Page 5.

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 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

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

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 may 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 pawn their wives in time of need ; and some lend them for a month, or more, or less, according as they agree—that marriage is dissolved on the most trifling occasions—that sons and daughters are sold whenever their parents please, and that is frequently—that many of the rich as well as the poor, when they are delivered of daughters, stile 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 defraud.” 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 !

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

If credit could be given to what some writers have advanced, we might suppose the moral philosophy and virtuous conduct of the Hindoos 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 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 sordid 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 characterises 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 Gentocs 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

* Harris's Voyages and Travels, Vol. I. Chap. II. § xi. xii.

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

"came before us, but it was proved in the end a
"Brahmin was at the bottom of it."*

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 bare-faced false-
"hood, servile adulation, and deliberate deception,
"which they daily practise. It is the business of all,
"from the Ryott to the Dewan, to conceal and de-
"ceive; the simplest matters of fact are designedly
"covered with a veil, through which no human un-
"derstanding 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 noto-
"rious. 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 consid-
"ered 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 shame; so that to
"relieve their own smart they provide for the poor:
"but here, O miserable state! I have found the path-

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

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

“ way stopped up by sick and wounded people, perishing with hunger ; and that in a populous neighbourhood, where numbers pass by, some singing, others talking, but none shewing mercy ; as though they were dying 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 Brāmhins, 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 antichristian 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 denied 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 Gomorrha.

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

† Translated from the Sanscrit, and published in, 1773.

‡ Genesis xliii.

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 has 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 punishments, so essential to the preservation of order in society, and to the prevention of crimes, was publicly ridiculed, and the people taught to believe that death was an everlasting sleep."

* Judge Rush.

" They ordered the words ' Temple of Reason ' to
 " be inscribed on the churches, in contempt of the
 " doctrine of Revelation. Atheistical and licentious
 " homilies have been published in the churches in-
 " stead of the old service, and a ludicrous imitation
 " of the Greek mythology exhibited under the title of
 " ' The Religion of Reason.' Nay, they have gone
 " so far as to dress up a common strumpet with the
 " most fantastic decorations, whom they blasphemously
 " styled ' The Goddess of Reason,' and who was car-
 " ried to church on the shoulders of some Jacobins
 " selected 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 harangued the
 " people, who, in return, professed the deepest adora-
 " tion to her, and sung the Carmagnole and other
 " songs, by way of worshipping her. This horrid
 " scene, almost too horrid to relate, was concluded by
 " burning the prayer-book, confessional, and every
 " thing appropriated to the use of public worship :
 " numbers in the mean time danced round the flames
 " with every appearance 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 prac-
 tice 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 at-
 tendant abominations, with various other immoral
 customs of the heathen, are in a good measure banish-

ed 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 *bless 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 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

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

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 accustomed 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, tumults, 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 other's 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 unremitted 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 licentiously 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.

CHAP. 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 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 Rousseau, 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 Rousseau, the world would be much more miserable than it is: If all were like Howard, it would be much more happy. Rousseau, 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." Rousseau, 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 *perpetuity*, 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 philosophize 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 yourself explained them. You live in a state of enjoyment, I in a state of hope; and hope gives charms to every thing."*

Finally, If nothing deserves the name of happiness which meets not the necessities, nor relieves the miseries 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 desire after something which is not to be found under the sun—after A GOOD WHICH HAS NO LIMITS. We may imagine our desires are moderate, 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 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 ; yea, 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 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

* Isai. lv. 1, 2, 3. John vii. 37. vi. 35. † Acts xvi. 30.

‡ Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society, No. IV, p. 326.

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 afflictions 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 sinner 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 inquire 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. Gov-

errors 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 government 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 en-

larged 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 stands 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 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 acknowledges, 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

* For February, 1799, p. 9.

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 *Christianity*, 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 of 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 better 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, forever 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, though 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 other's 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 men 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 forever.

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 *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

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* Chap. V. vi.

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, Volney, 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 forever.’—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.

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.

CHAP. 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 po-

etic, 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 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 ;

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

and of various other events, the history as well as 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.*

* Lowth’s translation of Isaiah, 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.

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 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 he 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?

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

† 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.

The same Daniel, at the same time, three hundred 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: and 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 ambassador 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 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 em-

* See Prideaux'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.

pire 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 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 apostasy 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 ;*

* Isai. ix. 6. Mic. v. 2. Dan. ix. 26—27. Isai. xlii. 2. xxxv. 5. 6. liii. Pf. xvi. 10, 11.

† Matt. xxiv. 1—35. Luke xxi.

‡ Luke xxi. 24.

§ 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

*speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences 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 apostasy, 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 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 become 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

* 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

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 whore, 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 foam ; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.†* 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 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 falsehood,” the prophecies of Scripture, or the *Age of Reason*.

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

† 2 Tim. iii. 1—4. Jude.

CHAP. 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 discernor 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 ingenuousness 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 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 wherein must consist their cure.

It has already been observed* that Christian morality is summed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and 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 apostasy, 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 surprised at it. If men be destitute of the love of 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 control.

Neither are we surprised 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 surprised 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 *received 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

* 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.

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 Honorite, 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 akin 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 non-conformists 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 control 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 : 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 forwarned 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 particular 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

* Dan. vii. † Part I. Chap. VII. ‡ Judges ix.

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 controverted. 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 give 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 will 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 represen-

tations, 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*.

CH 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 human 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 by 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 re-

ject 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 school-boy ;” and to compare the command of the great Creator, in the first chapter of Genesis, *Let there be light*, to the “ imperative manner of speaking used by a conjuror.”† 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 a 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 their’s, of passion raised and inflamed by great and affecting objects.

* 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*.

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

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 sufficient 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 fiddle-stick : 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 conjuror : 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 William 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 has
 “ 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 osten-
 “ tation? 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 the
 high encomiums bestowed by Balaam on the Taberna-
 cles of Israel. It is no unusual thing for men to ad-
 mire 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 *in-*
variably eye the hand of God: in some instances they

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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-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*

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

† Jer. iv. 19. xlviii. 6.

*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, 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

* Isai. xvi. 9, 10, 11. † Matt. xii. 38. Luke, xxiii. 8, 9.

‡ Luke, xiii. 24. See also xxi. 5—19.

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 imperfections; 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. xiii.

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 excellency of her practical precepts; from the accordance we have 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 accounting 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 different writers, in proportion as they have struck

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 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. Crea-

"the minds of different 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 understanding, morally impossible that so many species of proof, 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."

Practical View, &c. p. 301—368, 3d. ed.

tion 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 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 ingenious 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*

* Prov. xvii. 24.

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 enough 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 school-boy 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 con-

* Matt. xxiii. 39.

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

trary, if such a 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 catechise, 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.

CHAP. 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 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

* Prov. xiv. 6. † Age of Reason, Part I. p. 1. Part II. p. 100.

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. 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.

* See President Edwards's Remarks on important Theological Controversies, Chap. VI.

† Volney's Law of Nature, p. 49.

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 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, with 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

* Rom. viii. 3.

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 his 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 Mediator 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 counsel 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 ma-
 “ jesty to pardon a company of conspirators at the in-
 “ tercession of one of their former 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 *tender*
 “ *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 proper
 “ 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 pre-
 “ vious relation or connexion, a mediation would have
 “ the appearance of an arbitrary and formal process,
 “ and prove but little interesting to the hearts of the
 “ community.”

Such were the reasonings of the king’s friends ; but
 where to find the character in whom these qualifica-
 tions were united, and what particular expedient could
 be devised by means of which, pardon, instead of re-
 laxing, should strengthen, just authority, were subjects
 too difficult for them to resolve.

Meanwhile the king and his son, whom he greatly
 loved, and whom he had appointed generalissimo of all
 his forces, had retired from the company, and were
 conversing about the matter which attracted 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 mediator ; 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 pur-
“ sued ? ”

“ My father ! ” said the prince, “ I feel the insult
“ 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 with-
“ out mercy. Yet I also feel for them. I have the
“ heart of a foldier. 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 receive your majesty’s pardon in my name. If
“ any man refuse so to implore, and to so receive it,
“ let him die the death ! ”

“ My son ! ” replied the king, “ you have express-
“ ed my heart ! The same things have occupied my
“ mind ; but it was my desire that you should be vol-
“ untary 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 happy 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 af-
“ fliction 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 ac-
“ cording 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 nothing 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 repeat 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 concerned 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 matters, and would allow that we had our provocations, and would promise us redress, and an easier 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 introduced 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 comprehend 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 justice 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 *transgressed 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 repa-

"ration for an injury, but as a singular instance of
 "mercy. And far be it from us that we should con-
 "sider it as designed to deliver us from our original
 "and just allegiance to his majesty'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
 "ourselves 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 notion
 "of being freed by it previously to our acquiescence
 "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 majesty's government.
 "O that we were once clear of this hateful and hor-
 "rid 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 companions 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 unwillingness 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 wick-
 "ed as it is in itself, it would be more wicked to justi-
 "fy. 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 remem-
 ber 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

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

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 obtained 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 conveyed 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 *Creator*. 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* 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

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

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

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 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 Scrip-

* Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

tures, 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 to Jesus Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for whom he died."† The writer of these pages acknowledges he never could 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 have 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 Scripture gives 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.

† See Dr. Owen's Dissertation on Divine Justice, Ch. XII. § 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.

As to what Mr. Paine alleges, 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 princi-

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 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, 29 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*, Ephes. 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.

ple pervades creation. To call this injustice, is to fly in the face of the Creator. 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 the 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 Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shubite, 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

* Chap. xlii. 7, 8, 9.

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 contented 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.

CHAP. 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 Supreme 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 will 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

* Page 40—47.

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 counterpart 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 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. 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 reflections, what are we to think of the Christian 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 equally dependent 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 woman 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 serpent, 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 scarce a momentary interval of life."†

To animadvert upon all the extravagant and offensive 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

* Page 40.

† Page 46.

“ 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 admitted 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 acquisitions with those of other men : but I am inclined 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, there-

fore, 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 allowed, 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 in-

significant. 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 have 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

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

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 high purposes. The great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are predicted and 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 philos-

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

ophers only had been their object, the language might possibly have been somewhat different; though even this may be a matter of doubt, since 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 writings, 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 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*

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* Chap. xxvi. 7.

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.

I. *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

* Ps. viii. 3, 4. 2 Chron. 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.

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 daily 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 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 !

* James ii. 13.

† Ephes. iii. 21.

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 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 apostasy. 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 the Corinthians concerning one of their excluded members, who had been

* Ephes. i. 10.

† Col. i. 19, 20.

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 forgivest 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 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

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

† Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10. Col. ii. 10. Ephes. i. 20, 21, 22.

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, as 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 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 journeys till she was restored to her situation: and it is not unnat-

ural 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.‡

^{*} Gen. xii. 2. xxii. 18.

† Deut. ix. 5. vii. 7, 8.

‡ Psal. lxxvii.

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 present 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.‡

* Ephes. iii. 10. † 1 Pet. i. 12.

‡ Col. i. 16, *by him, and for him.*

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 through which the Lord Jesus will be glorified and admired 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.‡*

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 crea-

* 1 Thes. i. 10.

† Ps. ciii. 17—22.

‡ Rev. v. XI, 12, 13.

tion, 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 re-united 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 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 Satan 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,

* Matt. vi, 10.

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, 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

* Acts iii. 10.

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 Tabor, 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*

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* 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13.

*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 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

* Rev. xxi. 1—5.

† Jude 7. Rev. xix. 3, 4.

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 who acquiesce in his salvation: but all who do not, or who possess 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

* Ezek. xv. 2—5.

† Numb. xvi. 38.

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 consideration; 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 no possession of the good land: it is the province of Christianity to add, *ALL IS YOUR'S!* 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, and 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 good will 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 you can 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 must 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 morals 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 gail 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 parents, 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 yourselves 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 revolvings 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 entreat 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 Rousseau, 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 sentences as the following may be found in his publications: "Supposing Christianity to have been a human in-

* Part II. Chap. III. p. 132, 133.

“vention, 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 intelli-
 “gible 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 benevo-
 “lent 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 continual-
 ly 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 unfavour-
 able character of your cause, that, in this particular, it
 exactly resembles that of vice itself? Vicious men 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 betray-
 ing 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 FREQUENT-

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

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 5.

LY 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.* Why is it that so many of you faint in the day of trial? If your cause were good, you would defend it with uprightness, 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

* 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, “I speak to me no more of “that man, but let me die in peace.”

† Age of Reason, Part II. Pref.

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 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 inquire 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

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

by reducing it to only a *probability*, which is to have the influence of belief:—Yea, 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 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.

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

† Characteristics, Vol. I. § 5.

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 induced 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 entreated 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 once famous city, a doom, which, according to your own writer, Josephus, was soon after 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 human 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 be-

ing 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, Ezra, 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 in-

* Psal. lxxiii. 1. Amos ix. 7.

† Zeph. ii. 10.

fidels. 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, though 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? Seriously examine whether you have not forsaken the God of your fathers, and become the friends and allies of them 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 inquiring, *Where is thy God*?† Such is the treatment which the *godly* part of your na-

* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 6, 7.

† Psal. xxii. 8. iv. 2. xlii. 3. xxi. 18. xl. 15.

tion 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 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 rational 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 controversy, 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

* Psal. lxxix. 10. cxv. 2. Joel ii. 17. Mic. vii. 8, 9, 10. Isai. lxvi. 5.

† Lindsey's Catechists, Inquiry 6.

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.*

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 Testaments 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!

* Zech. xii. 10—14. xiii. 1.

† Ezek. xxxvii. Luke xxi. 24.

‡ Hos. 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 infidelity 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 them-

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

selves 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.

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 it is 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*.‡

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. xvii. 8, 11.

† Rev. xviii. xix.

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

§ Rev. xvi. 15.

Q U E R Y

TO THE AUTHOR OF

"THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS."

[From the BIBLICAL MAGAZINE.]

REV. SIR,

WITH considerable pleasure I have perused your book, "THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS." There is one thing, however, in p. 200, second edition, on which I take the liberty to request a little information; namely, Whether any person, *by nature*, possesses that "honest heart" which constitutes the ability to comply with the invitations of the gospel to everlasting life? If not, Whether, if I be not what you call an *elect sinner*, there are any means provided of God, and which I can use, that shall issue in that "honesty of heart" which will enable me to believe unto salvation? And if not, be so good as to inform me, How the gospel can, with any propriety, be called, *A blessing bestowed upon me*; seeing it is inadequate to make me happy, and contains no good thing which I can possibly obtain or enjoy: for though I am a sinner, yet it is impossible for me to be a *believing sinner*.

Yours, &c.

C. G.

Portsea.

R E P L Y

TO THE FOREGOING QUERY.

DEAR SIR,

YOU inquire—(1.) "Whether any person, *by nature*, possesses that 'honest heart' which constitutes the ability to comply with the invitations of the gospel?" I believe the heart of man to be by nature the direct opposite of

honest. I am not aware, however, that I have any where represented an honest heart as constituting our ability to comply with gospel invitations, unless as the term is sometimes used in a figurative sense, for moral ability. I have said, "There is no ability wanting for this purpose "in any man who possesses an honest heart." If a person owed you one hundred pounds, and could find plenty of money for his own purposes, though none for you; and should he, at the same time, plead inability, you would answer, *There was no ability wanting but an honest heart*: yet it would be an unjust construction of your words, if an advocate for this dishonest man were to allege, that you had represented an honest heart as that which *constituted the ability to pay the debt*. No, you would reply, his ability, strictly speaking, consists in its being *in the power of his hand*, and this he has. That which is wanting is an honest principle; and it is the former, not the latter, which renders him accountable. It is similar with regard to God. Men have the same natural powers to love Christ as to hate him; to believe as to disbelieve; and this it is which constitutes their accountableness. Take away reason and conscience, and man would cease to be accountable: but if he were as wicked as Satan himself, in that case no such effect would follow.—(2.) If no man by nature possess an honest heart, you inquire, "Whether, "if I be not what you call an *elect sinner*, there are any "means provided of God, and which I can use, that shall "issue in that 'honesty of heart' which will enable me to "believe unto salvation?" Your being an elect, or a non-elect sinner, makes no difference as to this question. The idea of a person destitute of honesty using means to obtain it, is in all cases a contradiction. The use of means *supposes the existence* of an honest desire after the end; the Scriptures direct to the sincere use of means for obtaining eternal life; and these means are, *Repent and believe the gospel*; but they no where direct to such a use of means as may be complied with, without any honesty of heart, and in order to obtain it. Nothing appears to me with greater evidence, than that God *directly requires uprightness of heart*, not only in the moral law, but in all the exhortations of the Bible, and not the dishonest use of means in order to obtain it. Probably, you yourself would not

plead for *such* a use of means ; but would allow, that even in using means to obtain an honest heart, we ought to be *sincere* : but, if so, you must maintain what I affirm, that nothing short of honesty of heart *itself* is required in any of the exhortations of Scripture ; for a sincere use of means *is* honesty of heart. If you say, ‘ No ; man is depraved : it is not his duty to possess an honest heart, but merely to use means that he may possess it : ’ I answer, (as personating the sinner) I have no *desire* after an honest heart. If you reply, ‘ You should pray for such a desire,’ you must mean, if you mean any thing, that I should express my *desire* to God, that I may have a *desire* ; and I tell you that I have none to express ! You would then, Sir, be driven to tell me, ‘ I was so wicked, that I neither was of an upright heart, nor would be persuaded to use any means for becoming so ; and that I must take the consequences.’ That is, I must be exposed to punishment, because, though I had “ a price in my hand to “ get wisdom, *I had no heart to it.*” Thus, all you do is to remove the obstruction farther out of sight : the thing is the same.

I apprehend it is owing to your considering human depravity as the *misfortune*, rather than the *fault* of human nature, that you and others speak of it as you do. You would not write in this manner in an affair that affected *yourself*. If the debtor above supposed, whom you knew to have plenty of wealth about him, were to allege his want of an honest heart, you might possibly think of *using means with him* ; but you would not think of directing him to use means to become what at present he has no desire to be—an honest man !

(3.) You inquire, If there be no means provided of God, which I can use, that shall issue in that honesty of heart which will enable me to believe unto salvation, “ How can the gospel be a *blessing bestowed upon me* ; seeing it is inadequate to make me happy, and contains no “ good thing which I can possibly obtain or enjoy ? ” If I be under no other inability than that which arises from a dishonesty of heart, it is an abuse of language to introduce the terms “ possible, impossible,” &c. for the purpose of diminishing the goodness of God, or destroying the accountability of man. I am not wanting in power, provided I

were willing ; and if I be not willing, there lies my fault. Nor is any thing in itself less a blessing on account of our unreasonable and wicked aversion to it. Indeed, the same would follow from your own principles. If I be so wicked as not only to be destitute of an honest heart, but *cannot be persuaded to use means in order to obtain it*, I must perish : and then, according to your way of writing, the gospel was "inadequate to make me happy, and "was no blessing to me !" You will say, ' I might have used the means : ' that is, I might, *if I would*, or if I had possessed a sincere desire after the end ; but I *did not* possess it ; and therefore the same consequences follow your hypothesis as that which you oppose.

If these things be true, say you, we may *despair*. True, Sir, and that is the point, in a sense, to which I should be glad to see you and many others brought. Till we despair of all help from ourselves, we shall never pray acceptably ; nor, in my judgment, is there any hope of our salvation.

