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J. Baird

1841



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L E T T E R S 1841

O N

THERON and ASPASIO.

ADDRESSED TO THE

AUTHOR of that WORK.

With Two PREFACES, and Two APPENDIXES,

CONTAINING

An Account of the Progress of the CONTROVERSY,
and of the principal P I E C E S that have
been wrote against these L E T T E R S.

One Thing is needful. LUKE X. 42.

T H E F O U R T H E D I T I O N .

I N T W O V O L U M E S .

V O L U M E I .

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M D C L X V I I I .



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P R E F A C E to the T H I R D E D I T I O N .

SINCE Christianity, by the address of the clergy, became an engine of their dominion, almost every attempt to illustrate the truth and peculiar excellence of that religion hath been obnoxious to very obvious imputations. And many shewing a readiness to allow the clergy, whether reigning, or only yet aspiring to be, according to their claim, the genuine successors of the apostles and first ministers of the gospel, have fondly embraced so plausible an occasion for insinuating, that these two very different sorts of men have been all along of the same stamp, and actuated by the same views from the beginning;—to the no small reproach of the Christian religion.

But if the true genius and tendency of that religion, exhibited fairly only in the New Testament, be duly attended to, it will be found, that the Christian cause and that of the clergy form two very different, yea, two very opposite interests, which, from the commencement of the opposition, have been all along very hostile toward each other.

This opposition hath been more especially manifest since the scripture began to be published in the several languages of Europe. As that book hath proved the great instrument in the hand of Providence for breaking their kingdom, filling it with darkness, and obliging them, however reluctant, gradually to lower their pretensions; so they have looked with a most invidious eye on the increase of knowledge arising from that book, especially while sapping the foundations of their kingdom, it hath served to disclose, in its primitive lustre, the ancient doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, so much insisted on by the Author of the Christian religion.

It sensibly touches them to find their yoke cast off by many, who, allowing Christianity to be such as they exhibit it, have found a plausible pretext for avowing their aversion to that religion altogether. Yet, in this regard, they receive some consolation, by reflecting, that their credit sinks along with that of Christianity itself.

But what must grieve them still more sensibly is, to find themselves forsaken and opposed by others, who maintain, and what is worse, by what has hitherto appeared, have unanswerably proved, from the very book whence they (the clergy) have so long derived their importance, that

Christ's kingdom is quite a different thing from theirs, and that the very Author of the Christian religion hath devoted to destruction their kingdom, which he is now evidently fast consuming by his word and providence.

Freethinkers provoke their followers to throw off the clergy's yoke by the fear of a temporary laugh; but Christ moves his followers to turn away from them by a much more weighty consideration, even the fear of everlasting shame and contempt.

Those who understand the difference between Christ's kingdom and that of the Clergy, must see, that it is the interest of the latter to deceive. The truth on which Christ's kingdom is built, could never be the foundation of theirs; yet that both have one foundation, must be pretended. The pretence cannot be kept up without some form or likeness of what is pretended to. As therefore it was necessary to the rise of the clergy's kingdom, that the divine truth should be changed into a lie, so it concerns all who would study the support of that kingdom, to prevent as much as possible the imposition from being perceived. It is allowed that many, while imposing on others, are at the same time imposed on themselves. The scripture, pointing at the means by which Christianity would be separated from the cross, and the clergy's kingdom erected, acquaints us, that this would take place by a gradual progress of men *waxing worse and worse*, and a circulation of *deceiving and being deceived*.—It belongs however to every friend of the truth to detect the imposition, and expose the deceit wherever he can find it, let the heaviest part of the guilt fall where it may.

Now, that the clergy's kingdom is falling, it highly concerns all who have any taste for that kingdom which cannot be moved, that a fair and open appeal to the scriptures should be urged and carried on with all freedom. As the writer hath got the satisfaction of finding that these Letters have been in some measure subservient to this end, he concludes this preface with his hearty wish, that far and wide may the controversy spread, whether by means of his or any other pen, and let every man judge for himself.

PREFACE to the Second Edition.

IT is not unfrequent for writers, in subsequent Editions, to congratulate themselves and their readers on the favourable reception of the first. Though the writer of these Letters is not authorised, on this occasion, to proceed altogether in common style, yet he may be allowed to express himself very well satisfied with the reception he has got. He has obtained, what has been thought no bad reward even for poetry, which, says a renowned poet,

——— If 'tis truly good,
Is best rewarded when best understood.

He has had the satisfaction to find, that his leading scope has been as generally understood, as could well be expected of a subject destined to be the object of envy and disgust in every nation; yea, so generally, that even those who have thought fit to declare publicly, that, upon reading the whole performance, they were not able to collect a single idea from it, have at the same time acknowledged, that it occasioned them no small fretfulness and disgust;—an effect neither uncommon nor improper for the gospel to have on its opponents. Men are commonly much more chagrined at stubborn truth, than at the nonsense and folly of their neighbours. For it is an old maxim, That we “suffer fools gladly, knowing ourselves to be
“wise.”

Genuine Christianity must always appear as an insult on the taste of the public, yea, the

most respectable part of the public, and that in the most important matters. This, it is evident, must be the case, so long as she bears for her motto. *That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*; and while, as a proper counterpart to this, her favourite topic is to shew, That the character which was, and still continues to be “disallowed of men, is chosen of God, and precious in his sight.” On this account, her presence every where awakens aversion and disgust. Yet she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her. And though her enemies will always find cause to despise her, yet she will ever be justified of all her children.

Being a stranger from above, come to visit the earth for the benefit of men, and having no other errand than to distribute the bounty of heaven among the indigent, she can have no interest of her own to promote by the aid of men. Accordingly she never makes her court to those who are best capable of introducing her into the good graces of the public. She ever wears a benign aspect to the destitute, and, with her richest smiles, diffuses joy among her dependents; while she looks with an eye of steady neglect and contempt on all who pretend ability to bring her any additional ornament or importance. She comes not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. She “fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away.” Yea, her steady contempt of the latter is highly serviceable to ascertain and enhance her kindly regard to the former.

Though

Though she has no reverence for the names of greatest repute in the world; yet she aims not to change or reverse the order wherein the characters of men are ranked in the estimation of the public. She never insinuates, that publicans and harlots have as good a claim to the public esteem, as decent and devout Pharisees: she only declares “that the former go into the kingdom of heaven before the latter; and that there are many, who are first in this world, who shall be last in the next.” So that, though her language and temper must always be most provoking to those of first repute, as bearing hardest on their pretensions as to the kingdom of heaven, yet she never disputes their claim to precedence in the kingdoms of this world. Yea, the very nature of her opposition to them, rather serves in some respects to support that claim.

Having no political scheme to promote, she is no murmurer at the badness of the times, nor joins issue with those who urge the discontented inquiry, “What is the cause that the former times were better than these;”—a sort of discontent that points ultimately at those in authority. For the same reason, she interferes not with the state of religious parties, as having any inclination to raise one to the depression of another; nor does she spirit up any faction to rival the Established Church.

As she proposes no benefit to bodies-politic, so she claims no distinguished privilege, nor thinks herself any way intitled to particular fa-

your or encouragement from those in power. Yet, as she is far from doing or intending any hurt to such societies, she has a right to toleration and simple protection, in quality of a harmless stranger. If she is refused this, she rebels not, but suffers patiently, or retires peaceably.

She is a zealous asserter of liberty, yet she dogmatizes with the greatest assurance. — As she assumes no jurisdiction herself over those who despise her instruction, so neither is she desirous to draw upon them the frown of those in authority. Yea, she frowns with indignation at all who would thus befriend her. Her open declaration on this head runs thus: “ If
 “ any man hear my words, and believe not, I
 “ judge him not: for I came not to judge the
 “ world, but to save the world. He that reject-
 “ eth me, and receiveth not my words, hath
 “ one that judgeth him: the word that I have
 “ spoken, the same shall judge him in the last
 “ day.” Thus we see at one view how zealous she is for liberty, and at the same time how positive and peremptory in dictating.

As she comes not to offer problems to exercise the wit of man, but to declare divine truth, she boldly, on the part of heaven, denounces her anathema against all who oppose or corrupt that truth. Had she brought less strength of evidence, and affirmed with less assurance, she would have been more acceptable to the wise and prudent; but then, at the same time, she would have yielded so much the less comfort to the weak, the foolish, and the destitute. For
 it

it is well known, that when the heart of man comes to sink under its proper weakness, (and the stoutest heart soon or late grows weak) nothing less can then support it, than the all-commanding evidence and authority of divine undeniable truth.—When many of her professed sons began to think of establishing their own importance and pre-eminence, they affected to imitate her assurance in dogmatizing, and uttering anathemas in support of Tradition, and the decisions of human wisdom. And the effect at last was, their hurting and destroying one another's bodies; a striking sign of the spiritual death attending such apostasy. But now we must consider them as under a foreign influence, even that of the strange woman, against whom the following caveat is given: “ Let
 “ not thine heart decline to her ways; go not
 “ astray in her paths. For she hath cast down
 “ many wounded: yea many strong men have
 “ been slain by her. Her house is the way to
 “ hell, going down to the chambers of death.”
 —It would seem then to be a thing peculiar to genuine Christianity, to dogmatize tenaciously, and at the same time to be an unreserved friend to liberty and humanity. And thus at once she preserves the dignity of her character both in respect of heaven and earth, while, steady to divine truth, she shews all meekness toward all men.

Ever condescending to the needy, she never fawns on those who look above her: never aims, by softening matters, to deprecate their displeasure;

displeasure ; but despising them herself, encourages her children to do the same; saying with a determinate voice, *Let them alone, &c.* As for all those, who, standing above the level of her dependents, would yet claim kindred to her, she addresseth them only with spiritual *weapons, mighty to pull down.* In general, as she needs not the applause of multitudes to support her cause, she never affects to gain ground upon men in the way of soothing any of their prejudices by the arts of eloquence. Yet her adversaries, even by their opposition, are frequently subservient to the progress of her benevolent design. Nothing more naturally haunts the heart of man than the sense of blame, or the conviction of guilt: yet to nothing does his heart make a more vigorous resistance than to such conviction. Now, she, in a way peculiar to herself, testifies of the world, that their works are evil; yea, in such a manner, as stings even the men of best repute, in the tenderest part. Thus she awakens the hatred of the world. And the noise thence arising, often serves as an echo to publish and spread her testimony, till it reach the ears of the worthless, to whom it proves indeed to be good tidings of great joy.—It may be observed here, that the most cautious of her adversaries, the better to secure their own quiet, are commonly the most careful to make little noise with their resentment against her.

Moreover, there is, in human nature a certain principle, called in Latin *odium tertii*, in plain English, the pleasure of seeing our neighbours

bours and rivals properly censured, which often proves subservient to her friendly views. As her great aim is, to convince men of sin, and shew the necessity of the divine righteousness she reports men serve her purpose by accusing and exposing one another. For however blind individuals may be to their own faults, they are commonly quick-sighted enough to those of others. The same holds true of different religious parties striving for preeminence in the world. Now, however much such parties may be agreed in their opposition to the leading views of that wisdom which comes from above, yet they often find her dictates useful to expose the claims and damp the confidence of each other. It sometimes pleases the Pharisees, to hear her put to silence the Sadducees; and the latter no less, to hear her repel the high pretensions of the former; though, in the main, neither party is well satisfied with the general strain of her opposition to the other, as finding but too often occasion for the murmuring complaint, "Thus saying, thou reproachest us also." However, while such parties strive and jostle, they frequently prove the happy means of awakening attention to her salutary instruction among some detached obscure individuals, little accounted of by any party. So that she is never disconcerted in her grand design, let noisy parties behave as they will.

Though she concurs not with any of the parties aspiring after the public leading in religion, nor animates any of her children with such

such emulation ; yet she forms a peculiar union among her children. altogether upon the maxims of the kingdom of heaven, teaching them to love one another, and never to dream that their cause can flourish and prevail till the resurrection of the dead. She animates them to maintain, with tenacious and inflexible zeal, that heavenly truth, which ascertains the purity of the divine character, in opposition to all the corruption of the world, even that truth which is the bond of their union, and the source of their common joy ; while she teaches them, as to every thing human and selfish, or all things within their own disposal to be flexible, gracious, and yielding, both among themselves and toward all men. Well knowing, that the truth which unites them will always expose them to the hatred of the world, she would have them careful, as much as in them lies, not to dishonour their grand controversy, by giving men any other occasion to reproach them. Accordingly, one of her faithful sons, after describing her opposite, who assumes her garb, as earthly, sensual, and devilish, gives her true character thus : *The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated ; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

Our most serious writers, from the leading Churchman down to the lowest Dissenter, are commonly very earnest in pointing out the properest means to make Christianity FLOURISH AND PREVAIL ; sincerely regretting, at the same time,

time, the unhappy obstacles that retard an event which appears to them, in so many respects, truly grand and desirable. The two shining expressions in the last period the rather deserve a mark of distinction, as they make a part of the long established and most universally approved stile in religious writings. For however much Christian writers differ among themselves, they are generally agreed in being disposed, each in his way, to contribute their utmost, that Christianity may flourish and prevail. The reason is obvious. Multitudes, not much concerned to know what Christianity is, are easily intoxicated with the fond notion of a flourishing and prevailing cause. What flourishes and prevails in the earth, will always draw the admiration of the world, even as its prevalence must be owing to its coincidence with the taste of the world. The Jews, who had no taste for the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, were yet strongly possessed with the fond prospect of a flourishing and prevailing Messiah. And we should wrong them much, if we did not suppose them equally capable as our moderns, of embellishing that prospect with all the grand ideas of "judgment running down as a stream, righteousness and piety overspreading the earth," &c.—On this head it may suffice to add, that Jesus, perceiving one of his most zealous disciples tainted with the leading sentiment of his countrymen, severely rebuked him, as influenced by Satan in that sentiment, as an offence to him, and as favouring, "not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

It has already been noticed, that the scope of these Letters has been pretty generally understood. The writer has likewise had access to observe his reflections on the aspect the religious world bears to the apostolic gospel, notably confirmed. In both these respects, the general conduct and language of his readers serve greatly to keep him in countenance. While he perceives his notion of the apostolic gospel opposed by the same temper and dispositions that opposed that gospel when first preached, he finds, at one view, both that his design is understood, and that his reflections are verified. And thus he is furnished with fresh evidence, serving to confirm him in the persuasion, that his notion of the gospel is a just and true one.

The remarks of his readers generally concur in this, that his scheme will *never take*. Thus it appears, they understand as much about it, as to perceive wherein it differs from every scheme fitted to flourish and prevail in the world. And to understand that such a scheme will never take, is, with the bulk of people, found a sufficient reason to reject it, either as false or foolish. — To this way of thinking they are accustomed, by having frequent occasion to perceive the manifest absurdity of adopting any political scheme, which yields no prospect of its ever succeeding or prevailing — Besides, as to religion, we may easily perceive numbers of people, having no great taste for it at present, who yet shew a readiness to disclose their zeal for it, so soon as it shall be in a more flourishing condition ;

tion; that is, so soon as the reasons of their present coolness are removed, and the endearing motives in prospect have begun to exert their influence. To this observable disposition in mankind, we may, in a great measure, attribute the success which many preachers have had in awakening an occasional fondness for religion among the inhabitants of whole regions, while they have been exerting their eloquence to give them a prelibation of happier times.

To the same purpose with what is above noted, it has been observed, that the strain of writing in these Letters can never serve to promote the *interest of religion*. This observation likewise shews the attention of the reader: and it readily calls to mind the reason why the Jews were so averse to the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah. The whole tenor of his language, temper, and conduct, appeared to them so much the reverse of being fit to promote the interest of religion, that, for the sake of that very interest they conspired against him; as they did afterward, on the same account, against his apostles. Nor did the Christian cause begin to flourish and prevail in the world, till the Christian leaders began to be more concerned about the interest of religion, than about the truth of the gospel in its native simplicity: yea, in our own country, matters have proceeded so far, that many zealous Protestants, moved with the deepest concern for the interest of religion, have bound themselves by oath, to extirpate such as

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maintained

maintained the heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom, and the ancient Christian order.—But, more particularly,

The writer has had the satisfaction to find, that he has been pretty generally understood on the doctrine of faith. The ferment of the religious keeps him in countenance here. Here is a book, says one, writ to decry all practical godliness; another, he gives a very lame account of faith; a third, he makes nothing at all of faith, he makes it a mere non-entity; a fourth, the faith of devils! Hence it appears, that the writer's doctrine has been as well understood as the gospel can well be supposed to be by those who dislike it. As his obvious and often-declared aim was, to transfer the whole stress commonly laid on faith and its actings, in the matter of justification, to the simple truth known or believed, even that same truth which is the object of envy, and source of torment to devils; how could his opponents, or those who impugn the all-sufficiency of the bare truth, to justify and give peace of conscience, more clearly have shewn their apprehension of his meaning? As for those who incline to wink hard, lest they should see too much, and, for want of a better way of shewing their dislike, still affect to say, they do not understand him, it is presumed they might learn to express their meaning more properly, from the vulgar story of the Quaker's reply to his creditor, who, meeting him at unawares, complained he could not find him at home,

home, when he formerly came in quest of him. The reply was, “ I did see thee, but I did not love thee.” However, allowing them to use their own stile, we are commonly at no great loss to guess his meaning, who has no other reply to give his neighbour, urging upon him a mortifying truth, than, “ Sir, I do not understand you.”

A cry has been raised against these Letters, as if they meant to determine the future state of some persons whose doctrine is censured in them. Though the writer is sensible, that none but the more weak and foolish can seriously hearken to such a cry; yet he is likewise sensible, that the wise, for their own ends, often indulge and encourage the foolish in believing what they themselves see no foundation for; therefore, as he is persuaded, that the latter have as much concern with the gospel as the former, he thinks it proper to inform them, that when once men have wrote books, so acquired an existence as authors, they never die in that capacity, till their books are forgot, or have lost all influence; consequently, till that time happen, they lie equally exposed to every one’s censure or applause, as public edifices, statues, or pictures. — The zealous cry in favour of the dead, in this case, is well known, by all people of middling reflection, to have no force, no pertinent meaning in it, further than as it resents an insult shewn to the reigning taste of the living. All such likewise know, that the names of authors and public

lic speakers, dead or living, are, on all hands, conveniently used, as the readiest index to various points of doctrine, and particular branches of the public taste, when there is not the remotest intention to determine about any man's future state.—Yea, the writer is so far from having any occasion to stand upon the defensive here, that he has in readiness enough, and more than enough, to put all his opponents to the blush, if they are capable of it. He has warmly opposed, with arguments hitherto unanswered, all those eminent preachers who grudge mercy to the greatest sinners, even at the last hour: and though he has reason to conclude enemies to mercy to be none of the least sinners; yet he has no where grudged, but, on the contrary, expressly maintained the freedom of mercy, even to them at the close of life. The open state of the fact then supports him in affirming, that he has shewn a more benevolent temper to such preachers, than they to their fellow-creatures. But what avails it to the reader, what sort of men are either they or the writer? The great question that concerns the reader is, What is divine truth? If he has found that, he may boldly say, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”—But to proceed:

If the writer, when he composed his Letters, needed any further evidence to support the vehemence of his stile against the teachers and people most exposed to his censure, he has got it abundantly now. The main force of his censure

sure

sure turned upon this, That he considered them as enemies to his notion of the gospel, or of what saves men: and now, since his book was published, he has got manifold recent proofs of their enmity to that notion: and what is remarkable in this case is, that those same people who avowedly oppose that notion, complain loudly, as if their favourite authors were highly injured, by being charged as opposers of that same notion. Thus their opposition to the doctrine maintained in the Letters, while it operates in such indirect ways, bears the manifest badge of opposition to truth. Now, though some diligent observer should be able to make it appear, that the writer has mistaken any one or all of their favourite authors, in supposing their notion of the gospel, or of faith, differed from his; yet still it remains clear as sunshine, that such people act an absurd part, in calling it injurious to censure such authors, yea to censure them severely, if it be true, that there is but *one faith* that saves men. Yea further, though the writer himself should, upon more careful inquiry, find that those authors agree with his own notion of faith, still he would have reason to reject them as the favourite authors of such people; or, in other words, he would have reason to reject them in the sense wherein they are at bottom understood and admired by such people.—The writer professes to agree with the apostles, so do these people, so also do Roman Catholics and Scotch covenanters; but when they and he come

to explain themselves, they differ about the sense of almost every notable expression in the apostolic writings: yea, the apostles themselves are considered by some people as so many popes or cardinals, or rather as so many deities; and by others as so many political projectors of plans for national churches, and the dominion of the clergy; while the writer considers them only as so many self-denied witnesses for a truth, which neither flatters the pride of any man, nor yet yields any prospect of its ever prevailing in the world.—The like turn of reflection may easily be extended to the different notions men have of the character of the Messiah.