Let a man feel that there is no bar between him and heaven, except what consists in his own wickedness ; and yet that such is its influence over him, that he certainly never will, by any efforts of his own, extricate himself from it, and he will then begin to pray for an interest in salvation by *mere grace*, in the name of Jesus—a salvation that shall save him *from himself* ; and, so praying, he will find it ; and when he has found it, he will feel and acknowledge that it was grace alone that made him to differ ; and this grace, he is taught in the scriptures to ascribe to the purpose of God, given him in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Yours, &c.

A. F.

MR. FULLER'S

L E T T E R S

TO

MR. VIDLER,

ON

THE DOCTRINE OF

UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

B O S T O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY MANNING AND LORING, NO. 2,
CORNHILL.

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AUG. 1803.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

A REVIEW of the controversy between Mr. Vidler and Mr. Fuller, on the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION, in twelve Letters to a Universalist, being prepared for the press, the Publisher judged it a fit opportunity for gratifying the wishes of many of Mr. Fuller's friends, to reprint his Letters to Mr. Vidler on that subject. He accordingly applied to the Author for permission to do so, and received the following answer :—
" Mr. Vidler, in a Letter to me, signified his intention to reprint the whole controversy. As he has now, I should think, had sufficient time to fulfil his proposal, and has not done it, you are at liberty to publish that part of it which belongs to me."

The reader is requested to notice, that the first of these Letters appeared in the Evangelical Magazine for September, 1795, and the seven following ones in the Universalist's Miscellany, between July, 1799, and July, 1800; and that owing to this circumstance, the first Letter in the present series was not numbered in that of the Universalist's Miscellany: but what is there called the *first* is here the *second*; and so on throughout.

Those passages which relate to the article of "Birmingham news," are omitted, as irrelative to the point at issue.

The *Review* will be printed uniformly with the present publication, for the accommodation of the reader.

CLIPSTONE, Aug. 2, 1802.

LETTERS TO MR. VIDLER.

LETTER I.

*Expostulations with Mr. Vidler, on his having embraced the
Doctrine of Universal Salvation.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT has afforded me some painful concern to hear of your having embraced the scheme of Universal Salvation. When you were at K——, you appeared to me to be of a speculative disposition. I have long thought such a turn of mind to be very advantageous or very dangerous: persons of this description either make great advances in truth, or fall into great errors. I cannot, in this letter, enter deeply into the controversy; nor is there any necessity for it, as I am told that Dr. Edwards's Answer to Dr. Chauncey is in your hands. I earnestly wish you may read that piece with care, impartiality, and openness to conviction. I think you ought to have read it before you advanced your change of sentiment; and I greatly wish you had: for though I do not question your openness to conviction, any more than that of any other person in your situation, yet I know something of what is in man: I know it is a very rare thing *when we have once openly disavoured a sentiment, to return to it, and openly avow it again.* There are many instances of people changing their principles, and there may have been instances of the other; but I do not recollect any. False shame, supported by mistaken pride, forms here a very powerful temptation. The dread of being accused of versatility and indecision, insensibly obtains such a dominion over the mind, as to blind it to one side of the argument, and to give efficacy to every thing that looks like an argument, or the shadow of an argument, on the other.

It is certainly a very serious matter that we do not *err* in our ministrations. Error in a minister may affect the eternal welfare of many. I hope I may presume upon the friendliness of your temper while I expostulate with you on the subject. I will not be tedious to you, but let me entreat you to consider the following things :

First : Whether your change of sentiment has not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being in itself *unjust*. If it has, consider *whether* this does not arise from diminutive notions of the evil of sin ; *whether* you be not too much infected by sin yourself to be a proper judge of its demerit ; (a company of criminals would be very improper judges of the equity and goodness of a law which condemns them ;) *whether* you do not hold a principle, from which it will follow, that millions will be finally happy who will not be indebted to either the grace of God, or the death of Christ, for their happiness ; and consequently must have a heaven to themselves, not being able to join with those who ascribe theirs to God and the Lamb. For if endless misery be *unjust*, exemption from it must be the sinner's *right*, and can never be attributed to *mercy* ; neither could a mediator be needed to induce a righteous God to liberate the sinner, when he had suffered his full desert. In fine, consider whether you do not contradict your own experience. I think you have told me of your great distress of soul, arising from a consciousness of your deserving to be cast out of God's favour, and banished forever from his presence. Can you *now* say, that you did not deserve this ? Do you not deserve it still ? If you do, why not others ?

Secondly : Consider *whether the genius of the sentiment in question, be not opposite to that of every other sentiment in the bible*. The whole tenor of the Scripture saith to the righteous, *It shall be well with him ; and to the wicked, It shall be ill with him* : But Universal Salvation saith not only to the righteous, but to the wicked, *It shall be well at last with him*. Do consider whether you can find any one Scripture truth that resembles it in this respect. What doctrine, besides this, can you find in the bible, that affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses ; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death ? Instead of siding with God

against a wicked world, as a servant of God ought to do ; is not this a siding wicked world against God, and encouraging them to believe, what they are apt enough to believe without encouragement, that *they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst?* *Wo is me,* said an apostle, *if I preach not the gospel!* *If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel,* he is declared to be accursed ! Do seriously consider whether the doctrine of Universal Salvation will not render your preaching *another gospel.* The gospel of Christ is *good tidings to the meek, healing to the broken hearted, and comfort to them that mourn :* but must not your's be good tidings to the proud and impenitent, and comfort to those whom the Scripture declares under condemnation and the curse ? The gospel of Christ is a system of holiness, a system entirely opposite to every vicious bias of the human heart ; a system, therefore, which no unrenewed heart embraces—*he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God :—*But the good news which you must publish requires no change of heart, that it may be embraced ; being just suited to the wishes of an abandoned mind.

Thirdly : Consider whether your ministrations, on this principle, will not favour of his who taught our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die.* If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, that though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still* ; though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottomless* ; though the worm may prey upon them, yet at some period or other it *shall die* ; and though they may have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell in *everlasting* burnings : If, I say, you should raise such hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception ; think how you will be able to look *them* in the face another day ; and what is still more, how will you be able to look *HIM* in the face, who hath charged you to be *free from the blood of all men* ; and to *say unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him !*

My dear friend ! do not take it unkindly. My soul is grieved for you, and for the souls of many around you. How are you as to peace of mind, and communion with God ? Beware of the whirlpool of Socinianism. From

what I understand of the nature and tendency of your principles, it appears to me you are already within the influence of its destructive stream. All who hold this sentiment, I know, are not Socinians; but there are few, if any Socinians, who do not hold this sentiment, which is certainly of a piece with their whole system. It would greatly rejoice my heart to be able to acknowledge you, as heretofore, my brother and fellow-labourer in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do let me hear from you, and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

Feb. 14, 1793.

A. F.

LETTER II.

Reasons for not continuing the controversy, and replies to Mr. V.'s objections to the foregoing.

SIR,

IN the year 1793, when I understood that you had imbibed the doctrine of Universal Salvation, I wrote you a private expository letter, to which you returned no answer. You speak of this letter as being no secret in the circle of my acquaintance. I do not think it was shewn to more than two or three individuals. Some time after, as a request was made in the *Evangelical Magazine* for some thought on that subject, and as there was nothing private in the contents of that letter, I took the liberty to send it up for insertion. Accordingly it appeared in the Magazine for September, 1795, (p. 357) under the signature of GAIVS. To this letter you have since written an answer, in the two first numbers of your *Miscellany*: I received from you a copy of those numbers at the time, and since then another of a second edition, for both of which I thank you. To this answer I made no reply. In your second edition you inform your readers of the case, and seem to wish much to know the reasons of my silence. Some of your friends in the country, possessing a little of the sanguine temper, perhaps, of your Birmingham correspondent, appear to have entertained a hope

that it was owing to the impression which your letters had made upon my mind. If such be also your hope, I can only say it has no foundation.

Whether the reasons of my silence be "cogent" or not, the reader will judge when I have stated them. If I do not consider them as requiring a *continued* silence, it is because you have compelled me to pursue a different conduct. To the best of my recollection, I had three reasons for not writing at that time :—

First : I did not know that it would be agreeable to you to insert in your Miscellany, what I might write upon the subject ; and though I considered the Evangelical Magazine as a suitable work for the introduction of a single piece, yet it did not appear to be a proper vehicle for a continued discussion, unless what was said on both sides were introduced.

Secondly : Though I was not very deeply impressed with the force of your arguments, yet being fully persuaded, notwithstanding what you say of the holy nature of your doctrine, that it needed only to be read by a certain description of people in order to be imbibed ; and not supposing your work to have a very extensive circulation at present, I thought it might be as well to let it alone. You may consider this, if you please, as an acknowledgment of the weakness of my cause.

Thirdly : Your two letters appeared to me to contain so many misapprehensions, and a quantity of perversion of the plain meaning of Scripture, that I felt it a kind of hopeless undertaking to go about to correct them.

I do not entertain a mean opinion of your talents ; but they are perverted by a system. You write as though you did not understand the plain meaning of words. I should not have thought that by saying "I observed you to be of a *speculative* disposition," I should either have puzzled or offended you. I certainly did not mean, by that form of speech, either that you discovered a disposition "not to take the assertions of men as the rule of your faith," on the one hand, or any particular "want of respect towards the sacred writings" on the other. I should not have thought of using such modes of expression to convey either of these ideas. If you choose to pay yourself such a compliment, or load yourself with

such a censure, you are at liberty to do so ; but do not attribute either of them to me. You might have supposed that I meant to exhibit no very heavy charge, nor indeed any charge at all, under this form of expression, seeing I added, that “such a turn of mind might be very *advantageous* as well as very dangerous.”

In suggesting that “it is a serious matter that we err not in our ministrations,” I did not mean either to take it for granted that you were in an error, or to prove that you were so ; but merely to bespeak your serious attention to the subject. Your stumbling at the threshold in this manner, Sir, afforded but little hope that, if I wrote, it would produce any other effect than a wrangle of words, for which I had neither time nor inclination.

The three questions which I put to you, and “entreated you to consider,” were, it seems, totally irrelative to the subject, equally so as to “the doctrine of election :” yet you thought proper to offer answers to some parts of them, as well as to pass over others. Waving, for the present, the consideration of those parts which you have noticed, I shall remind the reader of a few things which you have *not* noticed, and leave him to judge whether even they were totally irrelative to the subject.

You have not told us, that I recollect, whether you claim an exemption from endless punishment *as a right* ; but seem to wish us to think that this is not your ground, especially as you ascribe it to the death of Christ : (p. 10.) yet, in other parts of your Miscellany, I perceive the gift of Christ itself is considered as a *reparation for an injury* ; (p. 69.) which affords but too plain a proof that notwithstanding all you say of grace and love, it is not on the footing of grace, but *debt*, that you hold with Universal Salvation.

Under the second question you were asked, “What doctrine, *besides* that of universal salvation, you would find in the Bible, which affords encouragement to a sinner, going on still in his trespasses ; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death ?” To this you have given no answer. Was this question equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election ?

Under the third question, you were addressed as follows :—“If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly

“ part of your audience, though they should live and die
 “ in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still* ; though
 “ they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottom-*
 “ *less* ; though the worm prey upon them, yet at some
 “ period or other it shall *die* ; and though they may have
 “ to encounter *devouring fire*, yet they shall not dwell with
 “ *everlasting burnings* : If, I say, you should raise such
 “ hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception, think
 “ how you will be able to look *them* in the face another
 “ day ; and what is still more, how you will be able to
 “ look HIM in the face who hath charged you to be *pure*
 “ *from the blood of all men !*” Was this equally irrelative
 to the subject as to the doctrine of election ? Yet to no
 part of this have you given any answer, except your at-
 tempting to explain away the term *everlasting* may be so
 called. You represent the whole of this third question,
 as proceeding on the supposition of your denying *all* fu-
 ture punishment. But is not this a gross misrepresenta-
 tion ? Does not the whole foregoing passage allow that
 you admit of future punishment of a limited duration ;
 and hold up, though not in the form of arguments, sev-
 eral scriptural objections to that notion ? I consider this,
 Sir, as a further proof of your talents for fair and plain
 reasoning, being perverted by a system.

You appeal to the *Scriptures*, and contend that they no
 where teach the doctrine of endless punishment ; yet you
 are aware that they *appear* to do so, and are obliged to
 have recourse to a method of weakening the force of
 terms in order to get rid of them. It has been long the
 practice of writers on your side the question, to ring chan-
 ges on the words *aion*, and *aionios* ; pretty words no
 doubt, and could they be proved to be less expressive
 of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and
eternal, they might be something to the purpose : but if
 not, the continual recurrence to them is a mere affecta-
 tion of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant. Be this
 as it may, this is an exercise which hardly becomes you
 or me. I shall only observe upon it, that by this meth-
 od of proceeding, you may disprove almost any thing you
 please. There are scarcely any terms in any language,
 but what, through the poverty of language itself, or the
 inequality of the number of words to the number of

ideas, are *sometimes* used in an improper or figurative sense. Thus, if one attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah, God, &c.* you may reply, that the name *Jehovah* is sometimes given to things ; as to an altar, a city, and once to the church ; therefore nothing can be concluded from hence in favour of the argument. Thus also, if one go about to prove the omniscience of God, from its being declared that *his understanding is infinite* ; you might answer, the term infinite is sometimes used to express only a very great degree, as when the strength of Ethiopia and Egypt is said to have been *infinite*. (Nah. iii. 9.) Again : If one endeavour to prove the endless existence of God, from his being called the *eternal* God, the *everlasting* God, &c. ; or the endless duration of the heavenly inheritance, from its being called *eternal* life, an inheritance *incorruptible* and that *fadeth not away* ; you might answer, these terms are sometimes used to signify only a limited duration ; and, that a thing in common language is said to be *incorruptible*, when it will continue a long time without signs of decay.

The question is, *Could stronger terms have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than are used ?* To object against the words *everlasting, eternal, &c.* as being too weak, or indeterminate in their application for the purpose, is idle, unless others could be named which are stronger, or more determinate. What expressions could have been used that would have placed the subject beyond dispute ? You ordinarily make use of the term *endless*, to express our doctrine : it should seem then, that if we read of *endless* punishment, or punishment *without end*, you would believe it. Yet the same objections might be made to this, as to the words *everlasting, eternal, &c.* It is common to say of a loquacious person, He is an *endless* talker : it might, therefore, be pretended that the term *endless* is very indeterminate ; that it often means no more than a long time ; and, in some instances, not more than three or four hours at longest. Thus you see, or may see, that it is not in the power of language to stand before such methods of criticising and reasoning, as those on which you build your system.

Admitting all that you allege in favour of the limited sense of the above terms, still the nature of the subject,

the connexion and scope of the passages, together with the use of various other forms of expression which convey the same thing are sufficient to prove, that when applied to the doctrine of future punishment, they are to be understood without any limitation.

If we read of a disease cleaving to a man *forever*, the plain meaning is *to the end of his life*: if of an *everlasting* priesthood, the meaning is, one that should continue *to the end of the dispensation* of which it was an institute: if of *everlasting* hills, or mountains, the meaning is, that they will continue *till the end of the world*: but if *after* this world is ended, and successive duration consequently terminated, we read that the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, and that in the same passage in which it is added, *but the righteous into everlasting life*; (Matt. xxv. 46.) wo be to the man who dares to plunge into that abyss on the presumption of finding a bottom!

The evidence which you offer of a *successive duration* after this period, is a proof of the scarcity of that article in the paths which you are in the habits of tracing. A plain unbiassed reader of Scripture would have supposed, that the terms *day and night*, in Rev. xiv. 11, had been a figurative mode of expression to denote *perpetuity*; and especially as the same language is used by the inhabitants of heaven, chap. vii. 15. For my part, I confess I should as soon have dreamed of proving from what is said in chap. xxi. 24—"The *nations* of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the New Jerusalem,"—that mankind will maintain their present political distinctions in a future state, as of founding upon such language the idea of successive duration. Your explications on other parts of the Revelations are of the same description, as frigid as they are puerile. It is a wonder the New Jerusalem *coming down from heaven* had not been supposed to have fallen into the *sea*, and to have filled it up; and an argument been drawn from its great dimensions, of its being large enough to contain the whole human race. You must not be surprised, Sir, if I do not perceive the force of these passages in proving that all beyond the last judgment is not *proper eternity*.

Yours, &c.

July, 1799.

A. F.

LETTER III.

Difficulties attending Mr. V's. Scheme, and its inconsistency with Scripture.

SIR,

YOU complain, more than once, of my not understanding the subject against which I write ; and here, for aught I see, I must fall under. I confess I do not, nor can I understand what it is that you believe. Having heard and seen so much of your professing to hold the doctrine of *universal* salvation, *universal* restitution, and that "all men will be finally benefited by the death of Christ," I really thought you had meant so ; and could not have imagined that with these pretensions you would have avowed the notion of annihilation. Hence it was, that in my third question, though I did not as you allege, proceed upon the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment, yet I acknowledge I did proceed upon the supposition that you hold with no other future punishment than what should terminate in everlasting life. And who could have thought otherwise ? After all the information you have since given me, I am still so ignorant as not to understand how all men are to be finally saved, and yet a part of them annihilated ! Neither can I comprehend how there can come a time with sinners, when he that made them will *not have mercy upon them*, on the supposition that *all punishment, of all degrees and duration, is itself an exercise of mercy.* (p. 10.)

Neither can I comprehend how you reconcile many things in your scheme with the holy Scriptures. I have been used to understand the terms *death* and *perish*, being opposed to everlasting life, (John iii. 16. x. 28.) as expressive, not of the loss of being, but of well-being. But with you they signify annihilation. (p. 42.) The design of God, it seems, in giving his Son to suffer for us, was not to save us from suffering, but merely from becoming extinct, and to perpetuate our existence. And the *death* which those who keep his sayings shall never taste, (John viii. 52) meant the same thing : they shall exist forever ;

a blessing which your scheme makes equally applicable to many who do not keep his sayings, as to those who do. And where do you find the above terms used to convey the idea of annihilation on any other subject; and from whence was this notion learned?*

When we are told that *God will not contend forever, neither will he be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made*, (Isai. lvii. 16.) I supposed it had been meant only of them who in the context are said to *put their trust in the Lord*; and that in the present life, seeing it was promised them that they should *possess the land and inherit his holy mountain*; of them who were of a *contrite and humble spirit*, and not of the *wicked*, who are likened to the *troubled sea*, for whom there is *no peace*: but you consider all these promises as belonging to the same people as the threatening in ch. xxvii. 16. *He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour!*

I observe when such terms as *forever* seem to favour your cause, they are to be taken in their utmost latitude of meaning. If it had been said of the Divine Being, he *will contend forever*, you would have introduced your sing-song of *aionas* and *aionon*,† as sometimes meaning only a limited duration; but seeing it is said he will *not contend forever*, here the word must be understood of duration without end. You must excuse me, however, if I once avail myself of your critical labours, and remind you that *forever* in this passage refers merely to the present life, as the context plainly shews.

I never imagined, till I saw it in the writings of Universalists, that *finishing transgression* and *making an end of sin*, (Dan. ix. 24) had any reference to what was to be done after the resurrection and the last judgment; and especially since what is there predicted was to be accomplished within *seventy weeks*, or four hundred and ninety years from the time of the prophecy.

* The reader will perceive hereafter, that Mr. F. was mistaken in supposing Mr. V. to hold the doctrine of Annihilation: this he acknowledges in Letter VI.

† Alluding to Mr. V's quotation in *Univer. Miscel.* No. I. p. 3.