Remarkable has been the zeal for *piety and holiness*, which the doctrine exhibited in these Letters has awakened in the minds of the religious. The doctrine of unlimited mercy, scorning all the boasted distinctions among men, seldom or never fails to move the spleen of those who plume themselves most on their devout character, and have the words *piety, holiness*, and the like, most familiar in their mouths. The zeal of the most forward of this class, however much restrained in this land of liberty, does yet sufficiently shew itself to be of the same nature with the vaunted holiness of those who said, “For a good work we stone thee not,” but— for what? in one word, for impiety.

The writer has of late got many recent proofs, clearly shewing, how much our modern Pharisees reverence their renowned rabbies
above

above the scriptures. He has got abundant reason to conclude, that they would easily have indulged him in using great freedom with the gospel, had he only shewn greater deference to the revered names of the demi gods of his country. Moreover, by the general stupid surprise which they have openly avowed at the notion of a devout path to hell, they have shewn themselves no less inattentive to the New Testament, than their ancestors were to the Old, who had the assurance to say, *Search, and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*; though their own scriptures shewed not only that the *great light* was to shine in Galilee, but also, that the first prophet who preached repentance to the Gentiles, (even Jonah, whom Christ referred to as his corresponding sign,) was a Galilean.— As to the notion of a devout path to hell, the passages ascertaining and describing such a notion are too numerous to be quoted here. But if any of our modern Pharisees should think the inquiry worth their while, they may consult a concordance, at the word HELL. He who has not a concordance, may read the 23d chapter of Matthew's gospel.

The writer has no reason to be chagrined at his readers. He is sensible, he is by far too small an object for the resentment they have shewn. That which provokes them is well able to bear all the weight of their resentment. The cause is far from being his. He was never worthy to stand among the meanest retainers
to

to it: nor would it suffer any loss by the want of him; he only would be the loser.—He is likewise sensible, it would be very foolish in him, to attempt, by any reconciling methods, to sooth or allay that resentment; being persuaded, that the voice of Him, who, at the beginning of the world, ranging mankind into two classes, said, I WILL PUT ENMITY, &c. will as certainly have its constant effect to the end of it, as the Word which at first separated the waters from the dry land.—And though the cause of the disallowed Messiah * will never prevail

* It may not be improper here to take some notice of a memorable saying used by Christ for the instruction of his disciples, when they were anxious about how and where his kingdom was to appear, and after he had given them various cautions against imposition on that head. The saying runs thus. “Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Nothing could be more fitly chosen, than this similitude, to shew his disciples, how he would always be *disallowed of men*, yet *precious to them that believe*. What more nauseous to men, and what more inviting to eagles, than an exposed carcass? The latter are led, by the rich savour of the most delicious food, to resort with pleasure to that, wherein the former can perceive nothing but what is dispiriting and disgusting. Wherever Christ’s disciples, united only by his word, meet together to remember his death, as their only recommendation to the divine favour, there the power of his kingdom is manifest to them that believe; and wherever he shall at last descend from heaven, there all his redeemed will be gathered together, and there the majesty and power of his kingdom will be visible to all. Let the sacrifice of Christ be

be

prevail in this mortal state, but remain *as a bruised reed, and smoking flax*; yet all its numerous and powerful enemies shall never be able utterly to break or extinguish it. In the midst of weakness, poverty, and disgrace, it will continue to be supported by the secret aid of heaven, till the grand revolution shall take place, when the bruised reed shall become an *iron rod*, and the smoking flax a *flaming fire*. Then the cause, hitherto just not crushed, shall flourish and prevail effectually, and all its enemies be confounded with everlasting shame and contempt.

As the writer never had the honour to be a *reverend* gentleman, he has no title to urge on his neighbours his notion of the gospel, under pretence of his being vested with any commission, or bearing any message from heaven.—As
he

be divested of all the foreign considerations that have been added, in order to remove the disgust of men, and it will be found, that to talk of living *by that alone*, will prove as disagreeable to the religious world now, as of old; and provoke even many of the most serious to turn away, with something like the old complaint in their mouth, *This is an hard saying, who can bear it!* Yea, we are assured, that, with this same complaint in their mouth, many of those expressly called *his disciples, went back*, and, what is still more striking, *walked no more with him*. — The forementioned memorable saying likewise sets before us, in a very striking view, what a sovereign contempt Christ had for the applause of the world, and how careful he was to inspire his disciples with the same contempt, even while shewing his concern for their welfare in the tenderest manner.

he never had any pretensions to *priesthood*, it would be absurd in him to move them, by declaring how much he would offer, suffer, or intercede for their benefit.—As he stands perfectly on a level with them all as to the kingdom of heaven, he has no title to dictate to them, or assume any airs of authority over them; nor does it become him to quarrel with them for neglecting his creed: yea, he is well satisfied, that they run no risk by despising any thing that comes from him, provided they reverence their Maker, to whom alone they are accountable. On the other hand, they cannot reasonably grudge him the liberty of expressing himself with the utmost confidence in behalf of his own creed.—Again, as he is persuaded, it is not his business to consult the interest of religion, otherwise than by maintaining the truth of the gospel against all who corrupt it, and committing the success wholly to heaven, he has no reason to be greatly disconcerted at any opposition to his notion of that truth: all his readers then are very welcome, for him, to take their own choice, and treat it as they shall find occasion. Those who incline to reject it, have this to encourage them, that the great majority of those who have the first repute either for orthodoxy, godliness, or good sense, will always be ready to keep them in countenance in so doing. And as for the cause to which the writer professes himself a retainer, he can assure them that it is already as advantageously situated
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in the world as becomes it, so stands in no need of any of them.

Yet if one heartily approves his avowed notion, he must be desirous to see others persuaded the same way with himself; and this desire will naturally lead him, as occasion offers, to lay open the ground and reason of his persuasion. This the writer has done. Yet he is sensible it is impossible to satisfy many, who, in the face of the clearest evidence, will always resume the old complaint, *How long dost thou make us to doubt?—tell us plainly.* He is likewise sensible, it belongs only to God so to mould and dispose the minds of men, as to make them see things in their proper point of light, and accordingly understand them as they really are.—The approach of death commonly proves an effectual mean to rouse the attention of men to their real condition.—A gospel suited to the taste of the public, is apparently most advantageous in every stage of a man's life but the last.—Then nothing but the *disallowed* gospel can support his heart.—This would readily appear, if we could collect the suffrages of the dying.—All who admit the disallowed gospel, find the last stage of life in some sort made present to them; so they find themselves under a necessity of admitting it as the only shield from despair.—The great use of the gospel is, to serve as the cure of death and the tear that precedes it.—Those who have not been much pressed with the fear of death and its consequences, can
see

see very little in the gospel worthy of their attention, however much they may flourish and make fine speeches about it.

This Preface may properly enough be concluded with a summary view of the scope of the Letters, in the words of a motto, somewhere observed in a church.

———*Errantia lumina fallunt,
Cruce certa salus.*

Which may be Englished thus.

“ Each wand’ring light bewilder’d men betrays;
“ The cross alone salvation sure displays.”

March 1759.

* * * What further the writer has to say on occasion of this edition, may be seen in the *Appendix*.



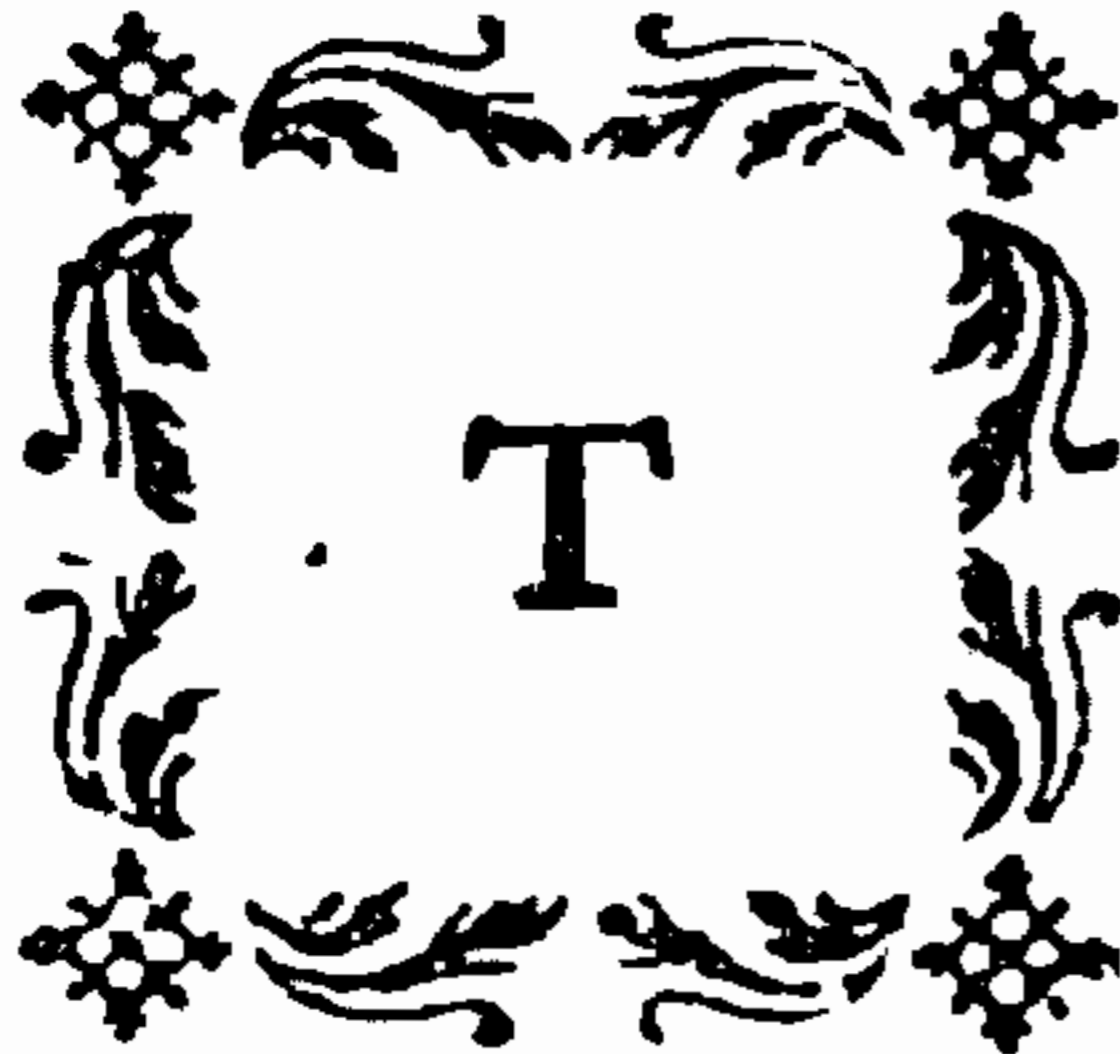
L E T T E R S

O N

THERON and *ASPASIO*.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

 HE uncommon, and therefore the more amiable zeal, shewn for the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, in your two volumes of *Meditations, &c.* and in your Sermon, intituled, *The cross of Christ the christian's glory*, afforded no small satisfaction to such as professed a hearty attachment to those doctrines, and filled them with the warmest prepossession in favour of any thing that should drop from your pen. It gave them pleasure, to see the grand article of the Christian religion, which, you now well say, “seems to be little understood, and less regarded, if not much mistaken and almost forgotten,” so warmly, and with such a winning address, maintained,
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in a book, which, on account of its various ornaments, readily insinuated itself into the hands of many who seldom think the more important truth worthy of their attention.

It could not fail to please all who worship, as their God and Saviour, Him who wrought that righteousness, to see you, in all your excursions through nature, making every thing that is beautiful, every thing that is grand in the creation, to serve as foils to the glory of his divine person, and to the importance of that service he has done for men. How different is your strain of reasoning here, from that of most of our religious philosophers? While they awaken our admiration at the number, magnitudes, and distances of the stars, and call up our attention to the wise and beneficial order of the universe, they employ all their eloquence to persuade us, that the grandest view of the divine Majesty, that the brightest display of his perfections, is to be found there. They would regulate our devotion, and animate our hopes, according to the character of Him which they are pleased to read us from thence. And all this, with a supercilious neglect of, and, as it were, in a contemptuous contrast to, that discovery of the divine perfections which was shown to men when God was made manifest in the flesh.

Though these gentlemen will look down upon you with an air of scornful pity on this account; yet you are sufficiently kept in countenance, by the unanimous voice of that order of intelligent beings, in comparison of whom
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the greatest philosophers must be considered as children and fools. The Angels, those attendants on the throne of the Most High, who were witnesses to the bringing of the creation into order; who saw his glory through the whole, and shouted for joy when it received the finishing touch; who, when the Saviour appeared, had the experience of several thousand years; and who had always been employed in messages about the concerns of men: They, surely, must be allowed to have the most intimate acquaintance with the works of God, and the quickest discernment of his glory therein: yet, in their song of praise, upon the appearance of Him who was born to die for men, while they point to Him as yet a babe lying in a manger, they plainly signify, that they now beheld more of the glory of God, than they had hitherto seen in all his works beside. Upon good authority, then, may you consider the greatest distances as contracting into a span, and the greatest magnitudes as shrinking into atoms, in comparison of the condescension that appears here. Though your sentiments here may seem to *sink* in the eyes of a few below; yet they receive the stamp of the true sublime, yea, I dare venture to say, of the only sublime, in the eyes of the innumerable company above.

But it is not my purpose to point out the many beautiful passages, and instances of the true sublime, that are to be found throughout your *Meditations*. I have said enough to shew with what a favourable bias I entered upon the

reading of *Theron and Aspasio*. And I had no sooner opened the book, than my appetite was whetted, by hearing, that the GRAND ARTICLE of THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS was to make the principal figure. And here I cannot forbear noticing, how pertinently you adduce the sense of a passage from WITSIUS *, with great propriety setting forth the strong influence that the doctrine of justification, according as it is well or ill stated, has upon the whole structure of the Christian religion. You will not then think it strange, if, while I read forward, my attention was chiefly awake to observe, if this doctrine was justly stated, according to its primitive simplicity, in opposition to the various ways wherein it has been artfully corrupted, and accommodated to the pride and lusts of men. And I may add, that such was my confidence in you, that I was disposed to allow you as ample freedom in writing, as the Roman dictator had in commanding, with this sole provision, that the *grand article* should suffer no detriment. Considering the excellency of this article, and that the least foreign mixture, like the dead fly in the precious ointment, deprives us of its genuine favour and benefit, we cannot be too cautious of its purity. The apostle of the Gentiles, writing to those of whom he had borne record, that the testimony of Christ

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* The passage referred to in WITSIUS, may not improperly be considered as a paraphrase or illustration of the designation which LUTHER, in his spirited manner, gave to that same doctrine, when he called it, *Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*.

was confirmed in them; to those whom he had espoused to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ; yet addresses them in this manner: *I am jealous over you with the jealousy of God.—I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ**. And I am apt to think, that, had you considered, with a more jealous eye, the writings of some popular preachers which you have read, the occasion of my present address to you might have been prevented. For I am willing to believe, that you have got your first taste of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity from higher and purer sources than these.

But not to detain you: so much were my fondest hopes gratified, in reading many of the Dialogues, by finding the grand article so clearly and warmly supported, that, though I met with scattered hints that somewhat alarmed my jealousy, yet, like one averse to believe what gives him pain, I was willing to overlook these, and to presume, that they did not enter into your leading design; till the Sixteenth Dialogue completed my disappointment. Then I was obliged to say, "Alas! how is the fine gold become dim!" Has our favourite author then at last so far lost

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* απλοτητος της εις τον Χριστον, *singleness toward Christ*. These words, as they stand in connection, must, I think, denote that simplicity, or singleness of affection toward the one husband, which is inconsistent with every the least unchaste desire toward any other.

fight of the imputed righteousness, as to mix another with it? Has he so embarrassed, or rather shut up our access to the divine righteousness, as to hold forth a preliminary human one, as some way expedient, or rather necessary, to our enjoying the comfort and benefit of it!

DEAR SIR, Having thus far opened my heart to you, it is necessary that I should now set before you the passages that compelled me, with regret, to speak as I have just now done. But before I proceed, I would first beg leave to consider you, rather as the author of that first-rate Sermon I mentioned above, than as a speaker in these Dialogues, and to address you accordingly, while I lay before you my complaint against ASPASIO. This liberty I beg on two accounts; first, for my ease in quoting from Dialogues; and then for my pleasure in writing, that I may, as much as possible, shun the disagreeable office of using the stile of an opponent directly, to one who has afforded me much pleasure, and never intended me any provocation.

Then let me add, that as I have the pleasure of agreeing with you in your just disregard of those terms, hatched in the schools, on pretence indeed of methodizing, but which have, in effect, served to obscure and confound the plain truths of the gospel; so do I likewise judge, that it would be very impertinent to abuse your patience, by animadverting upon words or forms of expression, where things of moment are not at stake. So that, however short I make my
 quota-

quotations, to avoid being tedious, my only aim is, to point at what I take to be the real meaning and tendency of the places from whence they are drawn.

Lastly, let it all along be remembered, that no man professing the Christian truth, can hold any error about that truth, without, at the same time, holding some double meaning of the words wherein that truth is delivered, whether he himself be aware of it or not.