I have been used to think that the mediation of Christ was not on behalf of fallen angels, whose nature he took not on him, of whose salvation the Scriptures are silent, and whose own ideas are, that they have nothing to do with him, Matt. viii. 29. But according to your reasonings, they also must be either saved or annihilated; yea, they must have at least the offer of salvation, otherwise their present and future sufferings would not be in mercy, which you consider as belonging to all punishment whatever.

It had been usual with me to think that the triumph of mercy, in the day of retribution, as described in James ii. 13. Psalm lxii. 12. respected another description of people than those who were to receive *judgment without mercy*; namely, those that should *so speak and so do, as they that should be judged by the perfect law of liberty*; but you have found out a scheme, it seems, in which these opposites are united in the same persons; and in which the ungodly, while receiving *judgment without mercy*, have no judgment but what is *in mercy*. (p. 10.) Is it surprising, Sir, that a man of plain and ordinary capacity should be at a loss to understand such things as these?

It would not have occurred to me that an argument could have been drawn from the threatenings of God to Israel in the present life, (Lev. xxv.) to what shall be done to the ungodly world in the life to come; yet so it is: (p. 43.) and the ground on which the analogy is justified, is the *immutability* of the divine character. But what the immutable character of God requires to be done, must be done alike in all ages, and to all people: whereas, what was there threatened to Israel was not done at the same time to other nations, nor has it been done since to any nation beside them. (Amos iii. 2. Acts xxvii. 30.) There is nothing in it analogous to his dealings with mankind; unless it be the general idea of his "making use of natural evil to correct moral evil." This being known to be the case on earth, you "cannot but think it must be the design of future punishment." Such is the whole of your argument, which you recommend to my "serious consideration!" But how if, on the other hand, I should say, though natural evil be used on earth to correct moral evil, in society at large, yet

it is not always sent for the purpose of correcting the parties themselves? We have no proof that the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire, or Pharaoh drowned in the sea, for their good: therefore, I cannot but think there is a similar design in future punishment.

I always supposed that the sense in which God is said to be *the Saviour of all men*, especially of them that believe. (p. 44) was that in which the apostle there puts his *trust* in him; namely, as the God of providence, whose care is extended to all his creatures, but especially to believers.

I have read of the *dispensation of the fulness of times*; but the idea never occurred to me that these times were to be understood of ages beyond the last judgment. I have no doubt but the "gathering together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth, will be accomplished, and that within the limits of *time*. If it be done, as you allow it will, (p. 10) by the time "that he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and shall have subdued all things unto himself," it will be done by the time he shall have raised the dead, and judged the world; for THEN is this work described as being accomplished. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

In reading the account of the *new heaven and new earth*, in the xxi. chap. of the Revelations, I find amongst other things it is said, *there shall be no more death*, and afterwards *no more curse*; but I should not have thought of these things being applied to the universe at large, but merely to the inhabitants of that blessed state; and the rather seeing it is said in the same chapter, that *the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have THEIR PART in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*. Neither could I have supposed it possible, from such a representation of the *second death*, to conclude that it consisted in annihilation.

By the *times of the restitution of all things*, (Acts iii. 21) I have been used to understand the times of the resurrection and the last judgment: for that till then, and no longer, will Christ be detained *in the heavens*. Whenever Christ descends from heaven, then, according to Peter,

will be the times of the restitution of all things : but this will be previous and in order to his raising the dead and judging the world (1 Thes. iii. 16.) Consequently these are the times of which the apostle speaks. The utter overthrow which will then be given to the kingdom of Satan by the general conflagration, (2 Peter iii. 12) the destruction of the last enemy, death, by the resurrection, (1 Cor. xv. 23, 26) and the final adjustment of human affairs by the last judgment, (Matt. xxv. 31, 46) will be *a restitution of all things* ; the empire of sin will be crushed, and the government of God completely restored.

But the *times* in which your scheme is to be accomplished, must be after the final judgment ; for from that period there is an *everlasting punishment* for the wicked to endure, a *lake of fire* into which they are to be cast ; (Matt. xxv, 46. Rev. xx. 15) and from which your restitution of all things is to recover them. Your restitution therefore, and that of the Scriptures, are not the same.

You cannot conceive of a restitution of all things, and of sin being *made an end of*, unless all the individuals in the creation be either reconciled to God, or annihilated : but what authority have you for such a construction of these terms ? Did the *restoring of all things* on the Messiah's first appearance, (Matt. xxvii. 11) include all individuals, so far as it went ? When God said to Zedekiah, *And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end*, did it mean that he should be either converted or annihilated ? Ezek. xx. 25. And when the same language is used of the sins of the people, (chap. xxv. 5) does it mean that they should be either converted or annihilated ? Rather is it not manifest that by *iniquity having an end* is meant, that the perpetrators of it were brought to condign punishment, shut up in Babylon as in a prison, and rendered incapable of doing further mischief ? Such will be the case with all the ungodly at the second coming of Christ ; and this will be the restoration of peace, order, and happiness to the rest of the universe.

The doctrine of endless misery appears to you to "confound all degrees of punishment, in giving infinite punishment to all." (p. 42.) You, it seems, can conceive of no diversity of suffering, unless it be in duration. Will

the reflection of lost souls on their past life then be all exactly the same? The same in the objects reflected on, and consequently the same in the intenseness of their misery? How grossly absurd, Sir, must be your notions of future punishment, to admit of such an idea! Besides, there is equal reason to believe that there will be different degrees of glory as of misery. If heavenly bliss bear any relation to the labours and sufferings of the present life on behalf of Christ, which the Scriptures assure us it does, (Matt. v. 12. 2 Cor. iv. 17) these being diverse, that must also be the same. But according to your reasoning, there can be no diversity unless it be in duration: either therefore, all degrees of happiness must be confounded in giving infinite happiness to all, or the inhabitants of heaven, as well as those of hell, must, after a certain period, be continually diminishing by annihilation.

Such, Sir, are your expositions of Scripture. Except in the productions of a certain maniac in our own country, I never recollect to have seen so much violence done to the word of God in so small a compass.

According to your scheme, all things work together for good to them that love not God, as well as to them that love him. Thus you confound what the Scriptures discriminate.

Our Lord told the Jews, 'That if they believed not that he was the Messiah, they should *die in their sins*, and whither he went they *could not come*; (John viii. 21.) but according to your scheme, they might die in their sins, and yet be able to go whither he went, and inherit eternal life.

The Scriptures describe a sort of characters who shall be exposed to *a certain fearful looking for of judgment*: (Heb. x. 27.) but this, according to your scheme, can be nothing more than annihilation. For as the case of the characters described is suggested to be irrevocable and hopeless, they cannot be punished during ages of *ages in a way of mercy*, or with a view to their recovery: and as to their being punished during this long period, and in the end annihilated, this would be contrary to all your ideas of punishment, which must always have its foundation in mercy. Hence it follows, that all this fearful looking for of judgment, amounts to no more

than what atheists and infidels generally prefer ; death being to them an *everlasting sleep*.

Nor is your hypothesis less at variance with itself than with the holy Scriptures. Your notion of *temporary punishment* clashes with all your arguments drawn from the benevolent feelings of a good man. You ask, "Doth not every good man love his enemies, and forgive even the worst of them? Is there a man living whose heart is filled with the love of God that would not promote the best interest of his most inveterate foe, if it lay in his power? And has not God more love than the best of men? And are not his wisdom and his power equal to his love?" (p. 74.)

In return I ask, Is there a man living whose heart is filled with the love of God, who would be willing that his worst enemy should be cast into hell for ages of ages, or for a single age, or even a single day, when it was in his power to deliver him from it? But God hath more love than the best of men, and his wisdom and power are equal to his love ; consequently there will be no future punishment !

Your notion of annihilation will also contradict the greater part of your pretensions. You talk of *universal* salvation ; but you do not believe it : for a part of the human race are to be given up as incurables to annihilation. You plead the fifth chapter to the Romans in favour of your doctrine, contending that *justification of life* will be as extensive as *condemnation* ; but you believe no such thing : for a part of those who are condemned, instead of being justified and saved, will be given up as incurables to annihilation. You think you see *times* beyond the last judgment, in which *all things*, or rather as you understand it, *all persons*, are to be gathered together in Christ, and reconciled by the blood of his cross : howbeit you mean not so, neither doth your heart think so ; for a part of them will be struck out of existence, and who can therefore be neither gathered nor reconciled. You pretend to unite the opinions of Calvinists and Arminians : the former, you say, render the death of Christ effectual, but limit its design to a part of mankind : the latter tend it to all, but consider it as ineffectual ; while you maintain that it is designed for all, and effectual

to all. (p. 70, 71.) But this is mere pretence : you believe no such thing ; for a part of mankind are to be at last annihilated. By an anecdote which you have inserted in p. 65, of your Miscellany, you flatter yourself that you have fastened a difficulty on a Mr. R. from which he cannot extricate himself, but by embracing your doctrine. But neither could he, if he did embrace it ; for you no more believe that God will save all mankind, than Mr. R.

You pretend to urge it as a difficulty on me, that “ either God *cannot*, or *will not* make an end of sin ; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ to destroy the works of the devil ; or else that the full efficacy of the atonement is withheld by the divine determination :” (p. 44.) But it is all pretence. If it be a difficulty, it equally bears upon your own hypothesis as upon mine. If Christ died with an intention to save all, why are not all saved ? Why must a number of them be annihilated ? Is it because God *cannot* bring them to repentance and salvation ; or because he *will not* ? Is there not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, without his having recourse to a mere act of power ; an act which might have been exerted without that blood being shed ? Or is the full efficacy of the atonement withheld by the divine determination ?

Yours, &c.

A. F.

Kettering, August 9, 1799.

LETTER IV.

Replies and Defences of former Reasonings.

SIR,

I MUST be very weak, if, while writing in a publication of which my opponent is the Editor, I should expect to have the last word. When I have said what appears to me necessary on any point, and on the whole matter

of dispute, I shall leave it to the judgment of the candid reader.

From any thing I had advanced, you had no ground to conclude that I formed an improper estimate of my own reputation. Any man, who has been in the habit of writing, and whose writings have been at all regarded by the public, must be possessed of some reputation; and whether it be small or great, it is his duty not to make use of it for the propagation of what he believes to be pernicious error.

"Truth (you say) courts the public observation of men;" and so may error. If it be true, that wisdom *crieth in the top of high places*, it is equally true, that folly is loud and stubborn. The advocates of infidelity, Sir, are not less bold than yourself; nor less loud in their challenges of examination. Such challenges afford no criterion of truth: nor is it any proof of the goodness of a cause that its abettors court the public attention. They may be well aware that public prejudice is in their favour; or may entertain a much greater dread of sinking into insignificance by neglect, than of being overcome in the field of contest.

You have repeatedly reminded me of the favour which you confer upon me by permitting my papers to appear in your miscellany. Now, Sir, I consider it as no favour at all; nor as affording any proof of your impartiality. If you think otherwise, you are at perfect liberty, after introducing this series of letters, to discontinue them. If I wish to write any thing farther on the subject, I shall not be at a loss for a proper medium.

"The prejudices of both professor and profane (you tell me) are in my favour." Had you used the term *consciences*, instead of prejudices, you would have been nearer the truth. So far as my observations extend, the prejudices of the bulk of mankind are on the other side. Deists and libertines lead the way by an open or affected rejection of all future punishment. Socinians, who generally include Universal Salvation in their scheme, follow hard after them. Mrs. Barbauld, if I remember right, in her Remarks on Mr. Wakefield's Inquiry, goes so far as to represent the ideas of access to God through a Mediator, and of punishment in a bottomless pit, as

originating in the ignorance and servility of eastern customs. Unbelievers, it is well known, rejoice in the spread of Socinianism, as being favourable to their views; and Socinians rejoice no less in the spread of Universalism, as favourable to their's. This is sufficiently manifest by the applauses which writers on your side commonly meet with in the Monthly Review. There are great numbers of nominal Christians of loose characters, who would be glad to believe your doctrine of temporary punishment, and to proceed, by an easy transition, to that of no punishment at all; nor is there any bar which prevents their falling in with these views, but the remonstrance of their consciences. They fear it is too favourable to their vices to be true, and therefore are deterred from embracing it. Such, Sir, is the "description of people," after whom you inquire; such is the company with whom you associate, and to whom you administer consolation; and such is the justness of your remark, that "the prejudices of both professor and profane are in my favour." If you yourself had not been persuaded of the contrary, I question whether you would have given that title to my two first letters, which appears on the blue covers of your work.* The word *torments*, it is true, can give no *just* offence, as it is a scriptural expression; yet to persons who judge on these subjects merely by their feelings, the ideas conveyed by it are sufficient to prejudice them against every thing which a writer may advance.

Your magazines, Sir, I presume, would be less acceptable to many of your readers than they are, if, instead of employing so large a portion of them in attempting to prove that all will be finally happy, you were frequently to insist that some men would be tormented in hell without any mixture of mercy for a number of ages; and if you insisted on this doctrine also in your pulpit exercises, you yourself might possibly be considered as a "brawler of damnation."

You carefully avoid claiming Universal Salvation *as a right*, and are pleased to represent my inquiry on that subject as "a quibble." I am not surprised, Sir, that you should feel reluctant on this head; that you should

* Letter I. from Mr. A. Fuller, in defence of eternal torments.

decline the defence of your friend, and that you should alternately compliment and reproach your opponent, as if to keep him at a distance from the subject. (No i. p. 5. No. xxxiv. p. 309.) If I mistake not, this is a fundamental principle in your system, and that which proves it to be fundamentally wrong. There is no need of having recourse to the pieces of other writers; your own productions afford sufficient evidence that the salvation for which you plead is not that which arises from the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; and consequently, that it is no part of the salvation revealed in the gospel. You reject the idea of invalidating the divine threatenings towards sinners, (No. xxxiv. p. 310.) admitting "them in their full latitude, and the execution of them too;" maintaining that "God will deal with his creatures according to character;" and that sinners will be punished "according to their works." (No. ii. p. 42.) Now, Sir, if there be any meaning in all this language, it is, That *justice* will have its course on the ungodly; and that whatever punishment they endure, whether it be vindictive or corrective, endless or temporary, it is all that their sins *deserve*. If the threatenings of God mean no more than a punishment which is temporary, and for the good of sinners, their conduct can deserve no more; for we cannot have a more certain rule of estimating the just demerit of sin, than the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against it. But if sinners endure the full desert of their sin, there is no room for grace, or *undeserved favour*; nor is any place left for the work of mediation. A criminal who has suffered the full penalty of the law, has no right to be told that his liberation is an act of grace, or that it was owing to the mediation of another. Your Universal Salvation, therefore, is no part of that which arises from the grace of God, or the death of Christ; nor is it, properly speaking, salvation at all, but a legal discharge in consequence of a full satisfaction to divine justice being made by the sufferings of the sinner.

If you contend that the liberation of the sinner is owing to the grace of God, through the mediation of his Son, which mitigates and shortens his punishment, then you at once give up all you have before maintained; That sinners will be punished *according to their works*, and that

the threatenings of God will be fully executed upon them. You may have read of "instances of both punishment and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins:" (No. xxxv. p. 337.) but this must be where the punishment has not been according to the desert of the sin, otherwise there had been no need of pardon.

You talk much of my dealing in "*suppositions* instead of arguments," and of my "resting my conclusions on unfounded assumptions."

I have carefully examined these charges and am unable to perceive the justice of them in a single instance. Though the letter which appeared in the Evangelical Magazine was chiefly in the form of supposition, yet that supposition was not destitute of argument to support it. It is possible, Sir, though it does not appear to have occurred to your mind, that arguments themselves may be conveyed under the form of suppositions. To convince you that this was the case in the above letter, I will put the very passage to which you object, into the form of argument.

The Scriptures teach us that those who at a certain period are found *filthy*, shall be *filthy still*; that they shall be cast into that *bottomless pit* which was prepared for the devil and his angels; and that they shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*.

But your doctrine teaches, that though they be filthy at death or judgment, or any other period, yet they shall not be *always so*; that though they be cast into the pit of destruction, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; and that though they have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting burnings*.

Therefore your doctrine is antisciptural. But if your doctrine be antisciptural, it is of that nature which tends to deceive the souls of men; and you will not be able to look them in the face another day, and still less HIM who hath charged you to be pure from the blood of all men.

The first three positions contain the argument, and the last the inference.

I should think "the world," or rather the reader, did not need to be informed what argument there was in this string of suppositions: if he did, however, I have attempted, at your request, to give him that information.

With respect to building on "unfounded assumptions," for which I am accused of "betraying my ignorance of "the subject I have written against," (No. ii. p. 45.) you have given us two instances, which I shall briefly examine.

First: I had asked, What doctrine, *besides* that of Universal Salvation, will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death? What principle is it that is here assumed? Why, (you answer) that the doctrine of Universal Salvation *does* afford encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and *does* furnish ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death. And is this indeed a question? I took it for a self-evident truth, and supposed you must and would have acknowledged it. Whether you will or not, however, I appeal to the common sense of the reader, whether any position can be more self-evident than the following—If the Scriptures teach that all men shall be finally saved, every sinner, whatever be his vicious courses, is encouraged to expect eternal life: and though he should persist in sin, till death, is warranted to hope and rejoice in the prospect of all being well with him at last. For any man to deny this position, is to deny what is self-evident, and there can be no farther reasoning with him.

To allege in answer, That it will be always ill with the wicked *while he continues so*, is trifling: for if the sinner be taught to believe at some future period beyond this life he shall be delivered both from sin and punishment—whether the former branch of this deliverance afford him joy or not, the latter must.

The same question, you say, might be asked concerning the doctrine of election. It might; but I should readily answer, No sinner while going on still in his trespasses is warranted to consider himself as elected to salvation: therefore that doctrine affords no ground of hope and joy to persons of this description. Can you say the same of the doctrine of Universal Salvation? If there were the same ground for an ungodly sinner to conclude himself elected, as your doctrine affords for his concluding that he shall be eternally saved, the cases would be

parallel ; and both these doctrines would be alike subject to the charge of comforting those whom God would not have comforted : but as this is not true of election, your notion is still solitary, and your difficulty remains where it was. All the encomiums which you pass upon the universal scheme (No. ii. p. 41—44.) furnishes not a single example of any other divine truth which gives encouragement to a sinner, while in his sins, to believe that in the end it shall be well with him. The question therefore still returns upon you, *What doctrine BESIDES that of Universal Salvation will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in them till death ?*

I do not say, “let the world judge” whether this question proceeded on any *unfounded assumption*, and whether it be equally applicable to election as to Universal Salvation, because I imagine it will be but a very small part of the world that will examine our productions : but I am willing to make my appeal to the intelligent and impartial reader. And with respect to you, Sir, the task which you have set yourself is before you ; either to “confess it to be true,” that your doctrine gives encouragement, hope and joy to wicked men ; or to “expose the falshood of this supposition more fully.”

In the second place, you charge me with “taking it for granted that your views invalidate the divine “threatenings towards sinners ;” and intimate that there is no “reason” in what I say, but upon the supposition of your denying “all future punishment.” (No. ii. p. 45.) That I never supposed you to deny all future punishment, I have already proved ; and that any thing which I advanced required such a supposition, you have not hitherto made appear. As to your invalidating the divine threatenings, so far as the doctrine of Universal Salvation appears to me to operate in that way, so far I must of necessity believe that you do : but whatever may be my belief, the question is, Have I built any conclusion upon it as an acknowledged truth ? If so, how came I to *entreat you to consider whether it was not so ?* Is it usual to entreat an opponent to consider whether that which we take for granted as an acknowledged truth, be

true? Undoubtedly I suggested this idea to you as being my judgment, which, however, I did not desire to impose upon you, any farther than as it was supported by evidence, and therefore at the same time intimated what was the ground of that judgment; namely, *the near resemblance between your labours and those of the deceiver of mankind*. If you cannot perceive this resemblance, I cannot help it. Other people can and will. He persuaded his auditors that though they should transgress, yet the evil they had dreaded would not come upon them: they believed—and were not afraid to transgress. You persuade your auditors that though they should die in their sins, yet the evil will not be *so great* as they had been used to apprehend—God hath not said, ye shall die eternally; and he means that you shall all come where Jesus is. If they believe, must they not be *less afraid* of transgression than before?