In the small first edition, *vol. 3. p. 278.* THERON, repeating a definition of faith formerly given by ASPASIO, says, “*Faith, you say, is a*” “*real persuasion, that the blessed Jesus has shed*” “*his blood for me, fulfilled all righteousness in*” “*my stead,*” &c. Again, in *p. 286.* ASPASIO says, “—I would only maintain, that an *ap-*” “*propriation* of Christ is essential to faith; that” “*none* have the proper scriptural faith, but those” “*who* are taught by the enlightening Spirit to” “*say, He shed his blood for me.*”

Pag. 272—278. THERON, after agreeing with ASPASIO about the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, makes this complaint: “*But—* it” “*seems* to be quite out of my reach.” To obviate this complaint, ASPASIO inquires, “*Are you*” “*sensible* that you *need* this immaculate and perfect righteousness of our Saviour?” This being answered in the affirmative, is followed by another question, “*Do you earnestly desire* this” “*righteousness?*” which also receives the like answer; but still a tacit complaint remains couched in these words, “*And that would be a*

“ blessed day, a day greatly to be distinguished,
 “ which should bring it *near* to my view, and
 “ *home* to my soul.” ASPASIO, in his reply, after
 putting the case, of THERON being overtaken by
 a dark and tempestuous night, and arriving late
 at the house of some valued friend, addresses him
 thus: “ Was you not *willing* to gain admit-
 “ tance? &c. — The adored Immanuel pro-
 “ fesses himself *equally* willing to come unto you
 “ who hearken to his voice, and consent to his
 “ overtures; equally willing to make his abode
 “ with you, to manifest his glories in you, and
 “ communicate his merits to you.

“ *Ther.* I cannot open my heart. *Asp.* Christ
 “ has the key of DAVID, &c. Since you hunger
 “ after the Righteousness, and thirst for the Spirit
 “ of the crucified holy Jesus, he himself has
 “ pronounced you *blessed*. — *Ther.* Ah! my
 “ ASPASIO! I cannot believe; I feel my impo-
 “ tency. My mind is, as you formerly hinted,
 “ like the withered arm. *Asp.* It is no small
 “ advantage, THERON, to be convinced of our
 “ inability in this respect. This is, if not the
 “ beginning of faith, the sign of its approach;
 “ and shews it to be, if not in the soul, yet at
 “ the very door. — Fear not, my friend; he
 “ that bids you stretch out, will strengthen the
 “ withered arm. He first makes us sensible of
 “ our weakness, and then *fulfils all the good*
 “ *pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with*
 “ *power.*

“ Can you doubt of his willingness? — Since
 “ you are sensible of your impotence, beware of
 “ the

“ the *contrary* extreme. Because you cannot,
 “ by your own strength, exercise faith, let not
 “ this occasion a tame resignation of yourself to
 “ infidelity. You must endeavour, diligently
 “ endeavour to believe; and wait and pray for
 “ the divine Spirit. Though it is his office to
 “ testify of Christ, *and bring near the Redeemer’s*
 “ *righteousness*; yet his influences are not to su-
 “ percede, but to encourage our own efforts.—
 “ *Work out your own salvation with fear and*
 “ *trembling*; here is our duty: *for it is God*
 “ *that worketh in you both to will and to do*;
 “ here is our encouragement.

“ You was once, THERON, a zealous advocate
 “ for good Works. Now you seem to have
 “ abandoned your clients. Remember, my dear
 “ friend, what our Lord Jesus Christ says, *This*
 “ *is the work of God*, of all works most accepta-
 “ ble and most honourable to the divine Majesty,
 “ *that you believe on Him whom He hath sent*.

“ *Ther.* The true belief, according to your
 “ notion, ASPASIO, is so refined and exalted a
 “ virtue, that I very much question whether I
 “ shall ever be able to attain it.

“ *Asp.* If you are unable to attain it, is the
 “ Lord unable to give it? *Our sufficiency* for this,
 “ and every good work, is not in ourselves, but
 “ in God.”

Pag. 284. “ *Ther.* To trust in Christ as an
 “ all-sufficient Saviour, and rely on him for
 “ *whole* salvation, is not this real faith? *Asp.*
 “ If you trust in the all-sufficiency of his *will*,
 “ as

“ as well as of his power, you practise what I
 “ recommend.”

Pag. 297. “ *Ther.* If we feel an aversion to
 “ sin, and prize the blessed Jesus above all
 “ things; if the prevailing bias of our affections
 “ be to the divine Redeemer, and the habitual
 “ breathing of our souls after a conformity to
 “ his image; may we not suppose ourselves
 “ possessed of the *truth* and *reality*, though we
 “ have not the *confidence* and *rejoicing* of faith?
 “ —I say *we*, because I apprehend this is not
 “ my peculiar case, but common to myself and
 “ many others. I ask therefore, in their name
 “ and in my own, May we not suppose our
 “ condition safe, though we dare not presume to
 “ use the language of the spouse, *My beloved is*
 “ *mine, and I am his?* *Asp.*—Let these persons
 “ know, whatever their names or their circum-
 “ stances are, that they have as good a *right* to
 “ adopt the words you mention, as PHILENOR has
 “ to call these gardens his own. Yet they will
 “ do well to remember, that these qualifications,
 “ however amiable, are by no means the *ground*
 “ of their right. They are to advance their
 “ claim, and hold fast the blessing, not as men
 “ ornamented with fine endowments, but as
 “ poor, indigent, guilty sinners. For such the
 “ Saviour is provided, to such his benefits are
 “ proposed, and on such his grace will be mag-
 “ nified.”

Pag. 301. On occasion of THERON and ASPA-
 SIO taking shelter in the summer-house from a
 violent storm, Christ being fitly represented, as
a covert

a covert from the storm and from rain, ASPASIO proceeds thus: “If this is a proper emblem of Christ, to what shall we liken *faith*? To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer-house is *free* for our use? that we are welcome to avail ourselves of the commodious retreat? Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather? Would this keep us dry amidst the descending deluge? Would this bare persuasion, unless reduced to practice, be any manner of advantage to our persons? No, surely. We must actually fly to the shelter, and we must actually apply the Saviour; otherwise I see not what comfort or benefit can be derived from either.

“*Ther.* May I then, from this instant, look upon Christ, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness, and his precious death, as my *certain* inheritance? May I firmly believe, that, through this grand and immensely meritorious cause, I shall have pardon and acceptance, true holiness, and endless salvation? *Asp.* Why should you not believe all this *firmly*? You have the same reason to believe with a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of assiance. It is the free promise of the gospel addressed to sinners that warrants the latter; and the very same promise authorises the former.”

HAVING now quoted enough at present, I shall here make a stand. And before I proceed to a more particular notice of the several passages,

ages, I cannot help reflecting with regret on the many artifices that have been devised by some, and unwarily adopted and propagated by others, serving to throw a mist betwixt the eyes of men, and the glory of that righteousness which delivers from death; serving to confound and perplex their minds about the way of enjoying the unspeakable comfort therein laid open to the guiltiest of mankind, in their most desperate circumstances; serving, in short, to render of none effect the gospel of our salvation. I speak not of those who have employed their weapons against the person and work of Christ, endeavouring to make us lose sight of him as a divine person, and of his acting as the substitute and representative of sinners in the whole of his obedience unto death; such as have got any taste of the good word of God, are not in the greatest danger of being subverted by these: but I speak of those teachers, who, having largely insisted on the corruption of human nature, concluded the whole world guilty before God, eloquently set forth the necessity of an atonement, zealously maintained the scriptural doctrine concerning the person and work of Christ; yet, after all, leave us as much in the dark as to our comfort, as if Jesus Christ had never appeared; and mark out as insuperable a task for us, as if he had not finished his work; while, with great assiduity and earnestness, they are busied in describing to us, animating us with various encouragements, and furnishing us with manifold instructions, how to perform that strange something which

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is to make out our connection with Christ, and bring his righteousness home to us; that something which has got many names, and includes divers considerations; all which have been supposed to be comprehended under the scriptural expression FAITH; as to which, after all they have told us about it, we are at as great a loss to tell distinctly what it is, or what we are doing when we perform it, if not greater, than when they began.

Though, by all who believe the scriptures, the power and cunning of the prime enemy of mankind, whose work stands in direct opposition to the Spirit of truth, must be acknowledged to be very active in promoting and enforcing the influence of all those glosses on the scriptures, by which the minds of men have been darkened about that blessed truth which contains the only ground of hope for them, and by which they have been furnished with directions setting them to work to do something, under whatever name, to make up their peace with God: yet, at the same time, it must be owned, that all this sort of doctrine draws its origin from a very broad and deep root in depraved human nature, from a principle firmly settled in the heart of every fool and of every philosopher. Hence it is that Christianity can never become popular in any nation, unless it be taught in such a manner as to leave room for the gratification of this common principle; and hence it is that philosophers will always have a copious fund of arguments against it, and will always despise it as
unsuitable

unsuitable to nature ; though the wisest and best of them, according to the history of human nature given us by its author, possess it only in its depraved condition, and can have no opportunity of observing it in others but in that same condition.

IN order to have a proper view of this common principle, we must trace it to its source, and consider man in his first condition. The scripture then gives us to understand, that when man was created, and paradise fitted up for him, he was framed to live, or enjoy the divine favour, by his own righteousness. He was not made like other animals, to live by his food alone : he was framed to know his dependence on his Creator, to hear his voice, and obey it ; and thus to be conscious of his favour, so long as he was conscious of having done nothing to deserve the loss of it. So we find he received his food by a formal grant from the voice of God, and, included in that grant, a command to be a test of his loyalty and dependence : and his obedience was to be the security of all his happiness. If it be inquired, what was the language of nature then, as to the concerns of man with God ? we must say, that God was very profuse in his gifts, and no less peremptory in his commands ; that he was very kind to the obedient, and no less severe to the transgressor : we must say, that man could have no hope of any further friendly correspondence with him, if once his righteousness was stained with one act of disobedience.

And

And the condemnation that has since followed, of all mankind to death, for one single transgression, and that not of what is called moral, but of a positive precept, is a standing proof of the extent of the divine displeasure against sin.

When man became a sinner, nature could point out no way of relief for him. Every attempt now to become righteous before God, and much more every imagination that God would assist him in any such attempt, came to be criminal in man, not only as defective in respect of the main principles that constitute a good work, but also as carrying in it a dishonourable reflection upon his Creator and Judge, as if he could be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness stained with sin*. Yet as, by his original constitution, he was framed to live by his own righteousness, and to enjoy an happy earthly life as its reward; and as he knows no other supports against despair, he still retains the strongest propensity toward both these. And though disappointment has hitherto attended all his attempts this way; yet his pride still flatters him with the prospect of better success, by means of new improvements in his attempts.

This propensity, this common principle in all men, must now be considered as nature corrupted;

* Notwithstanding what is above said, I am far from thinking, that any honest or sincere attempt to please God ever failed of success. Yea, I am ready to shew, that all objections and impediments have been, by a particular divine edict for that purpose, removed and dispensed with in favour of all who are sincerely well disposed, whenever they shall be found.

ed; and it is from this source that we find the scripture deducing all the corruption that is in the world.

Every scheme of religion devised by men, has been contrived for the gratifying of this principle: and from hence every corruption of that religion which came from heaven takes its rise. But when I reflect to whom I am writing, I find myself eased of the trouble of insisting on the manifold proofs that might be adduced for this: for every one who agrees with the apostle in saying, *Far be it*! that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*, must see how opposite the gospel is to this universal bias, this corruption of nature.

Every doctrine then which teaches us to do, or endeavour any thing toward our acceptance with God, stands opposed to the doctrine of the apostles; which, instead of directing us what to do, sets before us all that the most disquieted conscience can require, in order to acceptance with God, as already done and finished by Jesus Christ. What Christ hath done, is that which pleases God; what he hath done, is that which quiets the guilty conscience of man as soon as he knows it: so that whenever he hears of it, he
has

* Μη γενοιτο. As this Greek phrase is commonly used by Paul, to repel with abhorrence some reflection against the divine character, there is a manifest impropriety in applying the phrase given by our translators to such cases; as when the reflection is signified thus, *Is God unrighteous?* to repel it by saying, *God forbid.* And all the cases wherein Paul uses the Greek phrase, will be found to be nearly akin to this.

has no occasion for any other question but this, Is it true or not? If he finds it true, he is happy; if not, he can reap no comfort by it. If then we slight the comfort arising from the bare persuasion of this, it must be owing, at bottom, to our slighting this bare truth, to our slighting the bare work of Christ, and our considering it as too narrow a foundation whereon to rest the whole weight of our acceptance with God. Whereas all Christians of the same stamp with PAUL, can never see it in too bare a light, and are ready to say, Far be it! that we should glory, save in the cross, where that work was finished.

On the other hand, if the sinner finds his first glimps of comfort, his first ray of hope, from any other source; if he finds any good motions already begun in his heart, and finds reason to consider God as seconding and forwarding such motions; then his friendly correspondence with God is already begun: for he finds he has already begun to move in a course wherein he is favoured and assisted by God. And it may well be affirmed, that by whatever means his friendly correspondence with God is begun, much more may it be carried on and perfected by the same or the like means. For as he improves in goodness, he has still more reason to look for fresh supplies of assistance from God, than in his first feeble and doubtful attempts. Even as all who glory only in the cross, and have got their first taste of peace with God from the bare work finished there, may well reason in this manner,

Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Whatever doctrine then teaches us to think, that our friendly correspondence or acceptance with God is begun by our own good endeavours, seconded by the divine aid, or even first prompted by the divine influence, leads us to look for acceptance with God by our own righteousness: for whatever I do, however assisted or prompted, is still my own work; otherwise the most common actions of life could not be called our own, seeing in all these we must still acknowledge our dependence on God, in whom "we live, move, and have our being." Agreeably to what is now said, we may find Philosophers and Pharisees, both ancient and modern, in the height of their self-applause, acknowledging divine assistance, and ready to agree in using language like this, *God, I thank thee for my excellency above other men.*

We must begin our religion then as we would end it. Our acceptance with God, first and last, must rest intirely on the work finished by Jesus Christ on the cross; or we must betake ourselves to what many call the Religion of Nature, and what God warrants us to call the religion of pride, as being no less opposite to the law of nature, than to the gospel.

But it is now time that we should hear ASPASIO. He tells us, "Faith is a real persuasion that
"Christ died *for me.*"

This account of faith given us by ASPASIO, seems to me somewhat to resemble the arch of a
bridge

bridge thrown over a river, having the one end settled on a rock, and the other on sand or mud, so needing a great many subsidiary props to support its own weight; and which after all is liable to be undermined by every land-flood or swell of the river; and therefore the traveller had need to be cautious how he ventures upon it.

That Christ died, that he gave his life a ransom for many, is indeed a truth fully ascertained in the scriptures, and established there, firm as a rock, for the relief of the shipwrecked and the desperate; yea, many finding rest here, have been determined to follow Christ, at all hazards, having no other reason to give for their attachment, but, *Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

That Christ died *for me*, is a point not so easily settled: and therefore I am not surprised to find ASPASIO labouring hard, with much eloquence and skill, to establish it by a variety of props; and after all very ready not only to pardon, but also to sympathize with his friend, upon his remissness and inactivity to come up to it.

This is a point which the scripture no where ascertains; so far from it, that it often affirms the final perdition of many, not merely hearers of the gospel, but who have heard and received it with joy; yea, of those who have made such progress, that their only deficiency is, that their fruit came not to perfection. It affirms, that such as have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the

good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, may yet fall away irrecoverably. Yea it declares, in passages plainly pointing to zealous professors of Christianity, that "wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth unto destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; that strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" yea, that notwithstanding their great confidence about their acquaintance with Christ, and their interest in him, and their experience of his presence with them, he will at last say unto them, *I never knew you, depart from me.* When they are condemned then as hypocrites and unbelievers, they are not condemned for want of ASPASIO's faith; and that for these two reasons: The first is, It was never true that Christ died for them; the second is, They were not faulty in this respect; for the sacred text describes them as rather too confident about their interest in Christ.

The gospel proposes nothing to be believed by us, but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not. For shall our unbelief make the faith or veracity of God of none effect? Far be it! "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one of his words shall fall to the ground." The gospel, which foretels the final perdition of so many of its hearers, so many seriously and zealously exercised about it, can never warrant us to persuade every one who hears it, to believe that Christ died for him; unless we shall say that
Christ

Christ died for every individual of mankind, and consequently that none of mankind owe their salvation wholly to his death.

Though I do not see how ASPASIO's account of faith can be maintained without saying this, yet I would be far from charging a consequence of my drawing, upon ASPASIO, as his doctrine. Though in his beginning to persuade the young EUGENIO to be a Christian, he directly affirms to him, that Christ died for him, *vol. I. p. 237.* I would rather choose to look on this as spoken by way of ingratiating address, to gain the young gentleman's favourable attention, or on account of some amiable disposition he had observed about him, than to conclude from thence that ASPASIO would affirm the same thing to every individual of the human race.

ASPASIO's favourite poet seems to me to be more consistent with himself on this point; for he roundly maintains, that Christ died, as well for infidels as for believers, as well for the damned as for the saved. Addressing infidels, he says,

*And was the ransom paid? it was: and paid
(What can exalt the bounty more?) for you*.*

Night IV:

C 3

Pointing

* I presume that the emphatic *you*, so often repeated in an address to the wicked in the close of the sermon, intitled, *The cross of Christ the Christian's glory*, is not to be understood in the like extent as in the Night-thoughts. "Look unto the crucified Jesus, why does he hang on that bloody tree? why is his flesh rent with irons? It is for *you*, sinners, for *you*. That blood is poured out to cleanse *you* from guilt. Those wounds are sustained to heal *your* consciences."

Here

Pointing to CAIAPHAS at the last judgment.
*Mistaken CAIAPHAS! ah! which blasphem'd
 Thou or thy pris'ner? which shall be condemn'd?
 Well mightst thou rend thy garments, well exclaim,
 Deep are the horrors of eternal flame!
 But God is good! 'tis wondrous all! ev'n he
 Thou gav'st to death, shame, torture, dy'd for thee.*
 Last Day, Book II.

Describing the horrors of the damned.

*Ab! mercy! mercy! art thou dead above?
 Is love extinguish'd in the Source of love?
 Bold that I am, did heav'n stoop down to hell?
 Th' expiring Lord of life my ransom seal?
 Have I not been industrious to provoke?
 From his embraces obstinately broke? Ibid. III.*

According to him, then, the damned are originally as much interested in the death of Christ as the saved; and if we inquire what constitutes the difference, or to what the happy state of the latter is originally owing, we may gather it from such lines as these.

*Nature delights in progress, in advance
 From worse to better: but when minds advance,
 Pro-*

Here I beg leave to make one obvious reflection, that when one imitates the style of his favourite author on a point about which they think differently, some care ought to be taken to note the difference of sentiments.

*Progress in part depends upon themselves.
Heav'n aids exertion; greater makes the great;
The voluntary little lessens more.
O be a man! and thou shalt be a God!
And half self-made!—ambition how divine!*

Night IX.

Addressing man.

*—Dread eternity has sown her seeds
Of bliss and wo in thy despotic breast;—
Heaven and hell depend upon thy choice. Ibid.*

Addressing LORENZO.