And now, Sir, who is “ignorant,” and who has been employed in “raising dust to hide the truth,” are questions which I leave you to resolve. It is enough for me if I have proved your charges to be unfounded: for if this be accomplished, your work still returns upon your hands; as it will follow, that, notwithstanding all your challenges, and calling out for more to be written, you have not yet answered the first letter.

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER V.

Evidences of endless punishment.

SIR,

YOU seem to wish to persuade your readers that the grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine of endless punishment are very slender. The truth is, I have not at present attempted to state those grounds. Considering myself as not engaged in a formal controversy, I only introduced a few passages; and to several of them you have hitherto made no reply. The principal grounds

on which I rest my belief of the doctrine you oppose, are as follow :—

I. *All those passages of scripture which describe the future states of men in contrast.*

“ Men of the world, who have their portion in this
 “ life : I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness
 “ —The hope of the righteous shall be gladness : but
 “ the expectation of the wicked shall perish—The wicked
 “ is driven away in his wickedness : but the righteous
 “ hath hope in his death—And many of them that sleep
 “ in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting
 “ ing life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt
 “ —He will gather his wheat into the garner, and will
 “ burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire—Wide is the
 “ gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction,
 “ and many there be who go in thereat ; because strait is
 “ the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life,
 “ and few there be that find it—Not every one that saith,
 “ Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ;
 “ but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heav-
 “ en—Many shall come from the east and west, and shall
 “ sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the
 “ kingdom of heaven ; but the children of the kingdom
 “ shall be cast out into outer darkness ; there shall be
 “ weeping and gnashing of teeth—Gather ye first the
 “ tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them : but
 “ gather the wheat into my barn—The Son of Man shall
 “ send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his
 “ kingdom all things that offend, and them that do in-
 “ iquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there
 “ shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth : then shall the
 “ righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their
 “ Father—The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net,
 “ that gathered fish of every kind ; which, when it was
 “ full they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gather-
 “ ed the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So
 “ shall it be at the end of the world ; the angels shall
 “ come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
 “ and shall cast them into the furnace of fire ; there shall
 “ be wailing and gnashing of teeth—Blessed is that ser-
 “ vant, whom, when his Lord cometh, he shall find so
 “ doing : but and if that evil servant should say in his

"heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin
 "to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with
 "the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a
 "day, when he looketh not for him, and shall cut him
 "asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypo-
 "crites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth—
 "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into
 "the joy of thy Lord. But cast ye out the unprofitable
 "servant, into outer darkness; there shall be weeping
 "and gnashing of teeth—Then shall the King say unto
 "them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,
 "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founda-
 "tion of the world—Then shall he also say unto them on
 "the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlast-
 "ing fire, prepared for the devil and his angels—And these
 "shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the right-
 "eous into everlasting life—He that believeth and is
 "baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall
 "be damned—Blessed are ye when men shall hate you
 "for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day,
 "and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in
 "heaven. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have
 "received your consolation—He that heareth my say-
 "ings, and doeth them, is like unto a man who built his
 "house upon a rock; and when the flood arose, the storm
 "beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake
 "it; for it was founded on a rock. But he that heareth
 "and doeth not, is like unto a man who built his house
 "upon the earth, against which the storm did beat vehe-
 "mently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that
 "house was great—God so loved the world, that he gave
 "his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him,
 "should not perish, but have everlasting life—All that are
 "in their graves shall come forth; they that have done
 "good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have
 "done evil unto the resurrection of damnation—Hath not
 "the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make
 "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?
 "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make
 "his power known, endured with much long-suffering
 "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he
 "might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels

“of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory—
 “The Lord knoweth them that are his—But in a great
 “house there are vessels to honour and vessels to dishon-
 “our—Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for what-
 “soever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he
 “that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corrup-
 “tion ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spir-
 “it reap life everlasting—That which beareth thorns and
 “briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end
 “is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded bet-
 “ter things of you, and which accompany salvation.”*

I consider these passages as designed to express THE FINAL STATES OF MEN, which if they be, it is the same thing in effect as their being designed to express the doctrine of endless punishment ; for if the descriptions here given of the portion of the wicked denote their *final* state, there is no possibility of another state succeeding it.

That the above passages do express the *final* states of men, may appear from the following considerations :—

1. The state of the righteous, which is all along opposed to that of the wicked, is allowed to be final : and if the other were not the same, it would not have been in such a variety of forms contrasted with it ; for it would not be a contrast.

2. All these passages are totally silent, as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or temporary correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. It is supposed that some who are upon the right foundation may yet build upon it, *wood, and hay, and stubble* ; and that the party shall *suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the doctrine of Universal Salvation were true, we might expect some such account of all lapsed intelligences, when their future state is described : but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any other.

* Psal. xvii. 14, 15. Prov. x. 28. xiv. 32. Dan. xii. 2. Matt. iii. 12. vii. 13, 14, 21. viii. 11, 12. xiii. 30, 40—43, 47—50. xxiv. 46—51. xxv. 23, 30, 34, 41, 46. Mark xvi. 16. Luke vi. 23, 24, 47, 49. John iii. 16. v. 29. Rom. ix. 21—23. 4 Tim. ii. 19, 20. Gal. vi. 7, 8. Heb. vi. 8, 9.

3. The phraseology of the greater part of them is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe. On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have not *their portion in this life*; but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, *behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness*. Their expectation shall not *perish*; but shall issue, as well as that of the righteous, in *gladness*: and though *driven away in their wickedness*, yet they have *hope in their death*, and that hope shall be realized. The broad way doth not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be burned, but turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner. The tares will be the same, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fish will be turned into good, and gathered into vessels. The cursed, as well as the blessed, shall inherit the kingdom of God; which also was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There may be a woe against the wicked, that they shall be kept from their consolation for a long time, but not that they *have received it*. Those who in the present life believe *not* in Christ shall not *perish*, but have everlasting life. This life also is improperly represented as the seed-time, and the life to come as the harvest, inasmuch as the seeds of heavenly bliss may be sown in hell: and though the sinner may reap corruption, as the fruit of all his present doings, yet that corruption will not be the opposite of *everlasting life*, seeing it will issue in it. Finally: Though they *bear briars and thorns*, yet their END is not *to be burned*, but to obtain salvation.

To the foregoing Scripture testimonies may be added,

II. *All those passages which speak of the duration of future punishment by the terms "everlasting, eternal, forever, and forever and ever."*—

"Some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and *everlasting* contempt—It is better for thee to enter into life halt, or maimed, than, having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into *everlasting* fire—Depart ye cursed into *everlasting* fire—And these shall go into *everlasting* punishment—They shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power—He that shall blaspheme

“against the Holy Ghost is in danger of (or subject to)
 “*eternal* damnation—The inhabitants of Sodom and
 “Gomorrha are set forth for an example, suffering the
 “vengeance of *eternal* fire—These are wells without wa-
 “ter, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the
 “mist of darkness is reserved *forever*—Wandering stars,
 “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *forever*—
 “If any man worship the beast, or his image, and receive
 “his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall
 “drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured
 “out without mixture into the cup of his indignation :
 “and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in
 “the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of
 “the Lamb : and the smoke of their torment ascendeth
 “up *forever and ever* : and they have no rest day nor
 “night—And they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose
 “up *forever and ever*—And the devil that deceived them
 “was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the
 “beast and the false prophet are ; and shall be torment-
 “ed day and night *forever and ever*.”*

I have not mentioned Isai. xxxiii. 14, because I wish to introduce no passage but what shall be allowed to refer to a future life. The Hebrew word עוֹלָם, in Dan. xii. 2. answers to the Greek αἰών ; and whatever may be said of the ambiguity of the term, the antithesis in this passage, as in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it to mean the same when applied to “shame and contempt,” as when applied to life.

As to the term αἰώνιος, rendered *everlasting* or *eternal*, which you consider as proving nothing on account of its ambiguity, there is a rule of interpretation which I have long understood to be used on other subjects by all good critics, and which I consider as preferable to your’s. In my next letter I may examine their comparative merits. This rule is, *That every term be taken in its PROPER sense, except there be something in the subject or connexion which requires it to be taken otherwise.* Now, so far as my ac-

* Dan. xii. 2. Matt. xviii. 8. xxv. 41—46. 2 Thess. i. 9. Mark iii. 29. Jude 7. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 13: Rev. xiv. 10, 11. xix. 3. xx. 10.

quaintance with this subject extends, it appears to be generally allowed by lexicographers, that *αἰών* is a compound of *αἰ* and *ών*, and that its literal meaning is *always being* ;* also that the meaning of its derivative *αἰώνιος* is *endless, everlasting, or eternal*. This term, *αἰώνιος* which is very sparingly applied in the New Testament to limited duration, I always take in its proper sense, except there be something in the connexion or subject, which requires it to be taken otherwise: and as I do not find this to be the case in any of those places where it is applied to punishment, I see no reason in these cases to depart from its proper acceptation. Everlasting punishment is in some of them opposed to everlasting life, which, so far as an antithesis can go to fix the meaning of a term, determines it to be of the same force and extent.

To allege that the *subject* requires a different meaning in this case to be given to the term, is to assume what will not be granted. The *proof* that has been offered on this point will be considered hereafter.

With respect to the phrases *ὡς τὸν αἰῶνα*, *for ever*, and *ὡς τὰς αἰῶνας τὸν αἰῶνα*, *forever and ever*, I believe you will not find a single example in all the New Testament of their being used to convey any other than the idea of endless duration. You tell us that *ὡς αἰῶνας αἰῶνα*, *forever and ever*, in Rev. xiv. 11, should be rendered “to the age of ages.” Are you certain of this? Admit-

* Aristotle the philosopher, who lived upwards of three hundred years before the New Testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the Greek writers of his time, and those who in his time, were accounted ancients, affixed to this term. Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, “The beings which exist there, neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old; nor undergo they any change, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the farthest removed (from the centre;) but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy, and self-sufficient, they continue through all *αἰῶνα*, eternity. And this the ancients admirably signified by the word itself: for they call the time of each person’s life his *αἰών*, inasmuch as according to the laws of nature, nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called *αἰῶνα*, eternity; taking its name from *αἰών* being, (*αἰὼν ὢν*) immortal and divine.”

ting the principle of your translation, some would have rendered it *to ages of ages* : but render it how you will, the *meaning* of the phrase is the same. You might render it thus in other instances, wherein it is applied to the happiness of the righteous, or the glory to be ascribed to God ; but this would not prove that such happiness and such glory were of limited duration, or that the phrase in question is expressive of it.

To the above may be added,

III. *All those passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication, or by forms of speech which imply the doctrine in question.*

“ I pray for them : I pray not for the world—The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost *shall not be forgiven unto men*, neither in this world, neither in the world to come—He hath *never forgiveness* ; but is in danger of eternal damnation—There is a sin unto death : I do not say that ye shall pray for it—It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance—If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ; but a fearful looking for of judgment, which shall devour the adversaries—What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away ?—Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed : it had been good for that man if he had not been born—Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched *—Betwixt us and you there is a great gulph fixed ; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come from thence—He that believeth not the Son shall *not see life* ; but the wrath of God *abideth on him*—I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall *die in your sins* ; whither I go *ye cannot come*—Whose end is destruction—He that sheweth no mercy shall have *judgment without mercy.*”†

* Several times repeated in a few verses.

† John xvi. 9. Matt xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 29. 1 John v. 16. Heb. vi. 6. x. 26, 27. Luke ix. 25. Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark ix. 43—48. Luke xvi. 26. John iii. 36. viii. 21. Phil. iii. 19. James ii. 13.

If there be some for whom Jesus did not pray, there are some who will have no share in the benefits of his mediation, without which they cannot be saved. If there be some that never will be forgiven, there are some that never will be saved; for forgiveness is an essential branch of salvation. Let there be what uncertainty there may in the word *eternal* in this instance, still the meaning of it is fixed by the other branch of the sentence, *they shall never be forgiven*. It is equal to John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish*. If there were any uncertainty as to the meaning of the word *eternal* in this latter passage, yet the other branch of the sentence would settle it: for that must be endless life which is opposed to their *ever perishing*; and by the same rule, that must be endless damnation which is opposed to their *ever being forgiven*. If there be a sin, for the pardon of which Christians are forbidden to pray, it must be on account of its being the revealed will of God that it never should be pardoned. If repentance be absolutely necessary to forgiveness, and there be some whom it is impossible should be renewed again unto repentance, there are some whose salvation is impossible. If there be *no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment*, this is the same thing as the sacrifice already offered being of no saving effect: for if it were otherwise, the language would not contain any peculiar threatening against the wilful sinner, as it would be no more than might be said to any sinner; nor would a *fearful looking for of judgment* be his certain doom. If the souls of some men will be *lost*, or *cast away*, they cannot all be *saved*; seeing these things are opposites. A man may be lost in desert, and yet saved in fact; or he may *suffer loss*, and yet himself be saved: but he cannot be lost, so as to be cast away, and yet finally saved; for these are perfect contraries. Whatever may be the precise idea of the *fire*, and the *worm*, there can be no doubt of their expressing the punishment of the wicked; and it being declared of the one that it *dieth not*, and of the other that *it is not quenched*, it is the same thing as their being declared to be endless. It can be said of no man, on the principle of Universal Salvation, that *it were good for him not to have been born*: as whatever he may endure for a season, an eternal weight of glory will

infinitely outweigh it. An *impassable gulph* between the blessed and the accursed equally militates against the recovery of the one, as the relapse of the other. If some shall *not see life*, but the wrath of God *abideth* on them ; if those who die in their sins shall not come where Jesus is ; if their *end* be destruction, and their portion be *judgment without mercy* ; there must be some who will not be finally saved.

To these may be added,

IV. *All those passages which intimate that a change of heart, and a preparedness for heaven, are confined to the present life :—*

“ Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found* ; call ye up-
 “ on him *while he is near* ; let the wicked forsake his way ;
 “ and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him
 “ return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon
 “ him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon
 “ —Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have
 “ stretched out my hand, and no man regarded
 “ I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when
 “ your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desola-
 “ tion, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ;
 “ when distress and anguish come upon you ; then shall
 “ they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall
 “ seek me early, but shall not find me—Then said one
 “ unto him, Lord, are there few that shall be saved ?
 “ And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait
 “ gate : for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in
 “ and shall not be able—When *once* the master of the
 “ house hath risen up, and shut to the door, and ye be-
 “ gin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying,
 “ Lord, Lord, open unto us ; he shall answer and say
 “ unto you, I know you not whence you are
 “ Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity there
 “ shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth—While ye have
 “ the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the chil-
 “ dren of light—While they (the foolish virgins) went
 “ to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were
 “ ready went in with him to the marriage, and *the door*
 “ *was shut*—We beseech you, that ye receive not the
 “ grace of God in vain . . . Behold *now* is the accepted

“time, *now* is the day of salvation—To-day, if ye will
 “hear his voice, harden not your hearts—Looking dili-
 “gently lest any man fail of the grace of God . . . lest
 “there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau,
 “who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For
 “ye know how that afterward, when he would have in-
 “herited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no
 “place of repentance, though he sought it carefully
 “with tears—He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ;
 “and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that
 “is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is
 “holy, let him be holy still.”*

According to these Scriptures there will be no success-
 ful calling upon the Lord after a certain period ; and
 consequently, no salvation—Whether there be few that
 shall ultimately be saved, our Lord does not inform us ;
 but he assures us that there will be many who will *not be*
saved ; or, which is the same thing, who will not be able
 to enter in at the strait gate. None, it is plainly inti-
 mated, will be able to enter there, who have not agoniz-
 ed here. There will be no believing unto salvation, but
while we have the light ; nor any admission into the king-
 dom, unless we be *ready at the coming of the Lord*. The
 present is the *accepted time, the day of salvation*, or the sea-
 son for sinners to be saved. If we continue to harden
 our hearts through life, he will swear in his wrath that
 we shall not enter into his rest. If we *turn away from*
him who speaketh from heaven, it will be equally impossible
 for us to obtain the blessing, as it was for Esau, after he
 had despised his birthright. Finally : Beyond a certain
 period there shall be no more change of character ; but
 every one will have received that impression which shall
 remain forever, whether he be just or unjust, filthy or
 holy.

In this letter I have endeavoured to state the grounds
 of my own persuasion : in the next I may examine the
 reasonings, and objections which you have advanced a-
 gainst it. The greater part of this evidence being taken

* Mai. iv. 6, 7. Prov. i. 24—28. Luke xiii. 24—29. John xii.
 36. Math. xxv. 5—13. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Heb. iii. 7, 11. xii. 15—17.
 Rev. xii. 11.

from our Lord's discourses, who knew the truth, and was himself to be the judge of the world, renders it peculiarly interesting. If a preacher in these times delivered half so much on the subject, you would denominate him "a brawler of damnation."

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER VI.

Replies to Objections.

SIR,

IN a former letter I suggested, That whether the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment, or not, they certainly *appear* to do so. Whether this suggestion was unfounded, the evidence in my last letter must determine. You attempt, however, to discredit it, by alleging the few instances in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. as connected with future punishment, are used in the Scriptures.

"*Everlasting*, as connected with the future punishment of men; (you say) is used only *five* times in the Old and New Testament; and yet this same word is used in the Scriptures at least *ninety* times, very generally in deed in relation to things that either have ended, or must end."—You proceed, "As to the word *eternal*, which is of the same meaning, it is used in the text and margin upwards of *forty* times in the whole Bible; out of which there are only *two* which can be supposed to relate to future punishment."* You should have proceeded a little farther, Sir, and have told us how often the terms *ever*, *forever*, and *forever and ever*, are applied to this subject; as the distinction between them and the words *everlasting* and *eternal*, is chiefly English, and as you have allowed that it is from the use of the one, as well as the other, that I suppose the Scriptures must "*appear*" to teach the doctrine of endless punishment.

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 328.

As a candid reasoner, you should also have forbore to mention Jude 6. with a view to diminish the number of testimonies ; as it is not to the endless punishment of *men* only that you object. By these means, your number would at least have extended to *eleven*, instead of seven.

But passing this, I shall offer a few observations on your reasoning.—First : If the term *everlasting* be applied to future punishment five or six times out of ninety, in which it is used in the Scriptures, this may be as large a proportion as the subject requires. It is applied in the Scriptures to more than twenty different subjects ; so that to be applied five or six times to one, is full as frequent a use of it as ought to be expected.