*And JUST are all, determin'd to reclaim;
Which sets that title high within thy reach. Ibid.*

After expressing aversion to insist on the torments awaiting the wicked, he addresses the Muse thus :

*But rather, if thou know'st the means, unfold
How they with transport may the scene behold.
Ah how! but by repentance, by a mind
Quick and severe its own offence to find?
By tears, and groans, and never-ceasing care,
And all the pious violence of prayer?*

Last Day, Book II.

*—Reason rebaptiz'd me when adult,
Weigh'd true and false in her impartial scale;
My heart became the convert of my head.*

Reason *pursu'd* is faith;

Reason *the root, fair faith is but the flower.*

Night IV.

'Tis guilt alone can justify his death;

Nor that, unless his death can justify

Relenting guilt in heav'n's indulgent sight.

If sick of folly I relent, he writes

My name in heaven, with that inverted spear

(A spear deep-dipt in blood!) which pierc'd his side,

And open'd there a font for all mankind,

Who strive, who combat crimes, to drink and live.

This, only this, subdues the fear of death. Ibid.

These lines, and many others to the same purpose, need no comment; we need not wonder, then, that a poet so nervous in his diction, and so bold in his images, and whose leading sentiment in religion is so agreeable to the universal bias, should be very acceptable to the public, and that the press should scarcely supply the demands for his writings.

In this author, we have a lively instance, shewing us, to what heights men may go in fervent expressions, and even rapturous sentiments, about the atonement; while yet they consider all the grand things revealed concerning it only as so many good and excellent materials to work upon, in order to establish their own righteousness, and attain some distinguishing qualification beyond others for acceptance with God; or, in fewer words, while yet they con-

sider

sider them only as a proper footstool for human pride. What uninspired man ever expressed a bolder sentiment about the atonement than what is contained in these lines?

My heart! awake.

What can awake thee, unawak'd by this,

Expended Deity on human weal? Night IV.

Yet, perhaps, it will appear in the sequel, that mistakes about the divine grace manifested in the atonement, mistakes far less obvious and glaring than those of this author, have proved the fatal means of utterly excluding such as entertained them, from partaking of the great and eternal benefit conveyed by that grace to all who know and understand it in simplicity.

Having now begun to enter upon my plea with ASPASIO, I shall here put an end to this Letter, and subscribe myself, with great respect,

Dear S I R,

Your friend and servant.

L E T T E R

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

THUS I am still led to address you, from the endearing view I have of you in the sterling part of your creed; though I must own I should have held you much dearer, had I found your faith first and last fit to bear the apostolic stamp; the stamp which the apostles put on the faith of the first Christians, whom they addressed thus: "To them who have obtained *ΙΣΟΤΙΜΟΝ*, equally precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Yet as the precious metal disentangles itself from the vile in the furnace, I am not without hopes that your faith, on a proper trial, may work itself clear of the ingredients that sink its value. This I may hope from the great excellency of divine truth above human artifice, and its genuine abhorrence of every mixture.

Since I wrote my last, I have been taking a fresh view of the Dialogues and Letters, that I might the better assure myself of ASPASIO's real meaning; for the same end I have been looking again at the two volumes of *Meditations*, &c. presuming, that ASPASIO's meaning could receive no hurt by any illustration drawn from thence; and I must own, that while I made my survey, such was the effect of the XVIth Dialogue, that it seemed like a dark cloud arising in the west,
and

and extending itself eastward, till it makes all the beauties of the morning to languish, and damps the hopes excited by the chearful dawn; or like the chilling influence of the torpedo, which benumbs the hand and arm of him who touches it. Many glowing pages seemed to abate their fervour, and many nervous expressions to lose their natural vigour; or perhaps it will be said, that when once the eye is tinged, every object begins to appear in a more disadvantageous light: but whatever be the cause, such was the effect.

I found evident marks of one spirit breathing through the whole. I cannot therefore agree with the suspicion I have heard hinted by some of your fondest readers, that you had drunk out of some impure fountain since the writing of the two volumes of Meditations, &c. and far less with others, who have dated your change of sentiments since the writing of the two first volumes of Dialogues. After all, I must do you the justice to own, that I find the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion, the capital point, making a more striking and distinguishing figure in your writings, than in any that I have seen of the popular ministers, for some of whom you profess the highest regard. But never did the ancient proverb hold truer in any case than in this, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. In most of their practical writings and sermons, I perceive the leaven almost at every opening of the book, but more especially when they come to make their *applications*, where I can find little beside. In yours I shall only say, I wish I had

had

had not found it at all. This is that leaven of which Jesus called his disciples to *beware*, even those disciples who had learned their religion from the very lips of the object of worship, and whose faith he had, by his approbation, stamped as genuine and divine.

Can any of us now imagine that we stand in less need of that caution than they did? But the great difficulty is, to persuade us, that our danger is equal to what theirs was. All the names and designations under which the ancient opposers and underminers of the truth are pointed forth to us in the scriptures, are now held odious, especially by such as walk in their very footsteps; in like manner, almost every notable expression by which the truth is asserted and illustrated in the scriptures, has been stripped of the ancient simplicity of its meaning; not only so, but almost every passage of scripture has been dislocated, and every clause or verse regimented according to the fancy of self-seeking men, in their several systems.

If I should say, that our modern demagogues have done more hurt to the souls of men, than all those stigmatized with the name of infidel writers have done together, the reflection would be thought odious. I should be referred to many passages in their treatises, asserting almost every branch of the Christian doctrine, in words not easily to be contradicted; and though I might fairly shew a complete system of self-dependence to be contained in these same treatises, yea to be the leading scope and design of them; yet it is
easy

easy to see that such a discovery, or any attempt toward it, would meet with the greatest opposition from all who feed on this compound doctrine, especially from those who have the largest share of religious pride. For men do not choose to be scared away by arguments from the food which they love best.

If you should throw some handfuls of barley among ever so great a quantity of pearls, the poultry will indeed resort to the pearls; but it is their natural food that draws them: and if they should swallow a few of the pearls, it is only as they sometimes do gravel, for the better digestion of their food; for it is the barley that fattens them. And well do the pastors I speak of know how to season and mix up the Christian truth with proper ingredients to suit the taste of the people, and the people accordingly flock in multitudes after them: or, to express myself in a more obsolete stile, *They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

That I may not seem to have disjointed this ancient saying from its context, I would have it noticed, that the chief thing aimed at there is, to make us cautious of hearkening to every spirit or doctrine, by which men pretend to assure themselves of the favour of God, or that Christ abideth in them. The sacred writer, after shewing us by what spirit he and his fellows were assured of this, adds, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.* Then giving us several rules to judge by, he sums them up in these words, *We (the apostles) are*

are of God: he that knoweth God, beareth us; he that is not of God, beareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Keeping then this rule in our view, let us return to the examination of ASPASIO.

I WOULD willingly know by what authority ASPASIO calls every one to believe that Christ died for him. The scripture no where says, that Christ died for such a one who now for the first time hears the gospel: What then shall persuade him that it is true?

Will the grave affirmation and earnest call of a devout and revered preacher be of any weight in this matter?

Or is this a point whose truth or certainty is made out by the pains taken to believe it?

Or does the Spirit that breathes in the scripture, whisper any thing privately to the hearer in confirmation of this, beside what he publicly speaks in the scripture?

Perhaps it will be found upon inquiry, that the *appropriation* in question is supported by a concurrence of all these imaginations; and not only so, but is also subservient to several purposes extremely foreign to the design of the gospel.

As to what is hinted in the first of these three queries, seeing ASPASIO is not one of what is called the *sacred* order himself, what I have to say on this head will more immediately regard those of that order, who have taught or encouraged him in his account of faith, and whose honour is not a little concerned in it; especially
such

such distinguished leaders of the people as escort him at the foot of his page; leaders who have been considered as *burning and shining lights* in that part of the island where they lived, by multitudes who yet rejoice in their writings. And it must be owned, that when the honour of the Clergy is intertwined with any error about the truth, and there are few wherein it is not more or less interested, it becomes then the more difficult to disentangle the simple truth from the rubbish wherein it is buried.

Do not imagine that I am going to shock your delicacy, by entering upon the trite topics of wit against the Clergy, by which the mirth of every fool is promoted: no, my plea is of a graver nature; and I am the rather encouraged by the singular modesty which appears in your writings, to express myself with freedom to you on this subject.

What I have chiefly in view, is the great hurt done to the consciences of many, in their most serious moments, by those leaders, who, along with what they tell the people about Jesus Christ, have the address to insinuate into their minds, a high sense of their own importance; to insinuate did I say? yea to maintain it with a high hand, and to proclaim it with as great solemnity as any part of the gospel; by which means they have a great advantage over the minds of the people, and have it in their power to mold and fashion the gospel according to their pleasure.

There is no occasion for a very nice survey of their writings in order to evince the spirit of their doctrine;

doctrine; we have the old striking rule to judge by, *So we preached, and so ye believed.* The apostles refer us to the *faith* and *practice* of such as were influenced by them, as palpable proofs of the spirit of their doctrine; so, in the case before us, we may easily perceive the spirit of our modern leaders, as it breathes and acts in multitudes who are influenced by it. And among such of their followers as are most deficient, even in their kind of devotion, we may, at least, perceive a very devout regard to the preacher, which is a manifest proof of his steady attention to one favourite point.

But perhaps it will be required, What has all this to do with ASPASIO'S account of Faith? We shall see presently.

Many popular preachers have considered themselves as a kind of factors, or rather ambassadors for God, commissioned and impowered by him to make *offers* of Christ and all his benefits unto men, upon certain terms, and to assure them of the benefits on their complying with the terms. Accordingly they have not been negligent in setting forth the *dignity* of their character in this view, and they have plumed themselves not a little upon the offer they had to make, making frequent repetition of this their offer with great parade. But any one who reads the New Testament with tolerable attention, may see that there is as little foundation for any such offer, as there is for bestowing the title of God's *ambassador* on any man since the days of the apostles.

The

The apostles were witnesses for God concerning Jesus of *Nazareth*; they laid before men the infallible proofs, arising from their own knowledge, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament, *shewing that Jesus is the Christ*. The effect of this was, that some believed, and conformed with the apostles; and some disbelieved, and opposed them. The apostles then proclaimed a truth openly in the hearing of all men. And if it be still pleaded, that they made *offers*, we shall very willingly say, that they offered evidence for all that they testified; yea, that they not only offered, but freely produced it, let men make what use of it they would. They were *witnesses* for God to men, but they never bargained for God with men, however much some scriptural metaphors have been strained to that purpose. They never taught men to put forth any act, or to make one step of advance toward God, on the prospect that God would condescend and come down * the rest of the infinite distance to meet them. This was neither suitable to their office, nor to the honour of that God whose character they drew. As to ordinary teachers, or ministers of the gospel, it is well if they be able to declare the simple truth, as contained in the writings of the apostles, and maintain it in opposition to every lie that men would endeavour to mix with it, in order to undermine it. This will procure honour enough to them in the minds of those who love that

VOL. I. D truth;

* *The rest of the infinite distance*; the impropriety of this expression must be laid to the account of the doctrine here opposed.

truth ; and such teachers will be far from assuming an air of importance over others, as if they had any thing to *offer* to them more than the meanest lover of the truth has, who will be ready, as occasion requires, to offer any man an account of the *evidence* by which he himself is convinced of the truth.

The preachers, whose honour is concerned in what they call the *gospel-offer*, commonly take hold of the promises of the gospel, which it is easy to shew are made only to believers ; and by the dint of their authority, with the help of a little art, extend them to all their hearers without distinction. And to obviate the difficulty, “ How shall I know that the promise is to me, “ or that Christ died for me ?” they address their hearers in this manner. “ We are the ambassa- “ dors of God, to us the word of reconcilia- “ tion is committed. We are sent and commis- “ sioned to bring Christ near to sinners, and sin- “ ners near to Christ. We make an offer of “ Christ and all his benefits to you, and you, “ and you ; in the Name of the great God, We “ declare, that the promise is to thee, and thee, “ O man, woman, whosoever thou art ; in his “ Name we call you this moment to stretch “ forth the withered hand and the withered “ heart, and take hold of Christ, saying, *He is “ mine, and I am his.*”

I give here only a short specimen of what is to be found at large interwoven in almost all their Sermons ; and I am sensible they would as soon allow any article of the Christian doctrine to be
attacked,

attacked, as suffer this their *offer* to be called in question. We may find them busy in moving questions, and warmly disputing with one another about the nature and extent of Christ's death, trying which of them shall lay the most convenient foundation for their universal *offer*, and the particular application or appropriation connected with it; but this same *offer*, so highly serviceable to their extravagant pride, is like to be one of the last things they will entertain a doubt of.

These men, it must be owned, receive no small encouragement to their spiritual pride from their public standards of doctrine; affirming, that, "the Spirit of God maketh *the reading*, "but *especially the preaching* of the word, an "effectual means—unto salvation;" that is, God concurs with the preaching of the apostles, which can only be heard now by the reading of their writings, but especially with the preaching of our modern ministers. And thus far I am disposed to agree with their public standards for once, that I frankly acknowledge, that their Sermons are, by far, better adapted to the purpose of setting the minds of the people in motion to do something toward their peace with God, than the writings of the apostles, which in this respect must appear extremely insipid. Accordingly I find our most popular preachers, after they have given various motives and directions for stretching forth the withered hand, commonly enforcing them with this earnest and pressing call, "Up therefore, and be doing."

Agreeable to what has been said, we find that the *gospel-offer*, or the *universal-offer*, or as it is sometimes called with great propriety, the *ministerial-offer*, has been admitted as a fixed and uncontroverted stile, in place of the ancient apostolic stile, the *record*, the *witness*, or the *testimony of God*; and the embracing or accepting of an *offer*, with all the formalities and requisites necessary to constitute a genuine acceptance, has come in place of *believing the record*, or *crediting the testimony* of God.

The preachers I speak of seem to be sensible of the difficulty there is in laying a sure foundation for every one of their hearers to conclude, that Christ died for him; and they suppose that the same difficulty must press the minds of their hearers, as is evident from the many objections which they put in their mouths, not easy to be answered: however, after they have laboured the point sufficiently, and have done their best to set the minds of the people in motion, they boldly declare, by virtue of all the titles and all the authority with which they are clothed, that they are bound to *believe* this, otherwise they shall *perish* eternally. Such a declaration must be of considerable weight with people who are used to have their hearts affected, and their religious conduct influenced, more by the preaching of their minister, than by the words of God in the scriptures.

ASPASIO, unadorned with any religious title or dignity, is indeed far from assuming any airs
of

of importance; yet in his zeal for the doctrine of these ministers, or in the warmth of his friendship for THERON, he seems to go a step beyond them in *asserting* upon this point. He affirms to THERON, while yet an unbeliever, or an opposer of the IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS, that “the obedience of Christ was wrought out in his name, and in his stead.” So we find THERON, who had been opposing the imputed righteousness in the Thirteenth *Dialogue*, ruminating on this assertion of ASPASIO, in his soliloquy at the beginning of the Fourteenth *Dialogue*: “— ASPASIO urges me to fly, without any delay, to the covert of Christ’s meritorious obedience. This, he says, was wrought out in my name, and in my stead: this will be admitted both at the throne of grace and the bar of judgment, as *my* justifying righteousness.”

Now the above-mentioned ministers, at least the two celebrated gentlemen who flourished lately, to whom we are referred for the fullest account of ASPASIO’S doctrine about conversion and faith, will not allow this assertion of ASPASIO to be true or certain with respect to any man till once he *believes* it. They would not have affirmed to THERON, before he believed, that Christ died for him; but they would have affirmed to him, that it was his duty to believe so; and they would have strongly encouraged him to make a bold venture to exert an act of faith to that end; assuring him, that the truth and certainty of this matter would some how turn out

clear and evident in his believing it. And thus I find some propriety in the term which they have chosen to express their belief by, when they call it *the appropriating act of faith*; that is, an act by which I am enabled to conclude that to be mine, which could not appear to be so by any evidence, till once I exerted that act.

Hence we see, that, according to them, *This is mine*, or, *This was done for me*, is a truth whose evidence takes its rise from the *pains* that I take to believe it; or it is a proposition, which begins to deserve the name of truth, when I begin to believe it, and not till then. This, I must say, is indeed a very strange and uncommon way of finding truth; and they themselves acknowledge as much, while they call it “a mystery which we cannot comprehend or account for.”

The fore-cited assertion of ASPASIO to the unbelieving THERON, would indeed remove the difficulty, and afford a very intelligible foundation for faith, provided it were supported by any sort of evidence, or enforced by sufficient authority. But I cannot help thinking, that such an assertion makes but a very naked and defenceless appearance, from the mouth of the modest and untitled ASPASIO.

I made a shift formerly, the best way I could, to account for ASPASIO's making the like assertion to the young EUGENIO; but I would not choose to account for him in that manner often. I was then, and still am, very loth to charge ASPASIO with maintaining, that Christ died for any but those who shall be eternally saved by him

him; for if he died for them who perish, then the happiness of them who are saved must be owing to something else beside his death. And then it behoved me to look on all that ASPASIO has said about the necessity and excellency of the imputed righteousness, as words without meaning. Christ, speaking of himself as the good shepherd, says, John x. *I lay down my life for the sheep.* But to unbelievers he says, *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.* How then can ASPASIO say to any not hearing Christ's voice and following him, that they *are* of his sheep, for whom he laid down his life?

IF I look for an illustration of ASPASIO's meaning in the two volumes of *Meditations*, I find there * a way of speaking, for which, I must at least say, I find no foundation in the scriptures. That I may not be led away too far from my purpose, I shall only copy a sentence or two from the note on these words. "The first ADAM
" being disinherited, the second ADAM † was
" appointed heir of all things, visible as well as
" invisible." The note proceeds thus:

† Heb. i. 2. "In this sense, at least, Christ is
" the Saviour of all men. The former and latter
" rain; the precious fruits of the earth; food to
" eat, and raiment to put on;—all these he pur-
" chased, even for his irreclaimable enemies.—
" The Christian should ever keep in mind his

* Vol. I. p. 146, 147. Ninth Edition, 1752.

“forfeiture of them, and the price paid to re-
 “deem them.”

This way of speaking favours much of the Jewish apprehensions about their Messiah.— And, since the corruption of Christianity has taken place, the bulk of its professors have been ready to acknowledge a Messiah assisting them in the recovery of their righteousness, and removing, more or less, their forfeiture of earthly happiness. But all this is quite foreign to the gospel; which shews, that Christ’s people suffer the punishment of ADAM’s sin, as well as other men: yea, it sets forth the certainty of their hope, by this argument, “That they shall as effectually partake of the reward of Christ’s righteousness, as they suffer the penalty of ADAM’s transgression.” Compare what is said, *Rom. v.* with *1 Cor. xv. 22.* We had best take care, then, how we weaken the latter point, lest we undermine the former; lest, seeking to open a window to let in more light upon the life that now is, we darken the prospect of that which is to come. And if we look to the matter of fact, we shall find the apostles themselves, who, we are sure, were the favourites of heaven, acknowledging, that, take away the life to come, the balance, in point of happiness, lay much in favour of unbelievers; as is evident from the chapter last referred to, and from the whole of the New Testament.

The first Christians were distinguished from other men, not by any greater share of earthly comforts, as must have been the case, if their
 pecu-

peculiar Redeemer, who says, *I pray for them, I pray not for the world*, had removed the forfeiture of them; but in their patiently submitting to that forfeiture, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ unto death, in the hope of eternal life from the dead; a life of quite a different nature from that which was forfeited: whereas other men, conceited of their own worth, are always shewing their dissatisfaction with the forfeiture, and struggling against it, according as they are impelled by their ambition, avarice, or other worldly lusts; and consequently must be disaffected to the gospel, which affirms the forfeiture, and makes it to be more especially felt and experienced by them who believe and obey it.

This topic calls to mind a remark I lately heard made by some of your readers, on the general air of your writings, "That you seemed desirous to have Christianity make a respectable appearance in *high life*." They seemed to be of the mind, that Jesus Christ would not have vied with you as to the elegant figure of the personages to be pitched upon for a specimen of his kingdom and subjects, considering what a strange contrast he once drew, in a parable recorded by *Luke*, chap. xvi. 19. The chief design of which seems to be, as hinted *ver.* 15. to give a standing portrait of what is most sightly in the eyes of God, and what is so in the eyes of men.

But the first words of the note, "In this sense, at least, *Christ is the Saviour of all men*," deserve my attention most at present, as they take
hold

hold of a text of scripture, and as they indicate some bias toward the sentiments of those, who, seeking to extend Christ's redemption beyond the limits fixed in scripture, do most effectually exclude all men from the benefit of it. Perhaps no words in the Bible have been oftener punned upon than these, *The Saviour of all men*. It will be proper, therefore, to quote the whole verse; *1 Tim. iv. 10. For therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.* If our translators had been as careful here to prevent punning, as they have been in many other places, this plain text had perhaps never been the subject of any dispute. I shall only produce, out of many, one instance of their caution from the Old Testament, and another from the New. In *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* they say, *O Lord, thou preservest man and beast*; instead of saying, *Thou SHALT SAVE man and beast.* In *Acts iv. 9.* they render the words of PETER thus: *If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole*; instead of saying, *by what means he is SAVED.* Had they shewed the same caution about the text in question, we should have had this plain truth before our eyes, That the living God is the preserver of all men, especially of those that believe; that he, who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, has a peculiar care about those who were redeemed from among men. And whatever way this peculiar care about them was exercised, one thing is evident,

evident, even from the very text in question, that it did not issue in making their lives less subject to pain and trouble than those of other men.

One thing remarkable as to this text is, the great inclination which many who have occasion to point at it, shew, to present us with a different form of expression from that used by the apostle: some choosing rather to use the name descriptive of the Son of God, as redeeming from the curse, saying, "Christ is the Saviour of all men;" others in the same view, "God in Christ is the Saviour," &c. What is the reason of all this shyness and aversion to speak as the apostle does? Is there any obscurity in his words? or have they any purpose in view which his words will not so conveniently answer? Are they afraid, lest any Christian will dream, that there is any other God but he who is made manifest in Christ? or are they afraid lest any Christian will scruple to say, that whatsoever things the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise? or does it not rather proceed from an inclination to give us some other view of the redemption which is by Christ, than the scripture gives?

Let us make a trial of their method of commenting here on other parallel passages of scripture, and see where it will carry us: only premising thus much, which every Christian will own, namely, That that divine person, who in due time was found in fashion as a man, and who was called CHRIST, or the ANOINTED, on
account

account of his being anointed of God with the Holy Spirit to attend him in fulfilling all righteousness, and redeeming from the curse; and on account of his being again anointed with that same Spirit as the oil of joy and gladness, in testimony of his having compleated his work; that that divine person, I say, made the world, and could with the greatest propriety say, as to all divine works, from the creation downward, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

In making the trial, I shall go no further than to a passage I lately glanced at, *Acts xvii. 24, 25.* Here I shall only vary the first word, and, instead of God, say, *Christ that made the world, and all things therein,—giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* Now, I freely declare, that my real purpose and intention, in this deviation from the words of the text, is to introduce the consideration of the Son of God as doing what he does, and giving what he gives, as the Redeemer from the curse of the law, mentioned *Galatians iii. 10.* and in virtue of the price of redemption which he paid

Having thus modeled my text, I proceed to deduce a few plain inferences. 1. Hence it is manifest, that all men, at least, are as much indebted to the Redeemer for their life and breath, as for all other things which they enjoy. 2. If then the enjoyments of all men are redeemed by a price, so are their lives. 3. Suppose enjoyments only are redeemed, yet the having of children has always been considered as none of the least of these; therefore all men are redeemed,

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ed, as having been once granted as children to their parents, the first pair only excepted. It is easy to see what a wide field is opened for imagination here; and how much wider it would be, if I should proceed to consider what would follow from saying in the same view, *Christ made the world, and all things therein*; and, *In Christ we live, move, and have our being, &c.*—But I forbear.

IN speaking of the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, we had need to keep clear of all human systems, and hold close by the scriptures. Jesus Christ, by the price of redemption, which he paid, delivers his people from the wrath to come, and he intitles them to *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away*; all the pains from which he delivers, are eternal, and so are all the blessings which he procures; every thing which takes place, by virtue of his redemption, is eternal; as he redeems not by corruptible things, when he redeems by laying down his own precious life, so nothing restored by his redemption can ever be subject to corruption. He is indeed appointed heir of all things, and the divine appointment hath put all things under his feet; but now we see not yet all things put under him. He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; but at present he rules in the midst of his enemies, until they be made his footstool. His people are comforted in the midst of their sufferings by the hope of what they see not, waiting for the redemption of their bodies, at the
resur-

resurrection, and for the restitution of all things, or the deliverance of the whole creation from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. I content myself at present with glancing at a few passages of scripture on this subject, as I go along; a more particular notice of them would lead me too far off from my plea with ASPASIO.

Some who espouse the doctrine of the two gentlemen above pointed at, as warmly as ASPASIO, finding some difficulty in pressing men to believe, what cannot be called true before it be believed, have fallen upon an expedient to ease themselves, not unlike what is asserted in the note we have been considering. They maintain, “That Christ satisfied so for the sins of all men, “as to procure many temporary benefits to them, “and so as ministers might have sufficient “ground to call every man to believe that “Christ died for him.” And to shew what absurdities would follow upon the denying of this, they say, “But now, if Christ in no sense died “for any but the elect, how are these *glad tid-* “*ings to every creature?* How shall these good “news, this great salvation, be offered unto “them through the blood of the Lamb, if he “in no sense satisfied for them?” Hereupon I shall only observe, that it must be extremely difficult for any who maintain the appropriation in question, to maintain at the same time the account which Christ himself gives of his death, and his peculiar connection with his people therein.

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This observation is confirmed to me, when I look into the sentiments of the adversaries of the above-mentioned expedient, who are as zealous for the ministerial *offer* and the *appropriation*, as their opponents. I find them indeed maintaining strongly, that in no sense Christ died for any but the elect; and yet at the same time affirming, as ASPASIO's two friends have taught them, that Christ, by his taking on him the human nature, stands related to the whole human race; yea roundly asserting, that he "doth stand in an " *equal or undistinguished* relation of a *Kinsman-Redeemer* to mankind-sinners, as such;" not considering what inference necessarily follows, namely, That he died for the eternal salvation of all with whom he partook in flesh and blood; not minding that the scripture says only, "he " partook in flesh and blood with the children " whom God *gave* him, even the many sons " whom he brings into glory." *Heb. ii.* For it no where says, that he partook in flesh and blood with any who shall perish. Now, in order to get over the knotty point of the appropriation, these men go to work thus. Speaking of " a person's *special saving interest in Christ and* " *his death*,—as being actually invested with his " justifying righteousness, and accepted in the " sight of God on that account;" they add, " which never becomes *true* in the case of any " *till* the moment of believing; for though a " person has sufficient grounds in the word of " grace, whereupon to believe this particular in- " terest in Christ and his death,—and though it " is

“ is never *true* in the person’s case till the time
 “ of his believing; yet this doth not make *the*
 “ *act the cause of its object*: only, according to
 “ to the mysterious order of grace, the Lord
 “ gives *truth* to that saving interest, *at the time*
 “ of faith’s applying Christ to the soul *.”

But to return to ASPASIO: I have said already, and still say, I am loth to charge him with flatly opposing the scriptural account of Christ’s death; I am rather disposed to think, that his views of this matter are somewhat unsettled and indistinct, which might occasion his expressing himself inaccurately at times, and who can guard himself against inconsistencies at all times? I presume he would not venture broadly to contradict the account which Christ himself gives of his own death; and I am encouraged to think so, by his commonly connecting the death of Christ with *eternal salvation*, so as it should mean the same thing to say, Christ died for any person, and, that person shall be eternally saved. I will therefore consider this as a fixed point in the procedure of my controversy with ASPASIO. And agreeably to this,

I find, notwithstanding ASPASIO’s assertion to the unbelieving THERON, that Christ died for him, that THERON is at a great loss to find any evidence to support that assertion, and therefore must be prompted to try what he can feel about himself in support of it. He is obliged to take
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* See preface to a late edition of Dr. OWEN’S *Death of Death in the death of CHRIST*. Edinburgh, 1755.

all the pains, and go through the whole course commonly enjoined, in order to turn that assertion into truth; and, after all his labour, though very willing and very desirous to find it true, he seems to be at a loss how to make it out. Had an apostle laid before THERON the divine truth, with all its evidence, he would have been far from pardoning him or sympathizing with him in his incredulity, or hesitating about it. He would have treated him with the language commonly addressed to unbelievers in the New Testament. But ASPASIO certainly acts a very humane part, in sympathizing with his friend, in the difficulty he finds to believe a proposition, whose truth or certainty must be made out by the pains taken to believe it.

I AM sensible all the while, that neither the *authority* of the preacher, nor the *pains* taken by the hearer, are sufficient to perfect the appropriating act of faith; some further aid is necessary, and this is said to be the powerful and efficacious influence of the Spirit of God. Accordingly we find ASPASIO's two friends supposing the hearer to have essayed and attempted often to perform this act; and yet still to be complaining, that he is as far from making it out as at the first. However, they encourage him to persevere steadfastly in repeating his essays and attempts, comforting him with many promises which they adduce to that purpose, that if he do what he can, the Spirit will help him, or do for him what he cannot. They are sensible,

that the bare word of scripture is not sufficient to support the conclusion necessary to be drawn ; so they make this one of their great mysteries, “ How the Spirit of God turns the word of “ scripture, though in itself but a dead letter, “ into a living principle.” ASPASIO maintains, that none have the proper scriptural faith, but those who are taught by the enlightening Spirit to draw that conclusion. But I must have recourse to his friends for a proper view of the agency of this Spirit in the matter.

They maintain, that reprobates have as fair a revealed warrant to draw the conclusion as the elect have. But here lies the difference : The Spirit opens up the revealed warrant, which bears a general aspect toward all men, in a particular manner to the elect, so as to enable every one of them to say, *Christ loved me*. They attempt indeed sometimes to explain the matter by such logic as this : “ Christ came to save sinners ; I “ am a sinner ; therefore Christ came to save me.” But they are soon sensible of the deficiency of this reasoning, and resort to what they call *mystery*, or what cannot be accounted for. Here they introduce the Spirit, and resolve all difficulties by his mysterious working.

We are not then to be surpris'd at finding their way of speaking on this subject somewhat *perplexed*, and more *profound* than can be accounted for ; while they tell us almost with the same breath, that we are first to exert our natural powers, and do our utmost, in the prospect that the Spirit will come at last and help us out ; and
yet

yet that all this exertion of our natural powers, is the effect of the Spirit's work upon us. Nevertheless the same men are often pleased to say, that *nature* begins the work, and then *grace* seasonably interposes to help out the well-meant, but feeble efforts of nature.

However then the matter be brought about, one thing is plain, that the mysterious work ascribed to the Spirit, issues in this, to turn the *dead letter* of the scripture into a living principle, and to persuade a man, though he be not mentioned in the scripture, either by name or surname, that Christ died for him. And it is no less plain, that if this assisting spirit be the Spirit who speaks in the scriptures, he must, in this case, whisper something privately to the ear or the heart of the sinner, beside what he publicly speaks in the scriptures. But will any lover of the scriptures allow the possibility of this? Will he allow, that the Spirit, who breathes in the scriptures, ever speaks a word or syllable to any man, besides what he publicly speaks there? Or will he bear to hear the living and powerful word of God, on any pretence, or under colour of any distinction whatsoever, called a *dead letter*? No! he will abhor the thought; and, without being over-awed by the weight of any man's character, he will be ready to say, *Let God be true, and every man a liar*. But I forbear to enlarge on this at present. And I presume, that, with all freedom, I may call, whatever spirit speaks or suggests any thing not already publicly spoken in the scriptures, a *private spirit*; even

as the apostle PETER teaches us to call every gloss on the Old-testament scriptures, not supported by the public interpretation of them in the New, a *private interpretation*.

It would require a large Letter by itself to describe the *spirit* of the popular doctrine; and if any one who has already gained the ear of the people, should, in consequence of full conviction of the many deceits of that doctrine, lay them plainly open by evidence from the scriptures, it might perhaps prove the means of gaining some few from the error of their way: and it would be foolish to expect more. For the course of the world will continue the same while the world lasts; and popular preachers will always be attended to by the body of the people. The Author of Christianity assures his disciples, that his religion will be hated by all nations to the end; and he cautions them against marveling at this. A Christian then ought not to envy those preachers the attention paid to them, though he will find it his duty to maintain the despised truth, in opposition to all their artifices.

I MIGHT now consider how the AUTHORITY of the minister, the PAINS taken by the hearer, and the WHISPER of the private spirit, concur to persuade the hearer, that he is a *favourite* of Heaven, or that Christ died for him. But to have a proper notion of this, one would need to have a whole sermon or two in his view at once.

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It may suffice, at present, to observe, that the preacher having largely insisted on the progress of a genuine conversion, and the various actings of faith; and possessed the mind of the hearer with a high notion of the arduous task that must be performed, and with a view of the blessings which attend his right performance, as well as the miseries that must attend his failure; the mind of the hearer is, by this time, supposed to be in some commotion, and to be very anxious to do something, or exert some act, in compliance with the pressing call of the preacher. But while his thoughts are thus busied, various difficulties occur to him, how he shall accomplish so great a work.

The skilful preacher knowing, that when matters are once brought thus far, the work is half done, now exerts himself for the relief of the hearer, who begins to be considered as an *exercised soul*; and he is now as careful to lower the terms, and abate the demands on the hearer, as he was before to heighten them.—“A single
 “essay will now do the business.—The Spirit is
 “just at hand to second and perfect it. For al-
 “though the act be at the beginning but natural,
 “yet in the very acting, promised and purchased
 “grace strikes in, and turns it into a supernatural
 “act.” And to enforce this, the preacher, in the height of his warmth, will sometimes take upon him boldly to falsify the plainest facts recorded in the gospel; for instance, saying, “Do
 “as the man with the withered hand did; the
 “poor man *minted*, or attempted to obey, and

“ in the attempt of obedience, he got power to
 “ stretch out his hand as he was commanded.
 “ We must be essaying before we find the Spirit
 “ working effectually in us.” Now, you know
 he might with equal justice add, “ Do as LA-
 “ ZARUS did:” In obedience to the call, *Come
 forth*, he attempted to rise; but happening to be
 dead, he was not able fully to rise up and come
 forth, till he got more power than his own.—
 Now the preacher makes the utmost use of his
 authority; and as he rises in *dignity*, he stoops
 in *condescension*, and encourages the devout hearer
 to cheapen his offer still lower and lower, till he
 come as low as can well be imagined, even to
 what is the very next to nothing. “ You can
 “ complain, that you are dead, that you have
 “ not the least spark of spiritual life in you:—
 “ if you be but groaning under a sense of your
 “ deadness, it is a sign of some life; for the dead
 “ use not to tell such tales of themselves.—You
 “ say, you want power.—Do not say so; for all
 “ the power of Heaven is ready for your use,
 “ and ready to *do all*, only *put to thy hand*.—
 “ Though you want power, have you but the
 “ will? Christ will accept the will for the deed.
 “ —It is true you cannot *come*; are you willing
 “ then to be *drawn*?—You complain you want
 “ the *will* too.—Perhaps your will is only *impo-*
 “ *tent*.—It is well, if it be not *obstinate*.—Are
 “ you willing then to have your will bended?—
 “ There are promises at hand to make you will-
 “ ing.—Well, then, put your unwilling will in-
 “ to

“ to Christ’s hand, and leave him to do all;—
 “ and the work is done.”

The devout hearer, by this time, finding some motion in his heart corresponding, in some measure, with one or other of the terms proposed by the preacher, begins to hear some spirit secretly whispering to him, that his state and condition is changed; that he is now removed from a state of nature to a state of grace;—in short, that he is a *gracious person*.

Now the preacher, well knowing the common effects of his doctrine, and the spirit which attends it, exerts himself with all boldness and freedom of speech, to second and enforce the secret whisper of the private spirit, which the devout hearer entertains at first with some degree of timidity and hesitation: —“ Why then, it is
 “ to be hoped, that the good work is begun in
 “ you, which will be perfected at last.—You
 “ have been favoured with the heavenly visit —
 “ Many perplexities may befall you afterwards;
 “ —but one such visit secures your state for ever.
 “ —Be thankful to Him who hath made such a
 “ difference betwixt you and others; and when
 “ you behold the sins of others, from which
 “ you are restrained, let it be matter of joy to
 “ you, *when you are helped to say thankfully,*
 “ *what the Pharisee said boastingly,* THE LORD
 “ BE THANKED THAT I AM NOT AS OTHER
 “ MEN.—You may indeed fall into many sad
 “ miscarriages, failings, and short-comings; but
 “ your faults shall never properly deserve the
 “ name of damnable sins, or sins exposing you

“ to the curse of God’s law and the fear of his
 “ wrath. Such a fear would be unsuitable to
 “ your state, and would proceed upon an allow-
 “ ed act of unbelief, calling it in question, if
 “ God be your God, and ye his children. This
 “ would be razing the foundations. Therefore
 “ such fear, as being unsuitable to the grace we
 “ have, cannot enter into the notion of the re-
 “ verence and godly fear whereby we serve God
 “ acceptably ; *for not our God in Christ, but a*
 “ *God out of Christ, is a consuming fire* to all the
 “ workers of iniquity ; that is, to those who are
 “ not like us converted, and brought into a state
 “ of grace.” See the two last verses of *He-*
brews xii.

But, to have a more full view of the above-mentioned concurrence, it must be noticed, that the chief season, or day of power, or time of the agency of what I call the *private spirit*, is, while the preachers are declaiming with greatest fervour.—If Christ be compared to a fruit-tree, now is the time of the shaking of the tree and the distribution of the fruit ;—if to NOAH’S ark, the preachers open the doors and usher in the people ;—if to a dove-cote, and the people to doves, the preachers open the windows.—If the communication of divine love be spoken of, the preachers are the earthen vessels into which it is poured, in order to be conveyed to the people.—In short, they are commissioned to bring Christ near to sinners, and sinners near to Christ. So that if they are so modest as to decline the title, they effectually assume the character and work of
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of *mediators* betwixt God and the people. The title of *ambassadors* is that which they use the greatest freedom with; and they, no doubt, reckon that they put considerable honour upon Christ, while they call him GOD'S AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY.