Secondly : If the application of the term *everlasting* to future punishment, only five or six times, discredit the very *appearance* of its being endless, the same or nearly the same may be said of *the existence of God*, to which it is applied not much more frequently. You might go over a great part of the sacred writings on this subject, as you do on the other, telling us that not only many of the Old Testament writers make no use of it, but a large proportion of the New ; that Matthew never applies the word to this subject, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John ; that it is not so applied in the Acts of the apostles ; and though Paul once uses it in his epistle to the Romans, yet he closes that and all his other epistles without *so* using it again ; that James did not use it, nor Peter, nor John, either in his three epistles, or in the Apocalypse. And when you had thus established your point, you might ask, with an air of triumph, “ Is this a proof that the Scriptures *appear* to teach” the eternal existence of God ? Truly, Sir, I am ashamed to refute such trifling ; yet if I were not, your readers might be told, that doubtless I had “ cogent reasons” for my silence.

Thirdly : If any conclusion can be drawn from the number of times in which a term is used in the Scriptures, that number should be ascertained from the languages in which they were written, and not from a translation, which on such a subject proves nothing ; but if this had been done, as it certainly ought, by a writer of your pretensions, we should have heard nothing of number *two*, nor of number *five*.

Fourthly: You tell us not only that "the word everlasting is used very generally indeed in relation to things that either have ended, or must end," but that the word which is so rendered, was by the Old Testament writers "most generally" so applied.* By "the word which we render everlasting," I suppose you mean עולם, though there are other words, as well as this, which are rendered everlasting, and this word is not always so rendered. I have carefully examined it by a Hebrew concordance, and, according to the best of my judgment, noticed, as I went along, when it is applied to limited, and when to unlimited duration; and I find that, though it is frequently used to express the former, yet it is *more frequently*, even in the Old Testament, applied to the latter. I do not allege this fact as being of any consequence to the argument; for if it had been on the other side, it would have proved nothing. It would not have been at all surprising, if, in a book wherein so little is revealed concerning a future state, the word should have been used *much more* frequently in a figurative, than in a proper sense; but as far as I am able to judge, the fact is otherwise.

In looking over the various passages in which the word occurs, I perceive that in many of those instances which I noted as examples of the limited use of it, the limitation is such as arises necessarily from the kind of duration, or state of being, which is spoken of. When Hannah devoted her child Samuel to the Lord *forever*, there was no limitation in her mind: she did not intend that he should ever return to a private life. Thus also, when it is said of a servant whose ear was bored in his master's house, he shall serve him *forever*, the meaning is, that he should never go out free. And when Jonah lamented that the earth with her bars was about him *forever*, the term is not expressive of what it actually *proved*, namely, a three-days imprisonment, as you unaccountably construe it; † but of what it was *in his apprehensions*, which were, that he was cut off from the land of the living, and should *never more* see the light.

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 328, 329.

† Univ. Mis. No. i. p. 6.

So far as my observations extend, the word, whenever applied to a *future state*, is to be taken in the endless sense; and this you yourself will allow, *except in those passages which relate to future punishment*. You therefore plead for a meaning to the term, in relation to this subject, which has nothing parallel in the Scriptures to support it.

In the New Testament, the future state is a frequent topic with the sacred writers; and there, as might be expected, the terms rendered *everlasting, eternal, forever, &c.* are generally applied in the endless sense. Of this you seem to be aware; and therefore, after asserting that, by Old Testament writers, the term rendered everlasting was "most generally" applied otherwise, you only add concerning New Testament writers, that they "use it" "but a few times in relation to future punishment;" a remark, as we have already seen, of but very little account. If a particular term should be applied to one subject only five or six times, it does not follow that the evidence is scanty. There may be other terms equally expressive of the same thing; and the foregoing letter, it is presumed, has given proof that this is the case in the present instance. And if there were no other terms to convey the sentiment, five or six solemn asseverations on any one subject ought to be reckoned sufficient, and more than sufficient to command our assent; and if so, surely they may be allowed to justify the assertion, that the Scriptures *appear*, at least, to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment.

In answering what I considered as a misconstruction of a passage of Scripture (Rev. xiv. 19.) I suggested that the phrase, *day and night*, was not expressive of a successive or terminable duration, but a figurative mode of speech, denoting *perpetuity*. "It follows then (say you) "that your best ground for believing that there is no "successive duration after the end of this world, is only "a figurative expression or two."* Did ever a writer draw such an inference! What I alleged was not for the purpose of proving endless punishment, but merely to correct what I considered as a misinterpretation of a pas-

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 349.

sage of Scripture. If this be your method of drawing consequences, we need not be surprised at your inferring the doctrine of Universal Salvation from the holy Scriptures.

I thought that you, as well as myself, had better not have attempted to criticize on Hebrew and Greek terms. You think otherwise. Very well: we have a right then to expect more at your hands. Yet, methinks, you should have been contented to meet an opponent, who never professed to have a competent acquaintance with either of those languages, on his own ground: or if not, you should either have assumed a little less consequence, or have supported your pretensions with a little better evidence. To be sure it was very kind in you to inform me, that though αἰών and αἰωνίος agree, in some respects, with the English words *eternity* and *eternal*, yet they will not always bear to be rendered by these terms. I ought equally to thank you, no doubt, for teaching me, and that repeatedly, that “as for the word *eternal*, it is the “same in the original which is translated everlasting.”* Seriously, May not a person, without pretending to be qualified for Greek criticisms, understand so much of the meaning of words as to stand in no need of the foregoing information? Nay more: Is it not possible for him to know that the Greek words αἰών and αἰωνίος will not always bear to be rendered by the English words *eternity*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*; and yet perceive no evidence that the one are *less expressive of endless duration than the other*?

This, if it must be so called, was my “hypothesis.” To overturn it, you allege that the Greek terms will “admit of a plural,” and of the pronouns *this* and *that* before them, which the English will not.† So far as this is the case, it may prove that there is *some difference* between them; but not that this difference consists in the one being *less expressive of endless duration than the other*. Words in English, that are properly expressive of endless duration, may not ordinarily admit of a plural; and if this were universally the case, it would not follow that it is the same in Greek. Nor is it so: for the idea of end-

* No. i. p. 7. No. xxxv. p. 238.

† Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 332, 333.

less duration is frequently conveyed by these very plural forms of expression. Thus in Ephes. iii. 11. *κατα προθεσιν των αιωνων*; according to his eternal purpose. So also in 1 Tim. i. 17. *Τῷ δε βασιλει των αιωνων, αφαρτω, αορατω, μονω σοφῳ Θεῳ, τιμη και δόξα εις τες αιωνας των αιωνων*. Now unto the king eternal, immortal invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, forever and ever. Render these passages how you will, you cannot do them justice unless you express the idea of unlimited duration. And though the English terms may not admit of what is termed a plural form, yet they admit of what is equal to it: for though we do not say *everlastings*, nor *eternities*, yet we say *forever and ever*; and you might as well contend, that *forever* cannot properly mean unlimited duration, seeing another *ever* may be added to it, as that *αιων* must needs mean a limited duration, on account of its admitting a plural form of expression. You might also, with equal propriety, plead for a plurality of *evers* in futurity, from the English phraseology, as for a plurality of *ages* from the Greek.

With respect to the admission of the pronouns *this* and *that*, we use the expressions *this* eternity of bliss, or that eternity of bliss; nor does such language, being applied to a state of existence, express the idea of limitation. The very passage that you have quoted (Luke xx. 35.) where *αιων* is rendered *world*, and admits of the pronoun *that* before it, refers to a state which you yourself, I should suppose, would allow to be endless.

For any thing you have hitherto alleged, the Greek words *αιων* and *αιωνιον* are no less expressive of endless duration, than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*: the latter, when applied to temporary concerns, are used in a figurative or improper sense as frequently as the former. And if this be a truth, it must follow, that *the continual recurrence to them by your writers, is no better than a sing-song; a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant.*

You make much of your rule of interpretation, that "Where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word." (p. 333.) You are so confident that this rule is unobjectionable, as to intimate your belief, that I "shall

“not a second time have the temerity to reprove you for the use of it.” If you examine, you will perceive that I have not objected to it a first time yet, but rather to your manner of applying it. I shall take the liberty, however, to object to it now, whatever “temerity” it may imply. I know not who those “best critics” are, from whom you profess to have taken it, but to me it appears disrespectful to the Scriptures, and inadmissible. It supposes that all those words which are used in relation to different things (which, by the way, almost all words are) have no proper meaning of their own, and that they are to stand for nothing in the decision of any question; but are to mean any thing that the subject to which they relate can be proved to mean without them. Had you said, that the subject, including the scope of the writer, must commonly determine whether a word should be taken in a literal or in a figurative sense, that had been allowing it to have a proper meaning *of its own*; and to this I should have no objection; but to allow no meaning to a term, except what shall be imparted to it by the subject, is to reduce it to a cypher.

But exceptionable as your rule of interpretation is in itself, it is rendered much more so by your manner of applying it. If under the term “subject” you had included the scope and design of the writer, it had been so far good; but by this term you appear all along to mean, *the doctrine of future punishment abstractedly considered from what the Scriptures teach concerning it*; at least from what they teach by the terms which professedly denote its duration. You require that “there be something in the nature of future punishment which necessarily leads us to receive the word *αιωνιως* in an endless sense; in which case (as you very properly add) it is not the *word*, but “the *subject* which gives the idea of endless duration.”* What is this but saying, We are to make up our minds on the duration of future punishment from the nature and fitness of things; and having done this, we are to understand the Scripture terms which are designed to express that duration, accordingly? But if we can settle this business without the aid of those Scripture terms, why do we

* Univ. Mis. p. 329.

trouble them ; and what is the meaning of all your criticisms upon them ? If they are so " weak, from their " vague and undeterminate application in Scripture," that nothing certain can be gathered from them, why not let them alone ? It should seem as though all your critical labour upon these terms was for the sake of imposing silence upon them.

I do not know that endless punishment can be proved from the nature of things ; but neither can it be disproved. Our ideas of moral government, and of the influence of sin upon it, are too contracted to form a judgment *a priori* upon the subject. It becomes us to listen with humility and holy awe to what is revealed in the oracles of truth, and to form our judgment by it. When I suggested, that " the nature of the subject determined that " the term everlasting, when applied to future punishment, was to be taken in the endless sense," I intended no more than that such is the sense in which it is used when applied to a future state.

By your rule of interpretation, I have the " temerity" to say again, you might *disprove almost any thing you please*. I observed before, that if one should attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, your mode of reasoning would render all such evidence of no account ; because the same appellation is sometimes given to an altar, &c. You reply by insisting, that you interpret this term by the *subject*. But if you interpret it as you do the term *everlasting*, it is not the name *Jehovah* that forms any part of the ground of your conclusion. You do not, on this principle, believe God to be self-existent from his being called *Jehovah* ; but that the name *Jehovah* means self-existent, because it is applied to God, whom, from other considerations, you know to be a self-existent being. If Christ were called *Jehovah* a thousand times, you could not, *on this account*, believe him to be the true God, according to your principle ; because the same word, being applied to other things, its meaning can only be determined by the *subject* ; and in this case, as you say, it is not the word but the subject that gives the idea.

The rule adopted in my last letter allows a proper meaning to every Scripture term, and does not attempt

to set it aside in favour of one that is improper or figurative, unless *the scope of the passage or the nature of the subject require it*. This is a very different thing from *not admitting it, unless the subject, from its own nature, render it absolutely necessary*. The one is treating the proper meaning of a Scripture word with respect, not dispensing with it, but upon urgent necessity : the other is treating it with indignity, refusing it admission, except where it cannot be denied.

You refer me to Hab. iii. 6. as a parallel passage with Matt. xxv. 46. in which the same word is used in the same text in a different sense.* But these passages are not parallel ; for there is no such antithesis in the one as in the other. It has been thought, and I apprehend is capable of being proved, that the everlasting ways or paths of God, denote those very goings forth by which he scattered the mountains, and caused the hills to bow ; and that the term everlasting, in both instances, is expressive of merely limited duration. But admitting that the everlasting hills are opposed to the everlasting ways of God, or that the one were only *lasting*, and the other properly *everlasting* ; still the antithesis in this case naturally directs us so to expound them ; whereas in Matt. xxv. 46. it directs us to the contrary. If there be an opposition of meaning in the one case, it lies in the very term *everlasting* ; or between the duration of the hills and that of the divine ways : but the opposition in the other is between *life* and *punishment*, and the adjective everlasting, is applied in common to both ; which, instead of requiring a different sense to be given to it, requires the contrary. The words recorded by Matthew are parallel to those in John v. 29. *Some shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation* ; and we might as rationally contend for a different meaning to the term “ resurrection ” in the one case, as to the term “ everlasting ” in the other.

But besides all this, by your manner of quoting the passage, you would induce one to suppose that you had taken it merely from the *English translation*, which in a man of your pretensions, would be hardly excusable ; for though the same word be twice used in the passage,

* U. M. No. xxv. p. 331.

yet it is not in those places which you have marked as being so : the instances which you have pointed out as being the same word, are not the same, except in the *English translation*.

It was asked, Whether stronger terms could have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than those that are used? You answer, "The question ought not to be what language God could have used, but what is the meaning of that which he has used?"* I should have thought it had been one way of ascertaining the strength of the terms that are used, to inquire whether they be equally strong with any which the language affords? Should this be the case, it must follow, that if they do not convey the idea of endless duration, it is not in the power of language, or, at least, of that language to convey it.

You suggest a few examples, however, which in your apprehension would have been stronger, and which, if it had been the design of the Holy Spirit to teach the doctrine of endless punishment might have been used for the purpose. "I refer you (say you) to Heb. vii. 16. *ακαταλυστος*, *endless*, say our translators. 'The word (you add) is never connected in Scripture with punishment, and but this once only with life; which however shews that the sacred writers speak of future life in a different way than they do of punishment.'" (p. 334.) It is true that the term *ακαταλυστος*, is here applied to *life*; but not, as you insinuate, to that life of future happiness which is opposed to punishment. The life here spoken of is that which pertains to our Lord's priesthood, which is opposed to that of Aaron, wherein men were not suffered to continue by reason of death. The word signifies *indissoluble*; and being applied to the nature of a priesthood which death could not dissolve, is very properly rendered endless. It possibly might be applied to the endless happiness of good men, as opposed to the *dissoluble* or transitory enjoyments of the present state; but as to the punishment of the wicked, supposing it to be endless, I question whether it be at all applicable to it. I can form no idea how the term *indissoluble*, any more than *incorruptible*, can apply to punishment. The word *καταλυνω*, to *unloose* or *dissolve*, it is

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 334.

true, is said to refer to travellers *loosing* their own burdens, or those of their beasts, when they rested by the way : but there are no examples of its being used with reference to the termination of punishment ; nor does it appear to be applicable to it. In its most common acceptation in the New Testament, it signifies to *destroy* or *demolish* ; and you will scarcely suppose the sacred writers to suggest the idea of a *destruction* which *cannot be destroyed*.

You offer a second example, referring me to Isai. xlv. 17. *Israel shall not be confounded, world without end* : * but this is farther off still.—In the first place, The phrase is *merely English*, and therefore affords no example of “Greek,” for which it is professedly introduced.—Secondly, It is not a translation from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. To have done any thing to purpose, you should have found a Greek word which might have been applied to punishment, stronger than *αιωνιος* ; or if you must needs go to another language, you should have proved that the Hebrew words in Isai. xlv. 17. which are applied to future happiness, are stronger than the Greek word *αιωνιος*, which is applied to future punishment : but if you had attempted this, your criticisms might not have perfectly accorded, as they are the same words which you elsewhere tell us, would, if “literally rendered, be *age* and *ages* ;” † and therefore are properly expressive of only a limited duration. And why did you refer us to the *Old Testament* ? It could not be for the want of an example to be found in the New. You know, I dare say, that the English phrase, *world without end*, occurs in Ephes. iii. 21. And are the Greek words *there* used stronger than *αιων*, and its derivatives ? On the contrary, they are the very words made use of, and in a plural form too ; *εις παντα τας γενεας του αιωνος του αιωνος*, *throughout all ages world without end*. Had these very terms been applied to future punishment, you would have pleaded for a different translation, and denied that they were expressive of endless duration.

Without pretending to any thing like a critical knowledge of either the Greek or Hebrew language, I can perceive, Sir, that all your arguments have hitherto been

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 334.

† U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 364.

merely founded upon *English phraseology*; and from your translating $\pi\eta$ and $\pi\lambda\eta$ *age and ages*,* as though one were the singular, and the other the plural; and $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\alpha\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\omega\upsilon$ *to the age of ages*, as though one here also were the singular and the other the plural; as well as from your reference to $\alpha\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ as a proper term to be applied to endless punishment, I am furnished with but little inducement to retract my opinion, that you had better not have meddled with these subjects.

Yours, &c.

Kettering, March 17, 1800.

A. F.

LETTER VII.

An Examination of Mr. V.'s System and his Arguments in Support of it.

SIR,

I HAVE certainly to beg your pardon for having misunderstood you with respect to the doctrine of *annihilation*. I did not observe how you opposed the idea of endless punishment on the one hand, and annihilation on the other. In this matter I submit to your correction, and readily acquit you of all those absurdities which would have followed the admission of *that* principle. Other parts of that letter, however, you have but lightly touched; and some of them are entirely passed over.

As to your conjectures about my *motives*, both you and your friends might have been as well employed in something else. I can truly say, that I never wrote a line in my life with a view to "raise a dust" that might obscure the truth; and it is difficult to suppose that any person, unless he himself had been in the habit of doing so, would have thought of imputing it to another.

It is my desire to understand you, and not to wrest any of your words to a meaning which they do not fairly include. I have endeavoured to collect your senti-

* U. M. No. xxvi. p. 364.

ments as well as I am able. The amount of your first maxim, in page 330, appears to me to be this:—‘That
‘ if God created men, and placed them in circumstances
‘ which he certainly foreknew would issue in their fall
‘ and ruin, he willed this their fall and ruin ; and that it
‘ is of no importance that he forewarned them to avoid
‘ the evil : whatever be the event, he is chargeable with
‘ it. But God (you say) hath sworn by himself, that he
‘ willeth not the death of him who dieth ; that is, he will-
‘ eth it not as death finally or simply, or destruction irre-
‘ coverable. If, therefore, it occur, it is a part of his
‘ economy of grace, and finally a ministration unto life ;
‘ for he hath declared that it is his will that all should be
‘ saved : therefore the doctrine which forges any contra-
‘ ry will, falsifies supreme unchangeable truth.’

Thus it seems you reckon, that you acquit your Creator of injustice, which must otherwise attach to his character and conduct. Let us examine this matter. It is true, that whatever exists must, in some sense, accord with the will of God. Let the blasphemer make what use he may of it, it may be asked, Who hath resisted his will? God willeth not evil, however, as evil, but permits its existence for wise ends. The good that shall arise from it, and not the evil, is the proper object of divine volition. But it is not true, that God is on this account chargeable with man’s sin ; that all his cautions and warnings are of no account ; and that he is to be “accused” of the death of the sinner, if he die eternally. If it be, however, it is not the doctrine of universal salvation that will free him from the charge.

I am surprised, Sir, that you could allow yourself in this manner to reproach your Maker. You cannot allege all these things as merely attaching to my system. It is a fact—is it not? That God did place man in circumstances which he certainly foreknew would issue in his fall ; and that he did, notwithstanding, caution and warn him against apostacy, and still continues to caution and warn sinners against those very sins which he certainly foreknows they will commit : Who then is this that dares to arraign his conduct, and to accuse him of insincerity? Who, that at one stroke, aims to sweep away the accountableness of his creatures ; and to charge him with the evil of their sin, on account of his having placed them in such circumstances?