It must likewise be noticed, that the popular doctrine is so contrived, as to keep the people in constant dependence on the preachers for their comfort, and in continual expectation of the season of power in giving heed to them. In allusion to the impotent man, who indeed, according to the sacred text, laboured under an infirmity for thirty-eight years, and who, according to their imagination, lay so long at the pool; some exercised souls may be occupied so many years in fruitless essays and attempts. However, the preacher encourages them to wait, and persist in their attempts, assuring them of success at last; and for their comfort in the mean time, he will not scruple to pervert the scriptures, in order to pronounce them all *blessed* who are thus waiting. Again, in like manner, in allusion to JACOB, they who have been favoured with the season of power, and have enjoyed the wished-for visit, may remain unvisited for twenty years, betwixt one Bethel-visit and another, or perhaps all their life-time. However, though it be still held true, that one visit secures their state for ever, they are not to content themselves with a *reflex act*; that is, with the remembrance of their first visit, and its attendant impressions; but they must be still endeavouring to obtain a new visit,
by

by attempting again to put forth, as at the first, what they call a *direct act of faith*. In short, the frequent repetition of these attempts, or the straining hard to obtain some motion, or feel some impression on their hearts, is the great thing in religion, that first and last must employ the most serious moments of their lives. And herein it is imagined, the exercise of godliness consists. And however much the people may be thus kept in bondage for life-time, groaning after some inward feeling or impression, yet both the unconverted, and those said to be in a converted state, provided they attend on the preacher, and continue waiting and essaying, are encouraged to consider themselves as in a blessed state; as being distinguished from the ungodly and profane, under the character of *serious exercised souls*.

ANY one who has heard the preachers I have been speaking of, or read their printed sermons, may easily see, that the short sketch I have given of their doctrine, might be supported by numerous quotations; and that I have even retained their principal phrases as nearly as the gravity of the subject, and the shortness of this abstract, would allow. I know their doctrine appears ridiculous in the eyes of many who aim at much the same end with them at bottom, but who think to gain it by a shorter and easier course; yea, they are laughed at by many who, at the same time, laugh at Christianity. This is what I can easily account for. But that any one who has learned his religion from the New Testa-
ment,

ment, should mistake their doctrine for the Christian, is indeed astonishing! If we should be so easily imposed upon, how could we rank with those whom the apostle JOHN once addressed in this manner, *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth?* But it would require a treatise by itself, to lay open the many deceits by which these men *change the truth of God into a lie.*

I MIGHT now consider, how the doctrine which *thus* teaches men to look on themselves as the *favourites* of Heaven, is subservient to several purposes, extremely foreign to the design of the gospel. But this may partly appear from what has been said, and may occasionally appear more fully as we go along. A particular consideration of this would open too large a field for me at present. It would lead me to notice, first, the design and tendency of the gospel, as illustrated by the real effects it had on them who first believed it; and then shew how different these effects were from those commonly produced on the minds of the people, by the doctrine of the most zealous popular preachers; yea, to notice the difference betwixt the God of these last, and the God whose character is drawn in the New Testament;—betwixt their Christ and the Christ preached by the apostles;—betwixt their spirit and the Spirit which breathed in the lives and writings of the apostles;—in short, betwixt their sense of the words *grace, conversion, regeneration,*

tion, holiness, charity, church, kingdom of God, &c. and the sense given of them in the New Testament. Nor need the extent of these differences be wondered at; for if a man differ from the apostles, how little soever, how covertly soever, upon the point of acceptance with God, that difference will be found, more or less, to affect his every religious sentiment.

Having now taken a general view of some of ASPASIO's principal friends, I shall be at liberty to pay a more close attention to himself in my next.



L E T T E R I I I .

DEAR SIR,

AS the controversy we have entered upon, is of such a nature that it can be decided only by the scriptures, it gives me no small encouragement to proceed, that I have one to deal with who manifests a very uncommon esteem for those writings.

No question has been agitated with greater warmth among men, than that about *acceptance* with God. And indeed no other question can claim the precedence in point of importance. Yea, the importance of every other question must be rated according to the connection it has with this.

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Yet we may well say, how rarely is that question stated upon the same footing whereon it stood betwixt Christ and his few disciples on the one hand, and all the world beside on the other? but more especially the Jews, who maintained the opposition on more advantageous ground than any other people, then, or since, could do, and so gave the best handle for the fullest discussion of that question? Amidst a multitude of disputes about the Christian religion, that have employed the minds of men, the capital question has been “much mistaken, and almost forgotten.”

The greater part of the reasoners about acceptance with God, have generally made the question to run thus, “How are we to be exercised, and under what influence, prompting or seconding? What shall we do, or endeavour? What shall we feel? or *What doth God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?*” Whereas the first question ought to be, “Can any doing, feeling, endeavouring, any exercise of the soul, either prompted or seconded, be of any avail to us in this matter? or, Whether or not did Christ finish upon the cross, all that God requires, every requisite, without exception, to procure acceptance for, and give relief to the guilty conscience of the most profane wretch that lives?” For I need not add, that it must be the very same thing which placates divine justice, or which fully expresses the necessary opposition of infinite goodness to evil or sin, that can relieve the

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the sinner from the sentence of condemnation, which is no other than the voice of God, naturally residing in his conscience. We must not go to borrow distinctions from the schools, and say, What Christ hath done is indeed the only meritorious cause of our acceptance, and that our assisted or prompted endeavours are to cooperate by way of some subordinate cause, under whatever name. No; we must either take the one side or the other of the first and main question: "No trimming, no reconciling expedient," must take place here.

My plea with ASPASIO then proceeds upon this cardinal question, "What is the *turning point* from despair toward good hope?" The hinge of the hope of mankind is the hinge of our controversy.

In this controversy, then, I have this advantage, that I have only one object, one single point to keep in view. I have it to maintain upon all occasions, that *one thing is needful*. My chief labour and care again must lie in this, that I do not suffer the change to be put upon me by means of any distinction, that I be not imposed upon by well-sounding words to suffer any diminution of, or addition to, the *one thing needful*.

ASPASIO's faith rests, one foot on *grace*, and the other on *nature*; or, to adopt a contrast often stated in the New Testament, one foot on *the spirit*, and the other on *the flesh*; or, to make myself, perhaps, still more readily understood, one foot on the work of *Christ*, and the other on human efforts, or the motions of *man's* heart.

ASPASIO

ASPASIO then having *two* things in his eye, must have been greatly straitened, how to assign each of them its proper place. And though, in the general, he has handled the matter with as great, yea, I will not scruple to say, with greater skill and address, than any I have seen on the subject; yet to suppose that he could do it without falling into inconsistencies, would be to suppose him capable of doing that which never yet was, and, I am confident, never will be done by any man. Who could have imagined, that he, who said so many simple, clear, and striking things, with respect to the work of Christ, in opposition to all the pleas of human pride, in the latter half of the Sixth Dialogue, and almost throughout the whole Seventh, would have perplexed himself in the manner he has done in the Sixteenth, blending together two things as unfit for mixture as iron and clay?

Having premised thus much in the general, as to the state of the controversy, I shall now proceed to a more particular notice of ASPASIO'S words.

I TOOK notice, in my First Letter, that ASPASIO'S faith needed a variety of subsidiary props, beside the work of Christ, to support it. Let us now hear what these are.

ASPASIO, in order to conduct THERON within reach of the *imputed righteousness*, or to shew him that he is not so far from it as he apprehends, first puts several questions to him, which he is so happy as to answer in the affirmative, and

and then comforts him against several discouragements;—upon which THERON proceeds thus.

“ If we feel an aversion to sin, and prize the
 “ blessed Jesus above all things; if the prevailing
 “ bias of our affections be to the divine Redeem-
 “ er, and the habitual breathing of our souls
 “ after a conformity to his image; may we not
 “ suppose ourselves possessed of the *truth* and *rea-*
 “ *lity*, though we have not the *confidence* and *re-*
 “ *joicing* of faith? I say *we*, because I apprehend,
 “ this is not my peculiar case, but common to
 “ myself and many others. I ask, therefore, in
 “ their name and in my own, may we not sup-
 “ pose our condition safe, though we dare not
 “ presume to use the language of the spouse, *My*
 “ *beloved is mine, and I am his?*”

I am sorry that ASPASIO did not here check THERON with the Spartan IF *, once returned in answer to a threatening embassy from some of the neighbouring states, which is so pertinently introduced in the close of the Sixth Dialogue. But he has now got into better company, to whom more deference and respect must be paid. He was then talking to guilty sinners, to mere sinners; and having the righteousness of God in his eye, was confidently setting at nought all pretences to it among men. So that, whoever
 presumed

* *Dialogues*, vol. I. p. 264. “ Those neighbours gave them
 “ to understand by their ambassadors, That If they entered their
 “ territories, they would burn their towns, make the inhabitants
 “ prisoners, and spread destruction wherever they advanced —
 “ To which insolent menace, the brave Lacedæmonians made no
 “ other reply, than—IF.”

presumed to say, "If I love God, if I love my neighbour, may I not hope—?" He was ready to confound him by retorting the IF upon him. But now he is in presence of another sort of sinners, sinners endowed with amiable qualifications, not sinners pretending by their virtue and morality to supersede the necessity of the imputed righteousness; but devout sinners, seriously engaged in pious labours to come within reach of it.

Let us see then what reception he gives them. "Let these persons know," says he, "whatever their names or their circumstances are, that they have as good a *right* to adopt the words you mention, as PHILENOR has to call these gardens his own." *A right!*—Strange! when shall we come to an end of the question about right? Let us try. "What gives a right to eternal life? The imputed righteousness. What gives a right to that? The work of faith. Who have a right to act faith? Those who feel an aversion to sin, &c. Who have a right to say, they feel this?"—Perhaps—those who feel an aversion to its punishment. This calls to mind the vulgar story of the answers given to the question, "Whereon stands the earth?" which served only to provoke the renewal of the question.

If we are not satisfied simply to believe, that the earth continues to be upheld by the same power which poised it at the first, we must wait till the students of natural philosophy be agreed in fixing to us another support. If we are not

satisfied to answer all questions about acceptance with God, with the imputed righteousness alone, we must wait till our moral philosophers be able to settle to us the principle of moral virtue, about which they are far from being as yet agreed. And indeed, if once we depart one step from the revealed righteousness, the whole plea about *acceptance* with God is nothing else at bottom but a mere philosophical dispute, whatever mask of scriptural phrases it may be clothed with. Accordingly, philosophers have found the people called Quakers, notwithstanding their mask, to be at bottom their faithful friends and allies, and they are daily coming into a better understanding with many others. For, except where Christianity is maintained in that ancient simplicity which moved the spleen of their ancestors, they can have no violent or common quarrel against it; though they may maintain such disputes with its professors, as they have always entertained among themselves. And indeed it may cause them to smile, or shall we rather say, move their generous compassion, to see so many of their fellow-creatures labouring hard to maintain and defend the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and after all, in the matter of acceptance with God, setting out from the same common principle with themselves.

But stay! I must not run so fast; ASPASIO calls me back; “ Yet they will do well to re-
 “ member, that these qualifications, however
 “ amiable, are by no means the *ground* of their
 “ right. They are to advance their claim and
 “ hold

“ hold fast the blessing, not as men ornamented
 “ with fine endowments, but as poor, indigent,
 “ and guilty sinners. For such the Saviour is
 “ provided, to such his benefits are proposed,
 “ and on such his grace will be magnified.”

More strange still! Why then must I be at so much cost and pains to dress so fine, to put on so many ornaments? Is it that I may the better remember that I am naked, or clad in rags? Must I be cloathed like a gentleman, that I may be the fitter company for beggars? I am told, that any man fashionably dressed may appear at court. How shall such a one be brought to think, that his dress no way contributed to his obtaining the readier access? Can all the panegyrics and dedications that ever were wrote, persuade us, that men may be ornamented with fine endowments, and yet be insensible of their importance; or that every man's pride is not equal to his worth? The scripture itself does not strip men of their self-confidence, without divesting them of every pretence to it, without convincing them that they have no fund for it. It convinces them that they are poor, indigent, guilty sinners; that they are so in reality, and nothing else. It does not admit, that they have any amiable qualifications to abate the force of this charge, and then leave it to their own generous condescension to forego the consideration of them.

ASPASIO would have us to be very good and very humble, in order to meet the imputed righteousness; to be very holy, and to have a great sense of our defilement; to be very rich, and to have a great

sense of our poverty. But in that case, it is to be presumed, that whatever compliments we may pay that righteousness, it will meet with but a very cold reception from our hearts.

AVARO, by great diligence and success in trade, has acquired a large fortune ; yet one can scarcely perceive any alteration in his dress or behaviour. If you compliment him upon his wealth, he modestly replies, that if he has got some small trifle, it is more owing to kind Providence than to his industry ; for he has seen many traders, of greater abilities than his, decay into extreme poverty ;—and after all, what is it but dross ! yea, his confidence in his wealth is sometimes at so low an ebb, that he is sincerely afraid that he shall die a beggar. A stranger one day happened so far to mistake some of his modest and diffident appearances, as to entertain suspicions of his *credit*, and to intimate some doubts if he was a *good man*. As soon as AVARO perceived this, his temper warmed, his stile changed,—in short, were I to relate his whole behaviour on this occasion, you would say—“ A purse-proud tradesman indeed !”

But ASPASIO will still insist, “ that these qualifications, however amiable, are by no means “ the *ground* of their right.” Let us see then, where the ground of their right lies. I think the obvious meaning of ASPASIO’S words is this, These persons, so qualified, have the right, exclusive of unqualified sinners ; or of those who are nothing else but poor, indigent, guilty sinners. Where then can the ground of the right lie,

lie,

lie, but in the distinguishing qualifications? It cannot lie in any thing common to both; for in that case the unqualified would have as good a right as the qualified. Therefore it must lie in that which constitutes the difference betwixt them.

LET us now attend them both at their prayers, and notice how they present their supplications before God.—Methinks I see first a decent respectable company advancing to the house of prayer, and then stepping forward with a graceful assurance, beginning their address thus: “We
 “ give thee thanks, O God, for the aversion we
 “ feel to sin, and for every other amiable quali-
 “ fication by which thou hast distinguished us
 “ from other men; we bless thee for every fine
 “ endowment wherewith thou hast ornamented
 “ us; and more especially for the peculiar right
 “ thou hast given us of advancing our claim to
 “ all the blessings of the kingdom of thy Messiah;
 “ whom we prize above all things, and to
 “ whose merits we are indebted for every ad-
 “ vantage we enjoy. We humbly acknowledge
 “ that our qualifications are by no means the
 “ ground of our right. For, had it not been for
 “ thy grace assisting our feeble efforts, we might
 “ have been as yet like other men, drinking up
 “ iniquity like water. We acknowledge the
 “ righteousness of thy Messiah to be the only me-
 “ ritorious cause of all our happiness. For his
 “ sake, therefore, we earnestly beg the continu-
 “ ance of thy grace, that we may always come
 “ into thy house of prayer with a comfortable
 F 3 “ assurance,

“ assurance, and may never be filled with confusion of face in thy presence.”

Behind them at some distance, I see an abject company approaching with remorse in their faces, as if they had just come from the gratification of some guilty passion. They dare not venture beyond the porch, as if afraid to pollute the sacred mansion, but pointing toward the inner recess, where the propitiatory stands, they are encouraged to utter these few words. “ God be propitious to us sinners.”

Methought, as they went up, I overheard one of them saying to his fellow, “ Surely there is not a wretch upon earth riper for hell than I. My life has been one continued course of injustice, profaneness, and excess; by which last I have so reduced my health and circumstances, that instead of having any opportunity of lessening the debt I owe society, through my injustice, I must necessarily increase it, by the claims of my wants upon their compassion. Upon occasional touches of remorse after satiety, I have often made resolutions of amendment; but the first temptation always broke them. In short, the more I look into my heart, the scene appears the more shocking. Whether I look backward or forward, ~~Reason~~—experience,—feeling, suggest nothing but matter of anguish. But I am informed upon good authority, that there is a propitiation for sin,—that there is forgiveness with HIM, who hath mercy on whom HE will have mercy.—Let us therefore draw near.”

These

These last neither have the qualifications of the former, nor do they pretend to their right. They can perceive no promising sign about themselves. They feel no mark, no token, but what marks them out for wrath and destruction. They have nothing in the heaven above, nor in the earth below, to keep their hearts from sinking into utter despair, but the bare propitiation. This, and this alone, encourages them to make their address to God. By this, and this alone, God conveys the first taste of his favour and peace into their hearts. Now, and not till now, do they begin to love God and hate evil. Now a ray of good hope begins to dispel the gloomy fears of future evils: and faith continuing to work by love, they go on to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

I complain therefore of ASPASIO, for his discouraging such as God comforts, and leading forward those whom God holds at a distance. “Let *these persons* know,”—says he. Why *these persons* more than others? Surely, because these persons are in better circumstances than others. Nay, I am not allowed to say that fully neither: for he immediately adds, “whatever their names “or circumstances are.” But, after all, I cannot see how they can be in very bad circumstances; at least, they are far from being in such destitute circumstances, as those to whom God is said to commend his love, *Romans v.* They are not *ungodly*, for they are averse to all evil; nor are they *without strength*, for the prevailing bias of their affections, and the habitual breath-

ing of their souls, is toward the perfection of all virtue and goodness.

Yet when my friend deviates from the truth, it gives me some sort of satisfaction to observe, that his tongue falters, that every second word weakens or destroys the force of the former. And it pleases me to find, that ASPASIO had not courage to close this period, without bringing forth the plain truth at last. For, pointing to poor, indigent and guilty sinners, he concludes, “For such the Saviour is provided; to such his benefits are proposed; and on such his grace will be magnified.”

That I may not seem to be too severe upon ASPASIO, I will keep him in countenance, by taking notice of a rebuke that was once given to one of the chief apostles, for an instance of behaviour, which he was drawn into through the fear of giving offence, but which favoured strongly of ASPASIO's doctrine, *Galatians ii.*

The rebuke which his fellow-apostle gave him, was, I think, to this effect.—“You are indeed one of the peculiar people, highly distinguished, on account of many qualifications and advantages, from mere Pagans and Idolaters. But you have been taught by Revelation to know, that all these qualifications and advantages are good for nothing in point of acceptance with God; and that, in this respect, you are perfectly on a level with the vilest alien, who has nothing else to make him clean, nothing else to bring him nigh to God, but the bare report he has heard concerning
“ Christ

“Christ crucified. In consequence of your
“knowing this, you have, till now, regulated
“your practice accordingly; conforing and eat-
“ing in a friendly manner with the believing
“Pagans on all occasions; as knowing them to
“be, in all respects, as clean and nigh unto God
“as yourself, or any of your qualified brethren.
“Why then have you now suffered yourself to
“be so far over-awed, by the presence of some
“of your qualified friends, as practically to dis-
“semble your avowed principles, by your with-
“drawing on this occasion from the company
“of the believing Pagans? This your conduct
“is far from being upright, according to the
“truth of the gospel, and has moreover the
“worst of tendencies. You hereby administer
“fuel to the religious pride of your qualified
“brethren. You give these persons to know,
“that they have some *better right* to eternal life
“than others, who are not so qualified. You
“hereby tempt the Pagans, who have nothing
“else to recommend them to God, but what
“they believe Christ has done, and who have
“hitherto, and that upon good ground, confi-
“dered this as *enough*, to call in question their
“faith, and suspect that something more, beside
“what they have already believed, is necessary.
“In short, you compel them to seek after your
“qualifications, in order to complete and make
“sure their right and title to the favour of God.
“You compel them, in effect, to deny the truth
“of the gospel.”

While

While we are speaking of Jews, it may not be amiss to compare, for a little, the disposition which shews itself in us who call ourselves Christians, with the account given of theirs in the New Testament, as to the point of righteousness, or acceptance with God: for whatever contributes to our acceptance with God, must come under the notion of our righteousness.

If in this matter we would fix our attention more upon things, than words; more upon the leading features, than the inconsiderable differences; I am persuaded the likenesses would appear very striking.

We Christians have been led by prejudice, rather than by any just reason, to entertain a contemptible notion of the ancient Jews, in comparison of ourselves. And this notion has, among other causes, served to make us less attentive to the grand controversy, that was once carried on among them; a controversy, wherein the true character of God, and that of man, are set forth in the strongest colours. No Christian nation can justly claim the precedence of them, as to the knowledge or practice of virtue or piety. The Pharisees had the foremost reputation among them, both for integrity of life, and fervour in devotion. We are not to imagine, from the character given of the Pharisees by the Searcher of hearts, that they were worse men than ourselves. For even he grants, that they outwardly *appeared righteous* unto men, and speaks of them as *highly esteemed* among men, who knew as well how to judge of characters as we do.

And

And we find by several testimonies, that they were men who studied to keep a good conscience, and were zealous for God*.

The chief thing for which we find them censured in the New Testament, is, that they presumed God had a peculiar regard for them, and would accept them on account of the excellency of their lives. This their presumption did not arise from a firm persuasion that they had done enough to procure the favour of God and eternal life. For, as to this, their hearts failed them upon occasions, and the question recurred upon them, “What good thing shall I do? What lack I yet?” but it proceeded upon the difference they perceived, betwixt their own character, and that of other men. This naturally drew their attention and care to increase that difference, and make it as clear and sensible as they could; seeing from the contemplation thereof arose their chief satisfaction, and the readiest means for stifling the uneasy question, or keeping it out of sight. Consequently they had the less attention
to

* I think I need not take time to describe the ridiculous notion entertained by the populace, and their chief leaders, of the character of the Pharisees; by means of which, a great part of the gospel-history has become of no more importance to them, than an old legend, and, instead of conveying to them the most useful instruction, serves only to awaken in them the old self-applauding reflection, “If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them.”—The same reflection is in like manner cherished by a more fashionable sort of teachers, who maintain, that the character given in the New Testament of the Gentiles, at the first publication of the gospel, was peculiar to the Gentiles of that age; that they indeed deserved to be called *ungodly, without strength, &c.* but that it would be very foolish to apply such epithets to the people of good Christian nations.

to spare for noticing another difference of greater moment; that is, the difference betwixt their own character, and the perfection of the divine law.

Hence it was, that they became very wise and very scrupulous, as to every thing that regarded the first-mentioned difference, even making additions to the divine law in that respect; and, at the same time, very superficial in their knowledge, or rather very ignorant, as to what regarded the last: whereas, had they given their chief attention to the last, as they ought, it would have appeared so immensely great, as to make the first utterly to disappear; even as he who takes a great mountain into his eye at once, loses sight of the difference betwixt one pebble and another at the foot of it. It was this inattention and ignorance that PAUL bewailed, when he said, *They being ignorant of the righteousness of God, are seeking to establish their own.* And hence it was, that they had but a very partial and imperfect notion of the law of God, regarding it chiefly as it furnished them with the means of distinguishing themselves, as well from the looser sort of their own nation, as from the Heathen.

The law, according to which they sought to be found righteous or accepted with God, was indeed no other than the law delivered by MOSES; the law which requires GODLINESS and HUMANITY* in perfection, as also the law of nature

* For brevity's sake, I choose to use these two expressions for the sum of the divine law; *Godliness*, for love to God, with all the

nature requires. So the apostle says, *They followed after the law of righteousness.* But when he speaks of their manner of following, or the course of life by which they sought acceptance with God, he says, *They sought it, AS IT WERE, by the works of the law,* Romans ix. 32. that is, Though their works were far from coming up to what the law required, in order to constitute them good, or well-pleasing in the sight of God; yet they bore such a conformity to its precepts in the eyes of men, as to pass for the works of the law in their esteem, and they were very ready to transfer the appearance and weight which their works had in the presence of men, into the presence of God, and their correspondence with him; and to presume that he would put much the like value upon them.

Had the divine law been given only like human laws, as a rule by which men were to judge of one another, the Pharisees undoubtedly stood fairest for being justified by it: but when we think of the divine law given as a rule to regulate, not only the correspondence of men with men, but that of every man by himself with God; a rule by which every man is answerable to, and must be tried by Him who searches the heart, and is thoroughly acquainted with all the springs of human action, the question must naturally arise in the breast of the best of men, Who then can be saved? where is the character
to

heart, strength, and soul; and *Humanity*, instead of philanthropy, or as the full import of these words, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

to be found that God will approve? or even, where is the person that can stand up before his Maker, and, pointing to the most infamous of his neighbours, say, "I am not as this man?"

Though the Pharisees did in reality respect more the praise of men than that of God, yet we must not consider them as regardless of the approbation of God and their own consciences. Their whole conduct was not directed merely by ostentation: no; they were zealous for God, while they were ambitious to distinguish themselves among men. They were concerned to have the approbation of their own consciences, as to their difference from, or excellency above other men; so that they would not readily, even in secret, have allowed themselves in doing what was unsuitable to, or omitted what was requisite to support their difference from other men. * They studied so to keep a good conscience in this respect, as that they might be able, in their addresses to God, to appeal to him for the truth and reality of that difference; as would appear from the prayer of the Pharisee in the parable.

The great mistake then of the Pharisees lay in this, that they presumed, that what distinguished them from other men, would recommend them to God. But the greatness of their mistake is perceived only by such as believe the gospel. And indeed, it had never been effectually demonstrated to the conviction of any, if a righteousness exceeding theirs had not appeared in the world. That such a righteousness has indeed appeared,

appeared, the whole New Testament bears witness. And to say barely, that it exceeded theirs, as far as theirs exceeded the naughtiest character upon earth, would be to give but a very low account of it, and infinitely short of the truth. For it exceeded theirs as far as theirs came short of the perfection of the divine law. And the gospel undoubtedly gives their righteousness its highest place of distinction, when it says, that the righteousness necessary for entering into the kingdom of heaven, must exceed theirs.

THE righteousness I am now speaking of, is no other than the character of JESUS CHRIST. This character was not distinguished by those shining qualities, by which great men, and promoters of the temporal happiness of society, have gained the applause of their cotemporaries, and the veneration of posterity. It was a character in low life, wherein *godliness* and *humanity* shone forth in perfection. It respected the *good of men*, and the *praise of God*. It respected the eternal good of individuals of all ranks, without regard to what class or society of men they belonged to; without any view to form them into any faction or party connected by secular ties. Jesus Christ promoted no new art or science for the benefit of society. Though all means for forming the most perfect character were within his power; instead of distinguishing himself by such acts of generosity as commonly draw the applause and attachment of mankind, he chose to appear in such a condition, as to need the alms of others
for

for supplying him with the necessaries of life. He disputed not the secular privileges of any rank or class of men. He gave forth no new laws for the better government of states or kingdoms; nor did he urge a more vigorous execution of any penal statutes, then in force, for the better suppression of irreligion and immorality. He did not set on foot any work of public reformation. He left the world in all respects just as he found it, having only made a further discovery of the evil thereof to his own few disciples, whom he left exposed to its hatred; warning them to expect no better treatment from it than he himself met with. This character, though unadorned with those things which draw the admiration of the world, and though held in the greatest contempt by all ranks of men in it, was yet found perfectly well pleasing to God, and received the highest testimonies of his approbation and delight.

The name JESUS CHRIST has been *torn off* from the character drawn for it in the New Testament, and has been applied by various classes of men to the character most admired by each of them. Some, under the name JESUS CHRIST, present to our thoughts an eminent moral Philosopher; others a patriarch of Monachism; others the supreme head of a national Church, in whose name all heresy and profaneness are to be rooted out of the nation, and all zealous ecclesiastics obtain preferment: yea, we may find all the same sorts of men who opposed Christ and his Apostles at the first, now severally maintaining

maintaining their favourite maxims under the patronage of his name.

We cannot therefore have a proper view of the real character of JESUS, without noticing the contrast wherein it stood to that of all other men, but more especially to that of the Pharisees, who had the fairest claim to be accounted righteous, and were really esteemed so among men.

Jesus Christ undertook to *fulfil ALL righteousness*; and we see by his doctrine what an extensive view he had of the perfection of the divine law, and likewise of all the artful reasonings that take place in the hearts of men, evading the force thereof. His comprehensive knowledge of the divine law, and what righteousness was necessary to honour it, as well as his unfeigned love to it, are set forth beforehand in the Psalms, in language adapted for him. In the CXIXth Psalm, which is employed from beginning to end in drawing the picture of his heart, and in some others, we find him speaking in this manner: *I have seen an end of all perfection; the breadth and the length of the most perfect characters among men; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.—Thy righteousness, O God, is very high.—O God, who is like unto thee?*

After the commencement of his public ministry, when his character began to be exposed to the narrow scrutiny of all sorts of men, he did not, like other pretenders to righteousness, give such a view of the law of God as might best suit the purpose of gaining a reputation for virtue and holiness among men, and yet allow a

convenient reserve for the indulging of those passions, which, however much they may move within the bounds of decency, do indeed carry in them the highest disaffection to God. In the account which he gives of the divine law, in the Vth, VIth, and VIIth chapters of *Matthew*, the force of his discourse turns upon man's correspondence with God thereby. And he declares, that every thought entertained in the heart, opposite to the spirit of it, makes a man liable to hell-fire, or the wrath to come.

He fulfilled the law in the strict sense he himself gave of it. He regarded not the difference from other men, which the Pharisees made so much account of. So far was he from keeping his distance from the dissolute part of mankind, that he was said to be one of them. With such affability and kindness did he behave toward them, that he was called their friend. Toward the other part of mankind, the Pharisees, we find him wearing a more forbidding air. We seldom see him in their company, without the frown in his countenance. The story of the woman taken in adultery, recorded in the VIIIth chapter of JOHN's gospel, sets before us his behaviour in both these respects, in a very striking view. It would seem, that some Christians began very early to be ashamed of this part of Christ's character: for it is difficult to give any other reason why the authors of the Syriac version of the New Testament have dropped or left out that story recorded by JOHN, in their version.

To an attentive reader of the history of Jesus Christ, this temper of mind in him will often present itself in very surprising views. And indeed our surprise at this cannot be abated, but by our calling to mind another, no less wonderful part of his character; and that is, the joint appearance of human weakness and divine majesty. We find him subject to every human want and infirmity; yet claiming and manifesting every divine perfection, every attribute of that peerless ONE who shares not his glory with another. We find him, regardless of the charge of blasphemy, declaring, *The Father and I are one*, and receiving divine worship accordingly. We find him weary and thirsty, sitting on a well, asking a drink of water, and at the same time shewing himself to be *the fountain of living waters*. Not to multiply instances, we find him ready to expire on the cross; and yet shewing himself to be the Hearer of prayer, and the Sovereign of paradise, or the highest heaven.

WE must bear in mind what kind of person JESUS was, what submission he shewed, what honour he paid to the divine law by his obedience, when we hear him giving his verdict of the characters of all other men, and setting aside all the boasted differences among them. It was in the eyes of such a person, and it was in contrast with his righteousness, that all these differences shrunk into nothing; even as all difference among the stars is effaced when once the sun appears.

Had the wisest men of all nations laid their heads together, and consulted beforehand, what character was fit for God to wear, in becoming a man on the earth, they would, no doubt, have imagined something very grand, far outshining the character of the perfect prince drawn by the author of *Telemachus*.—Had a man of low condition, meanly born, of no education, choosing his friends and companions from among the basest of the people, and having no taste for the company of men of character and distinction; had such a man, I say, stood up, in the midst of the best improved nation, for the divine personage, having no testimonies for the dignity of his person and the excellency of his character, but what were heavenly, miraculous, or out of the course of nature; how great must the disappointment be? how great the contempt? how great the indignation? What skill, what pains would not men employ to stain his character, and invalidate every argument of his dignity? Philosophy, carefully tracing the footsteps of nature, would lend her aid to overthrow every preternatural testimony in his favour. Virtue, hitherto nourished by praise, and claiming the privilege of being her own reward, would awaken the resentment of her votaries to repel the insult. Every human excellency would be in arms: devout Zeal would take the alarm for the honour of God, and head the opposition; the Church would apprehend her danger; and all contending parties, suspending their mutual feuds, would
join

join in the general cry, “ Away with such an
“ one from the earth.”

What a ferment must have been in the minds of the wealthy citizens of *Sparta*, when LYCURGUS dissolved all property, and made an equal partition of lands, without regard to former claims? The appearance of JESUS CHRIST in the world, grated upon the hearts of men in a more tender part still. For we know, by history and daily observation, that men may be brought to embrace voluntary poverty, and to choose the greatest bodily pains, when they are thereby furnished with a ground of glorying before God over other men; yea, oftentimes for the sake of mere fame and worldly reputation. But where is the man that will fairly admit the conviction, that he has nothing about him whatsoever to recommend him to his Maker? Every man takes notice of some advantageous difference in his own favour. Even the man of pleasure, who seems to have cast off all fear of God, will, upon occasions, bestow a squint look on the devotee, and say in his heart, “ At worst I am no
“ hypocrite!”

Jesus Christ laid the foundation of such a revolution among mankind, as to *virtue* and *happiness*, as quite eclipses all the great changes that ever happened in the world; though it will not have its full effect, till the time when the once rude fishers of *Galilee*, with the other apostles, shall publicly appear, seated on twelve thrones, next to that of the MOST HIGH. The appearance of Jesus in the world well corresponded

with that grand revolution, and the lofty prophetic images, by which it is described. The ministry of JOHN the Baptist, who came to prepare his way, is thus pointed at by ISAIAH, chapter xl *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and bill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* The earth is represented as levelled into a plain, having a highway cleared out for Jesus, to walk alone conspicuous through the midst of mankind, that all flesh might see together the glory and excellency of his character, that all might see it on an even footing, none overtopping another, none intercepting the view of his fellow.

The same prophet speaking of his *day*, chapter ii. presents us, to the same purpose, with a grand assemblage of images, which are concluded with a repetition of the leading sentiment which introduces them. *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Basban, and upon all the high mountains, and upon*

upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols shall be utterly abolish. The apostle PAUL, while he takes a summary view of this passage, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. at once ascertains and illustrates to us the meaning of the prophet.

The same thing was clearly intimated, by the Spirit of prophecy, at the entrance of the SAVIOUR into the world: Luke i. 46. *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.—He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. Luke ii. 34. And Simeon—said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against,—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* To the same purpose is the saying of Jesus, oftener than once recorded in the gospels, *Many that are first shall be last, and the last first.* In fine, the whole New Testament speaks aloud, that, as to the matter of *acceptance* with God, there is no difference betwixt one man and another*:—no difference betwixt the best accom-

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plished

* For illustration of this, I shall here subjoin the following note. Jesus

plished gentleman, and the most infamous scoundrel:—no difference betwixt the most virtuous

Jesus was not insensible to those things which render man amiable to man, or one man more so than another; while he did not admit the consideration of them as of any weight in the kingdom of God. Here we may see his great self-denial, and at the same time the glory of the divine sovereignty. Jesus made a very acceptable citizen in the city of *Nazareth*, while, residing there, he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man; yet, in his preaching the kingdom of God, he shewed no peculiar attachment to them whatsoever. The like may be said of his connection with his kindred. The intimacy of private friendship subsisted betwixt him and his apostle JOHN; yet this did not make him more indulgent to his friend than to others, when he observed in him any disposition unsuitable to the kingdom of God. He wept over the capital city of his nation, while yet he foretold its destruction; even as he wept over his dead friend LAZARUS, though he knew it would cost him but a word to raise him from the dead. Conversing one day with a certain young ruler, he was so taken with his behaviour, that beholding him, *he loved him*; but as the conversation proceeded upon the title to eternal life, he sent him away sorrowful. On this occasion his disciples were greatly astonished, and said among themselves, *Who then can be saved?* Jesus closes his discourse to them at this time, with the standing maxim of his kingdom, *Many that are first shall be last, and the last first*. He knew by the ancient prophecies, and he saw by what sort of success his gospel was already attended with, that his kingdom was to consist chiefly of the last, the basest and worst of mankind, and not of the foremost, the most creditable, wise, and prudent among them. And he thankfully submitted to this, for the glory of his Father, and the manifestation of his sovereignty. So we find him expressing himself, upon the return of some whom he had sent to preach the gospel, in this manner: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*.

It is impossible to give any account of this matter, that will satisfy the pride of man; yet it is very evident, that, according to the mind of Jesus, the above-mentioned young ruler, however amiable, had no part in life eternal.