If it be as you insinuate, it must follow, That man is not blame-worthy in all his rebellion against his Maker, nor justly accountable for any of its consequences. Whether those consequences be *eternal*, makes nothing to the argument. Sin, and all the evils which follow upon it, are by you transferred from the sinner to the account of his Creator ! State your supposition with reference to your own principle—‘ Suppose him about to create twenty men. He knows ten of them will become vicious, and consequently exposed to the tremendous penalty of ‘ damnation *for ages of ages*. Who doubts, in such a case, that he wills that penalty, who, being almighty and ‘ all-knowing, does that, without which it could not ‘ come to pass ; and who will not accuse him of their ‘ damnation—having sent them into such circumstances !’ Thus, Sir, you undermine the justice of *all* punishment, present and future, and every principle of moral government.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Yes, says Mr. Vidler, it is he, who, “ knowing all events, “ and placing us in such circumstances as he does, that “ is accountable ! And it is of no importance in the consideration of common sense, that he cautions or forewarns us against the evil.”

If what you have suggested be true, it must also follow, that there is no need of a mediator, or of forgiving mercy. Where there is no blame, it is an insult to talk of forgiveness, or of the need of a mediator to effect a reconciliation. All that is necessary to recover man is justice. If the Creator only be accountable for the evil, it belongs to him to remedy it. Thus, instead of supporting the doctrine of universal salvation, you undermine all salvation at the very foundation.

Think not that you shall be able to roll away this reproach, which you have had the temerity to charge on your Creator, by suggesting that all the evil which follows will be ultimately a benefit ; for still it follows that man has not been blame-worthy in sinning against God ; that God has never been sincere in his cautions and warnings ; and that, being accountable for the whole, it is but justice to man that he turn all to his ultimate advantage, as a recompense for present injury. “ He sent his chil-

“dren into the wood, it seems, where he knew the poisonous fruit abounded; and though he warned them against it, yet he was not in earnest; and when they had eaten, to the endangering of their lives, he coun-
 “teredacted the poison; but was conscious, at the same time, that if there were any fault in the affair, it was his own; and if the children were to perish, he would
 “be justly accused of their death.” And can you, Sir, with these sentiments, continue to disavow your *invalidating the divine threatnings towards sinners*; and concurring with him who taught our first parents, “Ye shall not surely die?” What better exposition could the deceiver of mankind have wished for, than what your words afford! *Ye shall not surely die*; “viz. finally, or simply, or with destruction irrecoverable.” *For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened.* “If death occur, it is a part of his economy of grace, and
 “finally a ministration unto life.” That is, it shall prove a benefit.

“God hath sworn that he willeth not the death of him that dieth. That is, he willeth it not as death finally, or simply, or destruction irrecoverable.” Death simply and finally, then, means irrecoverable destruction; Does it? But if it does so in this passage, it may in others; and then the threatnings of death, provided they were put in execution, may mean eternal damnation. Yea, if death in this passage mean irrecoverable destruction, it will follow that some are irrecoverably destroyed: for the death in which God taketh no pleasure, whatever it be, the sinner is supposed to suffer—He hath no pleasure in the death of *him that dieth*. God taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, in the sense as *he doth not afflict willingly*, nor grieve the children of men. It does not mean that he doth *not afflict them*; for this is contrary to fact: but he doth not afflict for affliction sake, or for any pleasure that he takes in putting his creatures to pain. In all his dealings with sinners, he acts like a good magistrate who never punishes from caprice, but for a good end; in many cases for the correction of the party, and in all for the good of the community.

To your second maxim I have no objection—“That whatever God does is intended by his goodness, con-

“ducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his power.” But your application of it is inadmissible. Some parts of it are trifling, others rest on unfounded assumptions, and others are adapted to overthrow all future punishment.

First : The greater part of it is *mere trifling*.—Whoever supposed that eternal punishment, or any punishment, was a *benefit* to God ; or even a *pleasure* to him, or any holy beings, for its own sake ? Or who pretends that it is inflicted for the *honour, pleasure, or benefit* of the sinner ?

Secondly : Some parts of it which object to endless punishment, because it cannot be for the *honour* of God, or the *benefit* of creatures, proceeds altogether upon *unfounded assumptions*.—The only proof you have offered for the *first* branch of this position is naked assertion ; “ That every unsophisticated heart would so determine.” Suppose I say, every unsophisticated heart would determine the contrary, my assertion would prove as much as your’s ; and I may add, if *our* hearts be sophisticated it must be by malignity, or the wish of having our fellow creatures miserable, which I imagine you will not generally impute to us. But if *your* hearts be sophisticated, it is much more easily accounted for. The decision of sinful creatures in such a case as this, is like that of a company of criminals who should sit in judgment on the nature of the penalties to which they are exposed, whose prejudices are much more likely to cause them to err on the favourable than on the unfavourable side.—The *second* branch of this position is as unsupported as the first. Only one reason is alleged, and that is far from being an acknowledged truth ; viz. That no possible good can arise to society from the punishment of sinners, but that of *safety*. Common sense and universal experience teach us that this is not the only end of punishment. Israel might have been safe, if Pharaoh and his host had not been drowned ; yet they were drowned. Was *safety* the only end answered to the world by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah ; or were they not rather *set forth for an example* ? Is it only for the *safety* of society that a murderer is publicly executed ? That end would be equally answered by perpetual imprisonment, or banishment, or

a *private* execution ; but there would be wanting an *example* to express the displeasure of a good government against crimes, and to impress the public mind with it.

Thirdly : Most of what you say on this subject, if admitted, would overturn *all* future punishment.—You might ask, Would it be honourable to God to have any of his creatures miserable *for ages of ages*, rather than happy ? Would it be a greater *pleasure* ? Benefit he can have none ; for there is no profit in their blood.—As to the punished, future punishment can be neither honour nor pleasure to them ; and if their salvation could be accomplished without it, it cannot be any benefit to them. If they may not be saved without it, it must be either because there was not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ for the purpose ; or else that “the full efficacy of the atonement was withheld by the divine determination.”—As to *fellow creatures*, can the future punishment of any of the human race be any honour to them ? Who ever thought it an honour to him, that any of his family were punished in any way ? Is it not a dishonour to human nature at large to be sent to hell ? Can any creature have *pleasure* in the punishment of another ? Would not every benevolent mind possess a greater pleasure in seeing sinners converted and saved, without going to hell, than to see them condemned to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, *for ages of ages* ? Benefit they can have none, except *safety* ; and that is better answered by their enmity being conquered in the present life. As then future torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the work nor will of God ; and consequently, not the doctrine of Scripture !

You “think there is a vast difference indeed in the “nature of future blessedness, and future punishment ; “such as fully to justify us in giving a very different “sense to the word eternal, when applied to these subjects.” (p. 331.) It may be so ; but your thoughts prove nothing. “Sin and misery (you say) have no root “or foundation in God ;” and therefore must come to an end. Awhile ago they seemed to have their sole root in him, so much so as to exclude the accountableness of creatures : but allowing they have not, this inference is

a mere creature of the imagination. Reduce your argument to form, and see what it will amount to:—

Whatever has its root in the creature, must come to an end:

But sin and misery have their root in the creature:

Therefore sin and misery must come to an end.

Now what proof, I ask, have you for your major proposition? None at all. It is an argument, therefore, without any medium of proof, founded upon mere imagination. Another with equal plausibility might imagine, that as sin and misery had their origin in the present state, they will also terminate in the present state; and consequently that there will be no future punishment. And another might imagine, that as the acts of human beings are performed within a few years, the effects of them upon society cannot extend much farther; and consequently, it is absurd to suppose that a whole nation still feels the consequence of what was transacted in a few hours at Jerusalem, nearly 1800 years ago; and a whole world of what was wrought, perhaps, in less time in the garden of Eden. In short, there are no bounds to the imagination, and will be no end to its absurdities, if it go on in this direction. If instead of taking our religion from the bible, we labour to form a system from our own ideas of fitness and unfitness, and interpret the bible accordingly, there will be no end of our wanderings.

Because all judgment is committed to the Son, you conclude that future punishment has its origin in mercy, and will end in eternal salvation. To this I answer, first: If it be owing to the mediation of Christ that punishment should be a work of mercy, this is allowing, that, if no mediator had been provided, it must have been the reverse. But if so, all your arguments against eternal punishment from the divine perfections, and all your attempts to maintain that the original meaning of the divine threatenings never included this idea, are given up.—Secondly: If whatsoever is done by Christ in his mediatorial capacity shall terminate, on his delivering up the kingdom to the Father, the rewards of the righteous, as well as the punishments of the wicked, must at that period come to an end: for he will equally confer the one, as inflict the other. The “execution of judgment” com-

mitted to the Son, denotes not merely the carrying into execution the sentence at the last day, but the general administration of God's moral government, both in this world and that which is to come. See Jer. xxiii. 5. xxxiii. 15. Matt. xii. 18—20.

You talk of our "ascribing a proper eternity to sin and misery," as if we considered sin and misery to be necessarily eternal. The existence of intelligent creatures is no more eternal than their moral qualities or sensations; and therefore it would be improper to ascribe eternity either to the one or the other: but if God perpetuates the existence of intelligent beings to an endless duration, he may also perpetuate their moral qualities to the same extent; whether they originated with their existence, or were acquired at any subsequent period. Holiness and happiness, in respect to creatures, are not necessarily eternal, any more than sin and misery; and in this view it would be as improper to ascribe eternity to the purity and blessedness of the saved, as to the sin and misery of the lost, seeing that the endless duration of both depends upon the will of God. You speak of the "life and blessedness of holy beings as having their root and foundation in God; and that, being thus grounded in him, they will be, like him, eternal in duration." But this position is contrary to fact; for was not "God the source and proper spring both of the life and blessedness" of the unsinning angels? Yet they *kept not their first estate*, but lost their blessedness, and *are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*. The life and blessedness of man in a state of innocence had their origin in God, as well as those of saints and angels; yet they were not on this account like their author, "eternal in duration." To make such an assertion, is, "to say the least of it, an unguarded mode of expression:" but more than this, it is contrary to fact; and tends to lessen the dependence of creatures upon God as the constant author of all their happiness. The argument to prove that sin and misery cannot be eternal, is the counterpart of the above position, and of course it is equally fallacious.

"Sin and misery being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, they must (it seems) come to an

"end." Such an assertion is soon made ; but where is the proof ? A little more assurance might lead another to say, that sin and misery, being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, they cannot *exist* in a future state : and were it not for the awful evidence of facts, another might assert, that sin and misery do not *now* exist ; for in theory it would be as easy to prove, that the present existence of sin and misery is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence in future ; and that their existence in future *for ages of ages*, is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence to an endless duration. By such kind of reasoning some men have become atheists, because they cannot reconcile the present state of things with their ideas of a superintending power, possessed of infinite holiness and benevolence ; and I cannot but tremble for the man who begins to travel in this unwary path, by measuring the divine administration by his own unhallowed notions of moral fitness.

If your attempts to prove that all judgment is a work of mercy, and yet that there may be *judgment without mercy*, should prove fruitless, it is no more than may be expected ; for the thing itself is a contradiction. "The Scriptures afford instances of punishment and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins :"* but was this punishment *without mercy* ? "Judgment and mercy were united in God's dealings with Jerusalem."† Granted ; but for this very reason it could not be *judgment without mercy*. You might as well allege the union of wisdom and righteousness in all the works of God, as a proof that there are some works in which wisdom will be exercised without righteousness !

In another letter, Sir, I hope to conclude these remarks. Meanwhile I am,

Your's, &c.

A. F.

* U. M. p. 237.

† P. 338.

L E T T E R VIII.

A farther Examination of Mr. V.'s Scheme, with Replies to his Animadversions.

SIR,

I DO not know whether I fully understand your remarks on *proper eternity*. (p. 364.) It is certainly one of those ideas in which the human mind is easily lost, as it infinitely surpasses our comprehension: but whether “the scriptures have revealed any thing past or to come, besides “what is connected with successive duration,” and whether we be “left to infer a *proper eternity* only from the nature of Deity,” are other questions. You will allow that the Scriptures *attribute* a proper eternity to the Divine Being, and to his all-comprehending purposes, which I should think is not leaving us to *infer* it from his nature. They speak also of a period when *God shall be all in all*, when the *end* cometh, and of the *end of all things* being at hand. They likewise promise an inheritance that shall be *without end*. I should think, therefore, that this inheritance, of which the New Testament speaks very fully, cannot be said to be connected with successive duration; not so connected, however, as to be commensurate with it.

By successive duration being ended, I meant no more than what I apprehended you must mean by the cessation of *day and night*, (No. i. p. 8.) and the state of things when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Strictly speaking, it may be true that the idea of successive duration necessarily attaches, and ever will attach, to the existence of creatures, and that none but God can be said to exist without it: but there is a period, by your own acknowledgment, when the states of creatures will be forever fixed; and if at this period, sinners be doomed to everlasting punishment, the term everlasting must be understood to mean endless duration. This period I conceive to be at the last judgment; you extend it to ages beyond it. Here, therefore, is our difference. I did not allege Rev. x. 6. in favour of there being an

end of time. I did not apprehend it needed proof. Your formal answer to it, therefore, is only removing an objection of your own creating ; and if designed to prove that time will have no end, it is as contrary to your own avowed principles as to mine.

You contend, that "the day of judgment is not the " finishing period of Christ's kingdom ;" for which you offer a number of reasons. To the greater part of them I have already replied. The rest I shall briefly consider :

" This earth (which is to be the hell of wicked men, " 2 Pet. iii. 7—13) is to be renewed, whereby hell itself " will be no more."* If this gloss will bear the test, you have certainly for once hit upon a clear proof of your point ; for none can imagine the conflagration to be eternal. But, first : The Scriptures speak of a hell *already existing*, wherein the angels who kept not their first estate are *reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day* ; and in which the departed spirits of wicked men *lift up their eyes, being in torment* ; and intimate that this, whatsoever and wherever it be, will be the hell of ungodly men : for they are doomed to depart into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels*. But this cannot be upon earth, as its present condition does not admit of it.

Secondly : If the earth, as being dissolved by fire, is to be the hell of ungodly men, their punishment must *precede* the day of judgment, instead of following it ; for the conflagration is uniformly represented as prior to that event. It is described, not as your scheme supposes, as taking place a thousand years after Christ's second coming, but as attending it. *The day of the Lord's coming, is the same as the day of God, which Christians look for and hasten to ; wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved—Our God shall come and shall not keep silence ; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him ; and all this previous to his giving orders for his saints to be gathered unto him. And thus we are taught by the apostle Paul, that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven IN FLAMING FIRE.*†

* U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 365.

† 2 Pet. iii. 7, 12, 13. Psalm l. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

Thirdly : I appeal to the judgment of the impartial reader, whether, by the *perdition* of ungodly men, be not meant the destruction of their *lives*, and not of their *souls* ? It is spoken of in connexion with the deluge, and intimated that as the ungodly were then destroyed from the face of the earth by water, in like manner they should now be destroyed by fire.

You plead the promise, that "every knee shall bow to Christ," and consider this as inconsistent with a "stubborn knee even in hell." But the question is, Whether the bowing of the knee to Christ be necessarily expressive of a *voluntary* and *holy* submission to him ? The same inspired writer applies the language to that universal conviction which shall be produced at the last judgment, when every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. *We shall all stand* (saith he) *before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.** But you will not pretend that every knee will in *that day* bow to Christ in a way of voluntary submission.

"All things (you allege) are to be reconciled to the Father by the blood of the cross: but while any continue in enmity against God, this can never be performed." (p. 354.) You refer, I suppose, to Col. i. 19, 20. But if the reconciliation of things in earth, and things in heaven denote the salvation of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth, it would follow: (1.) That the holy angels are *saved*, as well as the unholy, though in fact they never sinned. (2.) That when the apostle adds, *And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*, he deals in unmeaning tautology. Things in heaven, and things in earth, were at variance through sin. Men becoming the enemies of God, all his faithful subjects, and all the works of his hands, were at war with them; yea, they were at variance with each other. But through the blood of Christ, all things are reconciled; and under his headship, all made to subserve the present and everlasting good of those who believe in him. Such appears to me

* Rom. xiv. 10—12.

to be the meaning of the passage, and which involves neither of the foregoing absurdities.

“Christ, (you add) is to rule till his enemies are *subdued*; till there be no authority, power, or dominion, but what shall be subservient to him; till death the last enemy shall be destroyed: and as the wages of sin is death, the second death must be here included.” (p. 365.) This language, which is taken from 1 Cor. xv. is manifestly used in reference to the resurrection of the bodies of those that sleep in Jesus, which is an event that precedes the last judgment: for *when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption—THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*; which is the same thing as *the last enemy being destroyed*. And *THEN cometh the end*, the last judgment, and the winding up of all things, *when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; *when he shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power.* (ver. 24, 25.) For you to interpret this language of things that are to *follow the last judgment*, and to say that it *must* include the second death, proves nothing but the dire necessity to which your system reduces you.

“Finally: The character of God is LOVE—which is expressly against the horrible idea of the endless misery of any of his rational creatures.” (p. 395.) So, Sir, you are pleased to assert. Another might from the same premises assert, that the punishment of any of his rational creatures in hell for ages of ages, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and this notwithstanding the death of his Son, and the omnipotence of his grace, which surely was able to have saved them from it, is horrible and incredible! Is it inconsistent with the benevolence of a supreme magistrate that he dooms certain characters to death? Rather, is it not an exercise of his benevolence? Should a malefactor persuade himself and his companions in guilt, that his majesty cannot possibly consent to their execution, without ceasing to be that lovely and good character for which he has been famed, would not his reasoning be as false in itself as it was injurious to the king? Nay; would it not be inimical to his own interest, and that of his fellow criminals; as, by raising a delusive hope, they are prevented from mak-

ing a proper and timely application to the throne for mercy?

Such are your reasons for successive duration, and final salvation, after the last judgment; which, whether they ought to satisfy any other person, let the reader judge. I shall close with replies to a few of your animadversions.

Your misrepresentation of what I had advanced concerning the Jews as a distinct nation, I should hope needs no correction. If any of your readers can mistake what you have said, for a just statement of the views, or an answer to the argument of your opponent, they are beyond the reach of reasoning.

You inferred from what was God's end in punishing Israel *in the present life*, that (seeing he was an *immutable* being) it must be the same in his punishing others in the life to come.* I answered, That I might as well infer from what appears to be his end in punishing Pharaoh and Sodom *in the present life*, which was not their good, but the good of others, that such will be the end of future punishment.† You reply, by *supposing* that these characters were destroyed for their good. (p. 367.) What, *in the present life*? No; but in the life to come! And do you call this reasoning?

You say, "If any be finally incorrigible, it must be in consequence of the divine purpose; or else the purpose of God has been frustrated." I have in my last letter replied to the substance of this dilemma. I may add, you need be under no apprehension that I shall be tempted to give up the infrustrableness of the divine purpose; and if I admit that God in just judgment has purposed to give some men up to stumble, and fall, and perish, it is no more than the Scriptures abundantly teach. You talk of "the LAST state of a creature according with the divine purpose:" but I know of no evidence for this, which does not equally apply to *every state*. If you be tempted to ask, *Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?* You may possibly recollect that these questions have been asked before, and answered too; and it may be of use to you to study the answer.

Akin to this is your dilemma, "That God cannot, or will not, make an end of sin; that there is not efficacy

* U. M. No. ii. p. 43, 44.

† No. xxxiii. p. 262.

“ enough in the blood of Christ to destroy the works of
 “ the devil ; or else that the full efficacy of the atonement
 “ is withheld by the divine determination.” It has been
 already observed, and I hope proved, that the Scripture
 phrases, *making an end of sin*, &c. convey no such idea as
 you attach to them. (p. 264.) And as to your dilemma,
 to which you ascribe great “ weight,” I answer again,
 you need be under no apprehension of my limiting the
 power of God, or the efficacy of the Saviour’s blood ;
 and if I say that both the one and the other are applied
 under the limitations of his own infinite wisdom, I say
 not only what the Scriptures abundantly teach, but what
 you yourself must admit. Can you pretend that your
 scheme represents God as doing all he can do, and as be-
 stowing all the mercy which the efficacy of the Saviour’s
 blood hath rendered consistent ? If so, you must believe
 that God cannot convert more than he actually does in
 the present life, and that the efficacy of the blood of
 Christ is not equal to the saving of more than a part of
 mankind from the second death.

You think that “ the Scripture is not silent concern-
 “ ing the future emendation of the ancient Sodomites ;”
 and refer me to Ezek. xvi. 44—63 ; arguing, that
 “ Sodom and her daughters must be taken literally for
 “ the city of Sodom, and the neighbouring cities of the
 “ plain—that the prophecy must refer to the very persons
 “ who were destroyed, seeing they left no descendants—
 “ and that there is the same reason to expect the restora-
 “ tion of Sodom, as the fulfilment of God’s gracious
 “ promises towards Jerusalem.” (p. 368.) But if your in-
 terpretation prove any thing, it will prove—I will not
 say, too much, but too little. It will prove, not that the
 ancient Sodomites will be saved from “ the vengeance of
 “ eternal fire,” and introduced into the heavenly world ;
 but barely that they are to return to *their former estate*.
 (ver. 55.) And do you seriously think, that *after the last*
judgment, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Samaria
 and Jerusalem, will be rebuilt, and repossessed by their
 ancient inhabitants ? If so, it is time for me to lay down
 my pen.

The former part of the above passage, (ver. 46—59.)
 I apprehend to be no promise ; but the language of keen

reproof : and instead of intimating a return to either Sodom or Jerusalem, the latter is reasoned with on the footing of her own deserts, and told in effect not to expect it any more than the former.* The latter part (ver. 60—63.) contains the language of free mercy ; not however towards the same individuals, against whom the threatenings are directed, but to their distant posterity, who under the gospel dispensation should be brought home to God ; and by a new and better *covenant*, have the *gentiles* given to them. The conversion of the heathen is expressed by this kind of language more than once ; as by *bringing again the captivity of Moab, of Elam, and of the children of Ammon in the latter days.* Jer. xlviii. 47. xlix. 6, 39.

You “have not discernment enough, it seems, to perceive the gross absurdity” of maintaining that there can be no diversity in future punishment, unless it be in duration ; that is, that the reflections of sinners on their past life must all be exactly the same. It may be so ; but I cannot help it. Your answer amounts to this : Diversity of degrees in future punishment *may* be accounted for by varying the duration of it ; “for every one knows there needs not so much time to inflict a hundred stripes, as to inflict ten times that number.” Therefore that *must* be the way, and the *only* way ; and if you do not admit it, you “confound all degrees of punishment, in giving infinite punishment to all.” (p. 42, 264, 369.)

You believe, you say, that “*those who die in their sins cannot go where Christ is.*” You must mean to say merely, that they *cannot follow him now, but shall follow him AFTERWARDS.* Such things, indeed, are said of Christ’s friends, but not of his enemies.

You have represented me as maintaining that all punishment clashes with the benevolence “both of God and his people.” I have said no such thing concerning God ; and if we were equally wise and righteous, and equally concerned to guard the interests of the universe, as he is, we should be in all respects of the same mind with him. The misery which I suppose true be-

* See a similar kind of phraseology in Jer. xxxiii. 19—26.

nevolence to clash with, is misery inflicted for its own sake ; and to this, whether it be temporary or endless, it is alike abhorrent. God has also made it *our* duty, while sinners are not his confirmed enemies, to do all in our power to preserve their lives, and save their souls ; but *He* is not obliged to do all that he can to these ends, nor does he. Temporary punishment, you contend, may consist with benevolence, “because it is directed to a “good and glorious end :” And do I contend for endless punishment on any other principle ? If you can form no idea of an end that is good and glorious, save that which respects “the amendment of the sufferer,” it does not follow that no such end exists. A murderer, contemplating his approaching exit, might be so much absorbed in the love of himself as to be of your opinion ; but the community would not.

Whether I have entered into “the merits of the cause,” or conducted the controversy in a becoming “spirit,” I consider as no part of my province to determine. The impartial reader will judge, whether I have dealt in “soft words, or hard arguments ;” and if I have been so happy as in this particular to follow your counsel, whether I have not been obliged to deviate from your example. On this account I shall be excused from taking any notice of your animadversions on these subjects, together with those of your new ally, the “Hoxton Student,” unless it be to thank you for affording additional proof of the justness of my remark, *That Socinians rejoice in the spread of Universalism.*

Whether the kingdom of heaven be prepared for all men, or not, that you and I may so agonize in the present life, as at last to enter in, is the desire and prayer of your sincere well-wisher,

A. F.

FINIS.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

I.—ON THE COMMON SALVATION.

II.—THE GOOD MAN'S DESIRE FOR THE SUCCESS OF
GOD'S CAUSE.

III.—THE OBJECT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF BELIEVERS
IN PRAYING FOR SPIRITUAL MIGHT.

To which are added,

TWO LETTERS,

On the Sicknefs and Death of a Christian Friend.

BY ANDREW FULLER, D. D.

B O S T O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY MANNING AND LORING, NO. 2,
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Sermon I.

JUDE 3.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

THE writer of this epistle was him who in the gospel is called *Judas not Iscariot*. The epistle itself is called *general*, not being addressed to any particular person or people; and may therefore be of more common concern. In the passage I have read we may notice, First, The *occasion* there was for writing: *it was needful*. The apostle did not write for writing sake; but to guard them against *certain men* who had crept into the churches *unawares*—turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (ver. 4.)—Secondly, The *earnestness* with which he engaged in it: *He gave all diligence*. The word* signifies halte, forwardness, diligent care; somewhat like that which a parent would feel in pulling a child out of the fire. (ver. 23.)—Thirdly, The *subject* on which he wrote: *the common salvation*. This furnishes a reason for his being so much in earnest: the very vitals of christianity were struck at. Had not this been the case, it may be they would not have heard from him. When Haman had conspired against the Jews in Persia, you recollect the petition of Esther, and the manner in which it was addressed to the king. After inviting him to her banquet, and postponing the matter till she had whetted his desire to the uttermost, she at length uttered her request: *If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my LIFE be given me at my petition, and my PEOPLE at my re-*

* σπουδή.

quest! For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: but if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage! Something like this seems to be the spirit of this passage. It is as if the writer had said, If the enemy had levelled his weapon against any thing but the very heart of the gospel, I might have held my peace.

The amount is: THE COMMON DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL ARE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE TO BE TAUGHT BY US AS MINISTERS, AND RETAINED BY US AS CHRISTIANS.

In discoursing on the subject, I shall endeavour to ascertain wherein the common salvation consists; inquire why it is so called; and shew the importance of its being made the grand theme of our ministrations, and the first object of our attachment.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain wherein the common salvation consists.

There can be no doubt, I think, that by this phrase is meant the gospel salvation. It is the same thing as *the faith once delivered to the saints: the common faith*, after which Titus is said to have been begotten.* In a word, it is that which in the New Testament is peculiarly denominated *the gospel*.

But the question returns: What is the gospel? Great diversity of opinion prevails on this subject. One denomination of professing christians tell you it is one thing, and another, another; and how shall we judge amidst such discordant accounts? If I were to tell you that such and such doctrines constitute the gospel, you might answer, This is only my opinion, which is subject to error, equally with that of other people. For this reason I shall not attempt to specify particulars, but mention certain scriptural mediums by which you yourselves may judge of it.

First: We may form a judgment wherein the gospel consists, by the *brief descriptions* which are given of it.—The New Testament abounds with these descriptions: it delights in epitome. For example: *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever be-*

* Titus i. 4.

liveth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. This is the common salvation : and surely I need not ask whether the doctrine which denies the *perishing* condition of sinners by nature, and supposes the unspeakable gift of heaven to be a mere fellow-creature, sent only to instruct us, and to set us a good example, can comport with this representation.—Again : *The Jews require a sign, or miracle, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* This is the common salvation. We hear of preachers knowing their auditors, and preaching accordingly : but Paul went straight forward, regardless of the desires of men.—Again ; *I determined not to know any thing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified.* In each of these passages, the gospel is supposed to be summarily comprehended in what relates to the person and work of Christ. This is the foundation which God hath laid in Zion : this is the common salvation.—Again ; *I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory, or hold fast, what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures : and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.* Here also we see what is the *gospel*, and what that is on which the *present standing*, and *final salvation* of christians depend : and I appeal to every thing that is candid and impartial in my hearers, whether such importance can be attached to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ upon any other principle than that of his dying in our stead, and rising again as our forerunner ?—Finally ; *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.** This language supposes, that in coming into the world, our Lord was *voluntary*, or that it was with *design*, which supposes his pre-existence ; and that this design was to *save sinners, the chief of sinners.* In calling it a faithful or true saying, it is intimated that it was so much

* John iii. 16. I Cor. i. 22—24. I Cor. ii. 4. I Cor. xv. 1—4. I Tim. i. 15.

the theme of the apostle's ministry, and so well known amongst christians, as to become proverbial. *A saying grown into credit by experience of its truth*, is the definition which has been given of a proverb; and such was the true saying of Paul. This therefore must be the gospel—the common salvation.

Secondly : We may judge wherein the common salvation consists, by the *brief descriptions which are given of the faith of primitive christians*. This, as well as the gospel, is frequently epitomized in the New Testament; and it may be expected that the one will agree with the other. So we preach, and so ye believed. The creed of the first believers, it has often been remarked, was very simple. *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Believing is called *receiving the witness, or record, of God—And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** There are many other important truths, no doubt, the belief of which is necessary to salvation; such as, the being and perfections of God, the evil of sin, &c.; but they are all involved in the doctrine of *Christ and him crucified*. This all-important principle is a golden link, which if laid hold of, draws with it the whole train of evangelical truth. Let a man cordially embrace this, and you may trust him or the rest.

There are, I conceive, four things which essentially belong to the common salvation; its *necessity*, its *vicarious medium*, its *freeness* to the chief of sinners, and its *holy efficacy*. If we doubt whether we stand in need of salvation, or overlook the atonement, or hope for an interest in it any otherwise than as unworthy, or rest in a mere speculative opinion which has no effectual influence on our spirit and conduct, we are at present unbelievers, and have every thing to learn.

II. Inquire wherefore it is called the common salvation?

Three reasons may perhaps be assigned for this.

First : It is that in which *all the sacred writers*, notwithstanding their diversity of ages and gifts, *are agreed in* .

* Acts viii. 37. John v. 1, 5, 9, 11.

teaching. The Old Testament writers understood it much less than the New; but they all *died in the faith of it.* They *testified of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow—To him give all the prophets witness.* The New Testament writers differed widely as to talents. *Paul* reasoned; but Christ and him crucified was his theme. *John* had more of the affectionate: he was baptized, as it were, in love; but the Lamb that was slain was the great object of it. There is no other name, said *Peter*, given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved; and *John* stood by his side and assented. If any of the New Testament writers could be supposed to dissent, it would be *James*, who wrote fully upon the necessity of good works: but he was of the same *faith*, and only pleaded for *shewing it* by his works.

Secondly: It is that which is *addressed to sinners in common*, without distinction of character or nation. The messages of grace under the Old Testament were principally addressed to a single nation: but under the gospel they are addressed to all nations, to every creature. The promises of mercy are indeed made only to believers; but its invitations are addressed to sinners. The gospel feast is spread, and all are pressed to partake of it, whatever has been their previous character.

Thirdly: It is that in which *all believers*, notwithstanding their different attainments and advantages, *are in substance agreed.* It is fitly compared to milk, which is the natural food of children. There may be great darkness, imperfections, and error; and many prejudices for and against distinctive names: but let the doctrine of the Cross be stated simply, and it must approve itself to a renewed heart. A real christian cannot object to either of those four things which were considered as belonging to the common salvation:—to the necessity of it, the vicarious medium of it, the freeness of it, or the holy efficacy of it.

III. Shew the importance of its being the grand theme of our ministrations, and the first object of our attachment.

It is that which God hath ever blessed to the salvation of sinners, and the edification of believers—The primitive christians lived upon it—Times of great revival in the church have always been distinguished by a warm

adherence to it. In the dark ages of popery, the schoolmen, as they are called, employed themselves in deciding curious points; but at the time of the reformation, the common salvation was the leading theme. Those ministers whose labours have been more abundantly owned for the promotion of true religion, have been distinguished by their attachment to the common truth; and those churches which have abounded the most in vital and practical godliness are such as have not descended to curious researches, nor confined their approbation to elegant preaching, but have loved and lived upon the truth, from whomsoever it has proceeded.

There are three things in particular from which we are in danger of neglecting the common salvation, both as preachers and as hearers:—

First: A pretended regard to *moral and practical preaching*, to the disregard of *evangelical principle*. All preaching, no doubt, ought to be practical; and there are no greater enemies to the Cross of Christ than men who can bear nothing but what soothes and comforts them: but this is not the only extreme. Almost all the adversaries of evangelical truth endeavour to cover their dislike to it under an apparent zeal for ‘morality, the christian temper, and christian practice.’ If we neglect the common salvation in our ordinary labours, morality will freeze upon our lips, and neither the preacher nor the hearer be much inclined to practise it. To lose a relish for the common salvation is the first step towards giving it up; and the effects of this we are warned against from the example of *the angels who kept not their first estate*.

Secondly: The *love of novelty*.—Both preachers and hearers are in danger of making light of common truths, and of indulging in a spirit of curious speculation. This will render preaching rather an entertainment, than a benefit to the soul. We are commanded to *feed* the church of God . . . not their fancies, or imaginations, nor merely their understandings; but their renewed minds. It indicates a vicious taste, and affords a manifest proof of degeneracy, where the common salvation is slighted, and matters of refinement eagerly pursued. The doctrine of Christ crucified is full of the wisdom of God, and will furnish materials for the strongest powers; and here we

may dig deep in our researches : but if this subject has no charms for us, what are we to do in heaven, where it is their darling theme ?

Thirdly : A partial attachment to *one or two particular truths*, to the neglect of *the great body of truth*. It has frequently been the case, that some one particular topic has formed the character of an age or generation of men ; and this topic has been hackneyed in almost every place, till the public mind has become weary of it ; while other things of equal importance have been overlooked. Beauty consists in lovely proportion : and herein consists the holy beauty of religion. When every part of truth has its due regard, and every part of holiness its share in our affections, then will the *beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us*, and then will he *establish the work of our hands*.

Finally : The common salvation, though it affords ground for a universal application for mercy, yet will be of no essential benefit to us, unless it be specially embraced. Notwithstanding the indefiniteness of gospel invitations, it is nevertheless true, that, *He who believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned !*

Sermon II.

PSALM xc. 16, 17.

Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us : yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

IN every undertaking we have an end or ends to answer, to which all our labours are directed. It is no less so in religious undertakings than in others ; and as these are pure, and worthy of pursuit, such is the good or evil of our exertions. What are, or at least should be, the great ends of a christian congregation in rearing a place for divine worship ? What are the main desires of serious people amongst you now it is reared ? If I mistake not, they are depicted in the passage I have read :—*That God's work may appear amongst you in your own time—that it may be continued to posterity—that God would beautify you with salvation—and prosper the work of your hands ?*

The psalm was written by Moses, probably on occasion of the sentence of mortality passed upon the generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, on account of their unbelief, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Numbers. It was a heavy sentence, and very affectingly lamented by the holy man ; but he discovers a greater concern for the cause of God, than for the loss of temporal comfort. He prays that they may be taught to make such a use of this awful providence as to *apply their hearts unto wisdom ;* and that however God might afflict them during forty years wandering in the wilderness, he would bless them with spiritual prosperity.

This prayer was answered. That generation which was trained in the wilderness was, perhaps, the best that Israel exhibited during their existence as a nation. It was of them that the Lord himself spake, saying, *I re-*

remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel then was holiness to the Lord. May our prayer for the prosperity of God's cause amongst us be thus answered.

All I shall attempt will be, to review the *objects* desired, and shew the *desirableness* of them.

The objects desired, though expressed by the Jewish lawgiver, have nothing in them peculiar to that dispensation; but are equally suited to our times, as to others. They prove that the cause of God is one, through every dispensation, and is directed to one great end—the establishment of truth and righteousness in the earth.

The *first* branch of this comprehensive petition is, That *God's work might appear unto his servants.* All God's works are great. Creation is full of his glory: providence is no less so: and each is sought out by them that have pleasure therein. But it is evident that by the work of God, in this connexion, is meant the operation of his *grace*. When the Almighty took Israel to be his people, he bestowed blessings upon them of two kinds; temporal and spiritual. He gave them the promise of a good land, and of great prosperity in case of their obedience to his will. But this was not all: he set up his cause amongst them. They were his visible people, by whom true religion was practised, and its interests promoted. It was the carrying on of this cause that is here intended. It was begun from the time when God made promise to Abraham their grand progenitor, and was carried on during the lives of the patriarchs. When they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, and formed into a people for himself, it became more apparent, and wore a more promising aspect; but when they were doomed to die in the wilderness, it seemed as if it must sink. Hence Moses, who was tenderly affected with what concerned the honour of God, pleads as he does. Thus he pleaded his *great name* on a former occasion: and thus the prophet Habakkuk pleaded when Judah was going into captivity, and the cause of God was likely to be ruined: *O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy!*

The work of God may be said to *appear amongst us* when sinners are converted to himself. Conversion is not confined to Jews and heathens ; but extends to sinners of all ages and nations. It is not enough that we are born and educated under the light of revelation, nor that we yield a traditional assent to it. Nicodemus could boast of all this, and more : yet he was told by the faithful and true witness, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven*. Conversion work is peculiarly the *work of God*. Ministers and parents may be the instruments ; but God is the proper cause of it. None but he who made the heart of man can turn it from its rooted aversion to the love of himself. Ministers and parents know this by painful experience ; and therefore can each adopt the prayer here presented as their own. Wherever this work is, it will *appear* by its holy and happy effects. The drunkard will become sober, the churl liberal, the unclean chaste, and the malignant persecutor of Christ's people a humble sufferer for his name's sake.

The work of God will also appear amongst us if christians grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The power of divine grace is no less apparent in the carrying on of God's work, than in the beginning of it. Nothing short of an almighty arm can preserve creatures, so prone to fall away, *from falling*, and present those who are so faulty, *faultless before the presence of his glory*. And where this part of the work is, it will *appear* also by its holy and happy effects. Such christians bear the most impressive testimony to the world of the reality and importance of religion.

A *second* branch of the petition is, That God's work might so appear as that there might be an illustrious display of his *glory*. All God's works display his glory ; but the work of grace in the salvation of sinners most of all. Other things manifest his wisdom and power ; but this his holy nature. The carrying on of his cause in the world, by the conversion and sanctification of sinners, gives a kind of visibility to the divine character. It is seen, and even felt by the most abandoned of men. God is said to have *appeared in his glory in building up Zion*, after it had been broken down by the Chaldeans. Even the heathen, when they saw what he

had wrought, could not forbear to acknowledge, *The Lord hath done great things for them!* But the building up of the gospel church, by turning the captivity of those who were the slaves of Satan, is still more glorious. The Lord could accomplish the former merely by his providence; but the latter is the effect of the travail of his soul.

It is requested, *thirdly*, That God would impart to them his beauty: *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!* All God's works are beautiful; but saints who are his workmanship, are the subjects of a *holy* beauty, or of the beauty of holiness. They are comely through the comeliness which he puts upon them. Conceive of the camp of Israel after they had been humbled, and taught to fear the Lord their God. Two or three hundred thousand godly young people, following him implicitly in the wilderness, and trembling at the idea of repeating the iniquities of their fathers! This was a sight at which even a wicked prophet was struck with awe, and could not forbear exclaiming, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* Powerful are the charms of genuine piety. There is something in it that disarms malignity itself, and extorts admiration even from those who hate it. Milton represents the devil himself, on his approaching paradise, as awed by innocence, as staggered, as half inclined to desist from his purpose, and feeling a kind of perturbation within him composed of malignity and pity. Something like this, existed, methinks, in Balaam. He wanders from hill to mountain, seeking for curses, but scattering blessings; sometimes half inclined to unite with God, and concluding with a vain desire to die the death of the righteous. Powerful, I repeat it, are the charms of genuine piety. Conceive of a society of christians drinking into the spirit of Christ, and walking according to his commandments. What an amiable sight! *Beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners!* So much as we possess of the spirit of true religion, so near as we approach its original simplicity, so far as our doctrine is incorrupt, our discipline pure and impartial, and our conversation as becometh the gospel, so much of the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us.

A *fourth* branch of the petition is, That God would set his seal to their undertakings, and establish the work of their hands : *Establish thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*—It was the work of Moses and Joshua, and the rest of God's servants, to mould and form the people, especially the rising generation ; to instruct them in the words of the Lord, and impress their hearts with the vast importance of obeying them. And this has been the work of God's servants in every age. This is our object in our stated and occasional labours, in village-preaching, and in foreign missions ; this is the object in the present undertaking : but all is nothing unless God establish the work of our hands. Except the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain. As we must never confide in God to the neglect of means ; so we must never engage in the use of means without a sense of our dependence on God.

Finally : It is requested that these blessings might appear both in their own times, and be continued to their posterity : *Let thy work appear unto thy servants*, who are now alive, *and thy glory unto their children*, when they are no more. It is desirable that true religion should be promoted *in our time*. This indeed should be our first and chief concern. Worldly men may care nothing about this. If they gain but the corn, the wine, and the oil, it is enough for them, but God's *servants* cannot be happy with mere temporal prosperity, if the interest of Christ do not prosper. Nehemiah might have lived in affluence at the court of Persia ; but he could not enjoy it while the city of his God was going to ruins. The true labourers in God's husbandry long to see it abound in fruits : the builders of his temple desire to see it rise. And though our own times lie nearest us, yet our prayers and efforts must not be confined to them, but extend to *posterity*. The succeeding generation should lie near our hearts. In them we hope for materials for God's building. The prayer of David would fit the lips of every godly man, and especially of every godly parent : *That our sons may be as olive-plants grown up in their youth ; and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace !*

I shall add a few words on the desirableness of the objects.

We have seen already that the manifestation of the glory of God depends on the progress of his work : by how much, therefore, we are concerned for the one, by so much shall we be importunate for the other. It is for the glory of God, that Satan's kingdom should be overturned, and the kingdom of his Son established on its ruins. This work is the *harvest* of all God's other works of glory. It was glorious in him to promise to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession : but the glory of this also depends upon its being performed. It was glorious for Christ to die, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works : but it is by the actual accomplishment of this object that his glory is perfected. It was glorious for God in his providence to drive out paganism and popery from this kingdom : but if it stop here, what are we the better ? The cutting down of weeds will be of but little use, if the pure seed be not sown, and spring up, and bring forth fruit in their place.

The progress of God's work in heathen countries has a close connexion also with our spiritual prosperity at home. There is much beauty and propriety in the petitions offered up in the lxviiith Psalm. *God be merciful unto us — THAT thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations !* God blesteth the world by blessing the church, and making it a blessing. A statesman would wish for an increase in population, that the army, and navy, and every other department of society might be filled : and shall not we pray for the prosperity of the church of God ; that faithful ministers, missionaries and every other description of christians, may not be wanting ?

Finally : The regard we bear to the souls of men, especially to the rising generation, must render these blessings desirable. It is not your's, but you that we seek. Our hearts' desire, and prayer to God for you, is, that you may be saved. If we recommend you to attend the gospel and embrace it, Is it because we want to enlist you under the banner of a party ? God knoweth ! Yet we shall say to you, and especially to the rising generation, *Go with us, and we will do you good ; for the Lord, we trust, hath spoken good concerning us : and it shall come to pass that whatsoever good thing the Lord shall do unto us, that will we do unto you.*

Sermon III.

EPHESIANS iii. 14—16.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.

THE writing and preaching of the apostles had two distinct specific objects in view. They *preached*, to make men christians; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God: They *wrote*, to make them eminent christians; to quicken believers in their heavenly race, to promote in them a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Such was the zeal of Paul in endeavouring to accomplish the former, that he counted not his life dear to him, but was willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus: nor was he less desirous of the latter; making it the leading object of all his epistles, and the matter of his prayer day and night. In the apostle's words there are three things which require our notice: The object desired—its importance—and the encouragement we have to seek it.

I. The *object* in which the apostle was so much interested on behalf of the Ephesians: *That he would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.*

Nothing good is found in fallen man; nothing grows spontaneously in that soil but what is evil: if any thing holy be found there, it must be produced by the Spirit of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Nor is divine influence less necessary in carrying on the good work after it is begun: such is our proneness to relax, to grow weary, to faint in our course, that we need to be continually strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.

The object prayed for is not *bodily* strength ; that is of but little account in the sight of God, though in many cases it becomes the matter of human boasting. Sampson was possessed of might in the outward man to a high degree, and a poor use he made of it. Perhaps a more feeble character is not to be met with among those whom the scriptures mention as good men : with all his wonderful exploits, he weakly yielded to the tempter, and became an easy prey to his enemies. Nor is it mere *mental* ability that is here intended ; that was the strength of Solomon. Paul did not pray that we might be made great men, but good men ; not that we might be poets or philosophers, but christians ; not that we might excel in genius or learning, but in grace and goodness ; that our souls may prosper and be in health—that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man. This part of the subject will be better understood by considering some of the symptoms of spiritual might.

1. The manner in which we perform *religious duties* may serve as a criterion by which to judge of our strength or weakness.—If we be christians, we shall worship God in our families and in secret ; shall search the scriptures, frequent the house of God, and aim to discharge the various duties which appertain to our stations in life. These things we shall feel it incumbent on us habitually to regard : but the question is, How, and in what manner do we perform these exercises ? If our souls be in a languishing state, they will become a task, and not a pleasure to us ; we shall be weary of the Lord's service, feel his yoke to be grievous, and while we keep up a round of duty, our devotions will be cold, feeble and unprofitable. But if we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, we shall count of the return of sacred opportunities, and find that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. When David longed for water of the well of Bethlehem, three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines to obtain it, hazarding their lives for his sake ; while men of weaker attachment would have murmured at the severity of such an enterprise. If we possess a warm heart for Christ, we shall not think much of the time, the talents, the property, the influence which we may devote to his

service; nor count our lives dear to us, if we may but promote his kingdom and glory in the world. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. Nor will this pleasure be confined to the public exercises of religion, but will extend to those of a more personal and private nature. It is possible we may feel much animation, and possess much enjoyment in the outward means, while we are cold and lifeless in the duties of retirement; and this will be the case where the religion of the heart is not cultivated, nor close walking with God carefully maintained. But if we be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man, communion with God will be earnestly sought after, private duties vigorously attended to, and the closet will yield us pleasure, as well as the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts. There are but few of whom it may be said, as of Caleb and Joshua, that they follow the Lord *fully*. Multitudes of professors appear to be but half-hearted in religion; they neither wholly relinquish it, nor take it up in earnest; but are desirous of following the Lord so far as is consistent with their carnal ease, their worldly interest, or their sinful passions, and no further. But if the object of the apostle's prayer be accomplished in us, we shall be decided for God, and prompt in our manner of serving him; not consulting with flesh and blood, not attempting to accommodate our principles and practice to those of the generality, nor wishing to do as little as possible for God, consistently with our own safety; but delighting to do all his will, we shall run in the way of his commandments.

2. The degree of our spiritual strength may be determined by the manner in which we *resist temptation*.—All men are tempted; but all do not resist temptation: this is peculiar to the christian character. Mere worldly men go with the stream; they walk according to the course of this world, and are hurried along with the impetuous torrent. But if we be christians, we are not of the world, and are in the habit of resisting its temptations. Yet if our resistance be feeble and indeterminate; if we hesitate where we ought to be decided; if we look back on Sodom, like Lot's wife, with a lingering desire after those sinful pleasures which

we profess to have given up, and regret the loss of sensual gratifications,—are we not carnal, and walk as men? He who is strengthened with might in the inner man will not pause when temptation meets him, nor parley with the tempter; but will readily answer, “Thus it is written.” It will be sufficient for him to know that God has forbidden this or that. Like a dutiful child, the will of his father is the guide of his conduct, and that alone will furnish sufficient motives for obedience: Thus it is written.

3. The spirit in which we *endure affliction* will tend to discover the degree of religion we possess.—Affliction is the lot of man, as well as temptation; and we must all get through our difficulties in some way or other: but the manner in which we get through them will shew whether we be strengthened with might in the inner man, or not. If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small; if we be fretful, and murmur at the hand of God; if we sink under the burden, and wish in ourselves to die; we either have no religion at all, or possess it but in a small degree. Great grace would enable us to bear affliction with submission, and even to rejoice in tribulation. Primitive christians were destitute, afflicted, tormented; and yet how happy were they with their lot! They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake, and counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. Out of weakness they were made strong, and waxed valiant in fight: thus they were more than conquerors through him that loved them.

4. The sense we entertain of *our own weakness* is also a criterion of our being strengthened in the inner man.—An apostle could say, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” To a worldly mind this may appear highly paradoxical, but a babe in Christ may understand it. When we have the greatest sense of our own insufficiency for what is good, and feel that we are nothing, and without Christ can do nothing, then are we strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. But if we feel self sufficient, confident, and disposed to lean to our own understanding, then are we weak indeed, and become an easy prey to the enemy. Peter was never so weak as when he thought there was no danger of falling, and boldly

said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." Paul was never so strong as when he felt himself to be "nothing." When most sensible of our own insufficiency, we shall pray most for strength from heaven, and watch most against temptation; and by these means we shall be strengthened with strength in our souls.

II. We are led to notice the *desirableness* of the blessing prayed for.—Paul would not have been so importunate in his request, if it had not been of the greatest importance that we should not only be christians indeed, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But there are other reasons which might be offered.

1. The Scriptures lay much stress on this, as tending to glorify God.—"Herein is my Father glorified, (saith Christ) that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples." Every field will bear some fruit, in the ordinary course of things; but it is to the more abundant honour of the husbandman when his field brings forth thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. So it is not merely by our being christians, that God is glorified; but by our being eminent christians. Nor is this all: if we be desirous only of so much grace as may carry us safely to heaven, it is doubtful whether we shall ever arrive there at last. Abounding in the fruits of righteousness is considered by our Lord as essential to the very existence of true religion; for, saith he, "*so shall ye be my disciples.*" Christ himself brought forth much fruit, and it is necessary that we resemble him.

2. Our *usefulness* depends much on our being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.—If our souls be in a languishing state, what good can we do in the world? Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing. What good can we do in society, amongst our immediate connexions or in our families, but as we diffuse a savour of Christ? And how can this be done, if we ourselves have lost that savour, and are become lifeless and unfruitful in the ways of God! At the close of every day it becomes us to inquire, Has any one been improved by our conversation? Will any one think the better of Christ, from what they have heard

or seen in us? Or have we been amongst men merely as men of the world; and might they not say of us, What do ye more than others? He who possesses much religion, will impart more or less of it to those about him: he will not make a show of it; yet it must be seen. There is that in the outward mien, the inward temper, and daily conversation of a man of genuine religion, which indicate that he has been with Jesus. The modesty of his countenance, the meekness and cheerfulness of his disposition, the sweet familiarity and seriousness of his intercourse with men, enliven the circle in which he moves, and recommend the religion which he professes.

III. The *encouragement* we have to pray that we may be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man, is intimated by the phrase, "That he would grant you according to the *riches of his glory*, &c."—When men are both rich and generous, and willing to give to the necessitous according to their ability, it affords a very powerful motive to solicit their assistance. But who can estimate the riches of God's goodness, and the boundless extent of his grace! And if he gives according to the riches of his glory, what encouragement is here for prayer! Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it, saith the Lord. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Let us ask much, and we shall have much: The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy. He who had but one talent, and went and hid it in the earth, lost it; but he who had five talents, and went and traded with the same, gained five other talents. Men who live to God, and whose whole concern is to promote his glory, shall find their sphere of usefulness enlarging with their activity, and that God is girding them with strength proportioned to their labours. Like their divine Master, their reward is with them, and their work before them. To him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

Letter I.

TO MRS. MEAD.

Kettering, Jan. 10, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR heavy affliction, and it seems, approaching dissolution, have not been forgotten by me ; though, through a multiplicity of concerns, I have not been able till now to write. I know it is a serious thing to *die* ; but I know also, that faith in the Son of God will remove mountains.

It was one of the consolations of our Lord to his sorrowful disciples, when about to be taken from them : *I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also : and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* What can I offer to my dear dying friend more suitable than a few remarks upon this interesting passage ?

If our Saviour had been going to some unknown place, and we must not follow him, we might well be unhappy : *but whither I go ye know.* It is true, we know nothing of an hereafter beyond what God in his word hath told us : but these lively oracles are a light in a dark place, whose cheering beams pierce the otherwise impervious gloom of futurity. When a dying heathen was asked whither he was going ? " O my friends ! (said he) we know nothing of an hereafter." Such must have been our answer, but for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. As it is, we know whither our Redeemer is gone : he is gone to his Father, and to our Father ; to his God, and to our God. He is gone to the Mount Sion ; to the city of the living God ; to the innumerable company of angels ; to the spirits of just men made perfect ; to God the judge of all. Whither he is gone, we know ; for we have had a foretaste of the bliss. As believers, we are already come to Mount Sion. The church below and the church above are only different branches of the same family ; so that he who is come to one, is come to the other.

But how are we to follow him, unless we *know the way*? If he come and receive us, he will be our guide. And this is not all; *The way we know*. Thomas thought he knew not whither his Lord was going, nor the way that led to him: yet he knew his Lord, and believed in him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. Jesus therefore answered, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: knowing me, you know the way to the heavenly life*. Yes, my dear Friend, we not only know *whither* our Saviour is gone, but the *way* that leads to him. The doctrine of the Cross, as dear PEARCE observed, “is the only religion for a dying sinner.”

If an affectionate father had resolved to remove to a distant country, he might not take his wife and children with him the first time; but might choose to go by himself, that he might encounter and remove the chief difficulties in the way, and make ready a habitation to receive them. Such was the conduct of our Saviour. *I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*. His passage through the territories of death, was attended with the most dreadful of all conflicts; but having overcome, it renders our's an easy one. Death to us is—*Jesus coming to receive us to himself*.

The presence of a beloved object is the grand preparative of any place; and that which gives it its principal charm. Such is his preparation of a place for us. Jesus is *there*; and that is enough. If any thing will operate as a magnet to attract us from earth to heaven, it is the consideration of being *where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God*.

If before this reaches you, you have not received your discharge, accept my affectionate farewell. We shall soon meet again; and meet to part no more. May you enjoy a safe and comfortable passage, and have an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

My sympathizing remembrance also to Mr. Mead, and to your brother and sisters. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit!

Affectionately your's,

A. F.

Letter II.

TO MR. T. R.

Kettering, Feb. 24, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I DROP you a few lines by Mr. T. to express the sympathetic feelings of my mind with a family whom I sincerely respect. Doubtless you have sustained a loss in the removal of dear Mrs. Mead; yet there are circumstances, which if duly considered, must greatly alleviate it. She might have left a family of helpless children. Her life might have been such as to have disgraced her connexions; and their only relief might have been in endeavouring to forget her. Or, if she had sustained a fair character among men; yet if that had been *all*, you would have sorrowed as those who have no hope.

As I said to her in the prospect of death, so now I say to you: *Whither she is gone ye know; and the way ye know.* It is not to an unknown state, nor where you cannot follow her. You have only to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Jesus went to *prepare a place for his followers.* We understand how he *prepares us for heaven*: But how does his presence *prepare heaven for us*? Three ways occur to me:—

First, As constituting *the essence of its blessedness.*—Think what an accession of joy his triumphant entrance must have occasioned through all the heavenly regions, and what a source of continued enjoyment his presence affords? What would some societies be without certain interesting characters, which are in a sort the life of them? And what would heaven be without Christ? The zest of the heavenly bliss consists in its being the place where *Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* This is urged, and well it might be, as the grand motive to *set our affections on things above.*

Secondly, As *gathering together the whole family of heaven and earth.*—This redemption brings many multitudes to

glory, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and every one that enters adds to the enjoyment. In order to connect us together in the closest bonds of affection, God has so ordered it, that both in this world and that which is to come, our blessedness should be bound up with that of each other ; in seeing the good of his chosen, rejoicing in the gladness of his nation, and glorying with his inheritance. Hence it follows, that every accession to the heavenly world affords an influx to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. Every one that goes before may be said to contribute to the preparing of the place for them which follow after. The pure river of the water of life has its origin in the throne of God, and the Lamb ; but in its progress it passes through various mediums, which swell its streams, and render it more and more delectable. From the entrance of Abel into the New Jerusalem, to this day, it has been rising higher and higher, and will continue to do so till all the nations of the saved are collected together.

Thirdly, *As superintending the concerns of the universe, and causing all events to work together and produce a great and ultimate good.*—Glory awaits the righteous immediately upon their departure from the body ; but a much greater glory is in reserve. Innumerable events in the system of providence must remain inexplicable, till the mystery of God be finished. It is impossible for spectators to comprehend the use of all the parts of a complicated machine, till it is constructed and put into motion. And as our Forerunner is now preparing the scenery of this grand exhibition, and hastening it to its desired issue, it is thus that he is preparing a place for us.

From hence we are encouraged to be looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, and directed to consider it as the period when we shall be fully *satisfied*. How solemn, and yet how sweet, is the description of it. *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. A shout*, methinks, denotes the universal joy of heaven for the arrival of the day when the war is terminated in victory, and the last enemy is destroyed. The blowing of a *trumpet*, may probably allude to that of jubilee, on which the prison

doors were thrown open, and the captives set at liberty. Such were the consolations presented to the Thessalonians on the death of their christian friends.

Our Lord did not absolutely forbid his apostles to weep at his departure : he himself *wept* at the grave of Lazarus ; but he dissuaded them from *excessive* grief—Let not your heart be troubled. I think that I never felt what may be called *heart trouble*, or *deep distress*, for the loss of any person, however near to me, whose death I considered merely as a removal to the church above. The words of our Saviour are here applicable : *If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father ; for my Father is greater than I.* That is, the glory I go to possess with my Father is greater than any thing I could inherit upon earth ; and therefore, if ye loved me, and your love operated in a proper way, you would rather be glad for my sake, than sorry for your own.

Present our kind and sympathizing regards to Mr. M. and all the family, and accept the same yourself, from

Your's affectionately,

A. F.