Have we not seen men remarkably amiable and useful in their neighbourhood, who were yet disaffected to the king? Now, from this disaffection, as being opposite to the general good of society,

tuous lady and the vilest prostitute:—no difference betwixt the most revered judge, and the most

we must infer, that their social disposition is very partial and defective; seeing it requires only a proper opportunity to draw forth their hatred of their countrymen, and make it issue in the most destructive effects.—With much greater propriety may we say, that all *ungodliness* includes *inhumanity*. He who has any reserve in his submission to God, on whom alone the happiness of mankind depends, must have the like reserve in his affection or goodwill to men; for as God stands in no need of us, so he requires no homage or submission from us, but what he judges necessary 'to promote our mutual happiness. Accordingly, we find the scripture always makes our love to our neighbour, the proof and measure of our piety toward God. And in this view, it is called the fulfilling of the law. So the apostle JAMES, chapter ii. 8. says, *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; ye do well.* And PAUL says, Rom. xiii. 10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* When Jesus was asked, *Which is the great commandment in the law?* Matthew xxii. his answer was, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is (ὁμοία αὐτῇ) LIKE UNTO IT, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* He gave the same summary of the law to the lawyer, who stood up and tempted him, saying, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Luke x. 25. And when the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said, *And who is my neighbour?* Jesus agreed to rest the issue of the controversy about righteousness upon the result of that question; for, after giving him a pattern of humanity, he says to him, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

Let us now apply what has been said to the case of the young ruler, who certainly deserved to be considered as one of the first or best of men. It is evident, he had a very great concern about eternal life; and no less esteem for Jesus, as a proper guide to him in that respect; so that he appeared determined to do all that Jesus should injoin him, in order to obtain it. For, if we notice the whole conversation, from his most respectful address, to his most sorrowful departure, we shall find, that he had as high a regard for Jesus as for life eternal; which is as much as to say, that he had indeed as high a regard for him, as he had at bottom, or in reality, for God. Jesus refuses the partial homage or worship he paid him, as being more than belonged to man, and less than

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most odious criminal, standing convicted before him, and receiving the just sentence of death from

was due to the one God ; and for answer to his anxious question, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?* refers him to those precepts of the law which respect the love of our neighbour. The young ruler, presuming he was blameless in this respect, answers, *Master, all these things have I observed from my youth.* Yet his conscience suggesting to him, that there must be a deficiency somewhere, made him subjoin this question, *What lack I yet ?* Hereupon Jesus affirms, there was indeed a defect in his obedience ; and, in order to its being perfect, enjoins him the practice of such humanity, as would manifest his entire, unreserved submission to, or dependence on God ; giving him withal, by his form of expression, in making mention of **THE CROSS**, a hint concerning a better righteousness than he was then seeking after, and a better life than he presently enjoyed. But such was his attachment to earthly happiness, or to the things which he possessed, in the *abundance* of which he at bottom thought happiness lay, that he had no ear to give to the true scope of the divine law, nor any attention for the salutary hint given along with it by Jesus ; which hint, had he understood it, would have at once eased his mind about righteousness, and loosed his attachment to earthly happiness. So he went away *every sorrowful, for he was very rich.*

Thus we see, however great regard he had for Jesus, for the favour of God, and eternal life ; however much he was concerned about godliness and humanity : yet his *wealth* was dearer to him than these sacred considerations, and determined him to turn his back upon them all.

We must, all the while, keep this in our eye, that he entertained an opinion of himself, as none of the least deserving of mankind ; that however deficient he thought himself in point of righteousness, he was far from thinking his case desperate in that respect ; for, in that event, his sorrow would have pressed him chiefly there. Thus we see how, upon a proper trial, the best of men are stripped bare of all pretences to true godliness and humanity.

The gospel sets before us the character of God, which is summed up in love, as fully displayed in the way of humanity or kindness to men. And this kindness of God is the only source of true mutual kindness among men.

After man had renounced his dependence on God, the link of affection or true kindness among men was broken. Men became foolish, and ignorant about happiness ; each setting up for himself,
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from his mouth:—in a word, no difference betwixt the most fervent devotee, and the greatest ringleader in profaneness and excess.

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and going astray after his own way. Hence endless discords naturally arose. So PAUL, speaking of himself and his fellow Christians, says, *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and (philanthropy, or) humanity of God our Saviour appeared,—he saved us.*

The kindness of God to man is thus expressed, 1 John iv. 9. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* And the argument for mutual kindness arises thus, ver. 11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

In the unparalleled submission of Jesus Christ, in his obedience unto death, we see displayed at once the grandeur of the divine majesty, and the extent of the divine kindness to men. And we cannot look upon Christ's work of love to men, without perceiving therein the perfection of godliness.

It is only by the work of Christ that men are restored to happiness, in dependence upon God, and to true friendship among themselves. They are restored to the favour of God, and of one another, by that which abolishes all differences and distinctions among them, and so every source of variance and discord.

The first Christians, who loved the saving truth, loved one another with a peculiar delight for the sake of it. And they shewed good-will toward all others, as knowing none, but whom God might save, and bring to the knowledge of the truth.

All the ancient followers after righteousness, who, for the sake of their favourite distinctions, opposed the saving truth, received this character from the sole unerring judge of godliness and humanity, *They please not God, and are contrary to all men; that is, they were adversaries to the eternal happiness of mankind.* And we have the same authority to support us in affirming, that every kind of opposition to the gospel, is at the same time pointed against the humane spirit of the divine law, 1 Tim. i. 9, 11.

From what has been said, it will appear, that Christians must have a way of judging very different from others, about the pleasure of God, and the benefit of men. Whereas all others infer what is agreeable to God, from their preconceived imaginations about the interest or benefit of men; Christians infer what is beneficial to men from the previous demonstration they have, by un-

doubted

IF then the true state of the case betwixt Jesus and the Pharisees be attended to, the conduct of these last will appear very suitable to the temper of the great majority of those called Christians, whether Popish or Protestant, Churchmen or Dissenters: and the great evil thereof will be observed only by those few who are Christians in the ancient or first sense of the word; and who, in every age and nation, always have made, and always will make but a very poor and despicable figure in the eyes both of the *wise* and of the *devout*, even as he whose name they wear did before them.

What could be more offensive to the pride of man, or, shall we say, to the delicate ears of virtue and piety, than to hear one claiming a heavenly mission, declaring, that all the pains taken by one man to excel another, and obtain the preference before God, go for nothing, or rather

doubted facts, of what is most agreeable to God. So that when they read the great things revealed in the gospel, they confidently affirm with PAUL, *These things are good and profitable unto men.*

These reflections I have briefly put together, as a sample of what the scripture affords, in answer to the objections men are ready to make against the revealed method of *acceptance* with God, as annulling all the boasted differences or distinctions in the characters of men. To which I shall only add, as a summary conclusion, that though, among those who have forfeited all title to happiness, different degrees of punishment may be inferred from different degrees of guilt; yet they are all equally destitute of any plea for justification. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

rather serve to make him more hateful in his sight? Do we not even feel some inclination to sympathize with the Pharisees in their chagrin, when they were obliged to hear such grating words as these, *That which is HIGHLY ESTEEMED amongst men, is ABOMINATION in the sight of God*; and that men of the vilest characters went into the kingdom of God before them?

When we hear Jesus saying, *The world hateth me, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil*; shall we say, that he was sent from heaven to tell the world, that murder, adultery, theft, &c. were evil actions? or did the world ever hate any man for declaiming against vice? or rather, would not any man speaking publicly in its favour run the risk of being stoned or torn to pieces even by the most vicious of the mob? The truth is, Jesus witnessed against the world as *evil*, in that respect wherein they approved and valued themselves most: and accordingly the zealous Jews understood him. Would they not judge, then, that they had good ground to count him an enemy to all that they called virtuous or pious?

But how must it heighten their provocation, to hear such a man, whose character was every where hissed at, who was even thought *beside himself* by his near relations, declaring, in the most open manner, with unshaken confidence, that God had no delight in any character under heaven but *his* alone; that none of mankind could ever find favour with God, but by *his* virtue and piety alone? Would they not think they had
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the highest reason for their resentment? *Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?—He hath a devil, and is mad, why hear ye him?*

THIS controversy, we know, issued in the death of Jesus. And, if I might be allowed to adopt the vulgar use of the word *victim* on this occasion, I would say he fell a victim to the resentment of every human excellency. For what is it that man glories in, that did not find itself piqued and affronted by the doctrine, joined with the extraordinary circumstances of the life of Jesus?

As matters betwixt Jesus and the world, in all the various shapes it assumes, stand always much on the same footing; what should hinder us to forget for a little the distance of time and place, to bring *home* the interesting scene, and hear JONATHAN declaring what impression the *recent* circumstances made upon his mind?

“HAD Jesus, when buried, like other mortals, remained in the grave, I had steadfastly adhered to the Pharisees, and gloried in being one of them, as being convinced, that the grand controversy about *righteousness*, which was carried on with great zeal on both sides, was now fairly decided in their favour, and that they had gained an additional honour by the opposition.

“I received a liberal and virtuous education among the Sadducees, who admit no sense of our sacred writings but what they think agreeable to sound philosophy. But happening, about the
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time that Jesus made his appearance, to fall acquainted with some amiable men of eminent piety among the Pharisees, I began to conceive a liking to their party. I observed, that they maintained a more strict temperance, and, in general, a greater purity of life, and that they had more exalted sentiments about the power and character of God than the other party. I made it my business now to attend their lectures, and study their tenets, in hopes of being found worthy to rank with them. Mean time, the uncommon opposition shewn to them by Jesus drew no small share of my attention, and served, on the whole, rather to increase than diminish my attachment to them. I considered their sentiments as a great improvement of my former way of thinking, and highly conducive to my advancement in virtue as well as piety. I readily judged, then, that the opposition which was chiefly pointed against what came nearest to perfection, must have proceeded from the worst of causes.

“ I had a very low opinion of Jesus, as well as of the company he kept, on many accounts, which I shall not now take time to relate. In the general, I thought him a stranger to every great and noble sentiment which charms and elevates the mind of man. What disaffected me most to him was, I thought him uncharitable to the last degree. I could not reconcile with any degree of charity or piety, the severe censures he passed upon men of the best established characters. It gave me great disgust, to hear him addressing

dressing the men whom I myself thought worthy of the highest esteem for every thing great and good, in such uncouth language as this, *How can ye escape the damnation of hell!* I thought it intolerable to hear him at the same time declaring, with singular assurance, that he himself was the only favourite of heaven; that every character of man, but his own, was the object of the divine displeasure; yea, without stopping here, with the greatest familiarity calling God his FATHER, in a sense peculiar to himself; and, without leaving us at any loss to gather his meaning, affirming, *The Father and I are ONE*; even while he shewed rather more zeal than any of us against the least appearance of ascribing any divine attribute or name to any but the one God, or even to himself in any other view:—To hear him, in the very house sacred to the honour of the one God, against the profaning of which he himself had shewn the greatest zeal, not only receiving divine praise from his attendants, but receiving it in the very words of the sacred hymns which we used to sing in our most solemn assemblies to the praise of the MOST HIGH; yea vindicating this praise as his due, by quoting those very hymns in support of it; and rebuking my zealous friends, who complained of this as an abuse.

“ Let any one put himself in our place, and try how he could have borne all this, joined with many other provoking circumstances of the like nature; or, if any thing less could have satisfied him, than to have seen matters brought to the

extremities

extremities to which all parties among us at last agreed to push them.

“ I must own indeed, that there was a peculiar energy in the rebukes of Jesus, which made it very difficult for one to resist the force of them. But what alarmed me most was, his performing many works that could not be done by human power; yea such power appeared in them, that I could not help suspecting, upon occasions, that the finger of God was there, notwithstanding all the pains that were taken to account for them otherwise. However, as his conduct, on the whole, seemed to me to be so very opposite to the universally received principles of reason and religion, I made the best shift I could to efface any impressions made on my heart from that quarter; concluding, that as the character of God himself must be measured by those principles, it would be absurd to suppose, that any revelation coming from Him could ever serve to undermine them.

“ By the same principles, I fortified myself against the prediction delivered by Jesus concerning his rising again from the dead; to which event he had openly appealed for proof of his doctrine; or, which is the same thing, the excellence of his person and character: and what served to give me the greater assurance was, I found my favourite party was very forward to refer the decision of the whole controversy to that same event, as being very confident that it would never happen.

“WHEN once Jesus was dead and buried, I thought the dispute as good as ended. But how great was my astonishment! when, not long after, those poor illiterate men, who had been the companions of Jesus, appeared publicly, testifying with uncommon boldness, that he had risen again from the dead, according to his prediction; that they were well assured of this by many infallible tokens, and that at last they saw him ascend into heaven;—when I saw that no threatenings, no infamy, no punishment, could intimidate them;—when, moreover, I observed so many undeniable proofs of supernatural power co-operating with them, and exerted in the name of Jesus, as risen from the dead!—Then the late wonderful works of Jesus, before his death, recurred upon my thoughts.—The former impressions I had been at so much pains to stifle, revived afresh upon me.—In short, the evidence crowded so fast upon me, from every quarter, I found there was no gainfaying it.

“But still I was averse to the last degree to admit it. I was shocked at the train of consequences which I saw must follow. And thus I questioned with myself; Has reason itself deceived me? Do all our best books of divinity and morality proceed upon false principles? Must I give up with all my choicest sentiments? Is there no such thing as wisdom or righteousness in the world? Are all the world fools, and enemies to God, but these rude *Galileans*? The reflection is confounding!—But what do these men propose? what do they aim at, by their alarming the
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the public in this manner, with their testimony about the resurrection of Jesus?—They can have no good design, no benevolent intention toward men. They seem rather to be influenced by a most malignant disposition. They certainly intend to bring this man's blood upon us;—to prove us all to be enemies to God, and objects of his wrath. They intend to make us desperate and utterly miserable.

“ WITH such reflections, whatever inward disquiet I should undergo, I resolved to combat whatever evidence they could produce;—till one day that I heard them charged, by some of my friends in authority, with the malevolent purpose I have just now mentioned.—But such was their reply, that, I think, I shall never forget it! They indeed not only allowed, but demonstrated all the consequences I was so averse to admit, with such force and evidence, as quite defeated all my resolution.—But then they, at the same time, laid open such a treasure of divine goodwill toward men;—they drew such a character of God, no less amiable than awful;—they laid such a solid foundation of everlasting consolation and good hope, for the most desperate and miserable wretch, as did infinitely more than counterbalance the loss of all my favourite principles, all my fond reasonings, and every worldly advantage I had connected with them. And all this they shewed, with the greatest simplicity and clearness, to be the plain meaning and import of the fact which they testified, even the resurrection of Jesus. And they confirmed every
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thing they said by the unanimous voice of the prophets, whom I had never understood till now. Their doctrine, in respect of authority, resembled the word of a king, against whom there is no rising up; and in respect of evidence, the light of the sun; or, to use a far more adequate similitude, it resembled the fact which they testified, and whereof it was the meaning. And it well corresponded thereto in its effects: for it proved sufficient to raise the dead, and give hope to the desperate.—The fact and its import, the *hand-writing* and the *interpretation*, equally became the majesty of Him who is the *SUPREME*.

“ I saw plainly, that in the resurrection of Jesus, there must have been the agency of a *power* superior to the power of nature, even capable to controul and reverse the course thereof: therefore I concluded, that this operating *power* was greater than the God of the Sadducees and the Philosophers. I found also, that this *power* had a *peculiar character*, manifest from the nature of the controversy, wherein it interposed its agency and gave decision. I found, by the decision, that its character was more grand and perfect, as well as its agency stronger, than that of the God of the Pharisees. As to its agency, it was able to raise from deeper misery to higher blessedness than the Pharisees thought of. As to its character, it appeared with unlimited sovereignty *just* and *merciful* in perfection. Whereas the God of the Pharisees was such only partially, and by halves; incapable to execute the threatened

threatened curse against every sin, and yet shew mercy and boundless favour to the transgressors; not so just as to maintain the honour, the spirit, and extent of the perfect law, at all events; nor so merciful, as to have any favour for the utterly worthless and wretched: but, halving the matter, merciful to men of good repute, and just in accepting those who are deficient in their righteousness; or, in another view, just in exacting the debt of five hundred pence, and merciful in forgiving that of fifty; or shewing justice only against the utterly insolvent, and mercy only to those who can make partial payment;—in short, (like all created potentates) incapable of appearing, at once, without limitation of either attribute, just and merciful in perfection.

“ I found then that the *power* which operated in the resurrection of Jesus, excelled, not only in strength, but also in majesty and perfection of character, all that was called *God* among men. So I perceived no small propriety in the saying of Jesus, *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee*. I concluded then that this *power* is the only true *God*: for that which is *greatest* must be *God*. Thus am I called off from every idol, however highly dignified, whether the work of mens hands, or of their imaginations, to adore Him who is *higher than the highest*.

“ I frankly acknowledge, then, that my religion, or my hope toward *God*, is *not founded on argument*, not on the wisdom of men, but on the *power of God*;—not any deductions from any principles I had hitherto known; but on *au-*



thority interposed in a manner quite unexpected, baffling, confounding, and repelling all my reasonings; and, if I may be allowed the expression, *forcing* upon me a new set of principles, by the most convincing and satisfactory, as well as irresistible evidence;—not on any reasonings *à priori*, but on a plain matter of fact established by impregnable evidence;—not on any effort exerted, or any motion felt in my breast, but on that motion of divine power, which burst the bands of death when Jesus rose;—not on any operation which men call *mystical*, to avoid saying *unintelligible*, but on the simplest and most striking operation of power that can affect the human mind, even the presenting alive again a man who was dead;—not on feeling any change on my heart to the better, or the remotest good inclination of my will, but on that fact, which, fore against my will, forced upon me the most shocking view of my guilt, and proved me to be an enemy to Heaven, in that respect wherein I thought to have approved and valued myself to my last hour;—not on any work of power assisting me to feel, will, or do any thing, in order to peace with God, but on a work of power, proving to demonstration, that every thing needful thereto is already completely finished;—to say all in one word, not on any difference betwixt me and others, or any token for good about me whatsoever, but on the token or proof of divine good-will expressed in the resurrection of Jesus, toward sinners of all nations, without regard

regard to any difference by which one man can distinguish himself from another.

“ This fact, firm as a rock, emboldens me to pay an equal regard to philosophical guesses and to enthusiastical fancies. If any one, then, should ask me a reason of the hope that is in me, I have only one word to say, *The resurrection of Jesus*. Take away this from me, and I am miserable indeed. Let this stand true, and nothing shall ever make me despair.

“ THIS fact and its import, or the character of God thence arising, mutually confirm and ascertain each other. This character could never have been drawn to our view, but from some divine work. No work but this could ever evince such a character; and if this work was done, of necessity there must be such a character. This fact and its import, then, must stand or fall together. But more particularly,

“ As this divine character can no where be published but along with the fact, I am assured, by hearing the *grandest character* thence arising, that the fact must be true. For to suppose, that the bare notion or idea of ought greater than God could ever be any where imagined, would be the wildest of all absurdities. And it is very evident, that that view of God, which the lower it abases the pride of man, raises his comfort and joy the higher; which reduces man to the most unreserved or to *extreme* dependence, while it exalts him to the *summit* of all happiness; could never be the contrivance of man, whose strongest

impulse is toward the gratifying of his pride, and whose joy naturally rises or sinks according to the success thereof. Therefore, when the fact and its import are conveyed to my knowledge by the same testimony, I have no room to doubt, that God, who alone can describe his own character, is the testifier and declarer of both: And surely it would be extremely absurd to suppose, that such a divine character could arise from a contrived lie.

“ Again, It is from this fact that the amiable character of the just GOD and the SAVIOUR rises to my view. I could never have known there was such a God, had I not known this fact. But I know, that this fact being true, there must be such a God; because it is impossible to account for it otherwise. Yea, every attempt to account for it otherwise, not only extinguishes all my former lights, but, without furnishing me with any new ones, lands me in atheism, in chaos, and utter darkness. Whereas the account of it given by the Witnesses, while it proves all my former wisdom to be foolishness, opens to me a new, and more delightful source of knowledge, throwing light upon a thousand facts that I could never account for before; shewing me a no less wonderful than satisfactory propriety, in all the extraordinary circumstances attending the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the ministry of his witnesses.—It throws light upon all the ancient sacred writings, and the extraordinary facts recorded in them from the creation downward. It sets my mind at rest,

as to all the difficulties about the divine character, and the condition of man, which occasionally pinched me before.—I am now reconciled to the entrance of Sin and Death into the world, and the whole dark side of things, on account of the marvellous light that shines forth from the greatest darkness.—I am now reconciled to the shade, on account of the magnificent picture thence arising to my view, and which could not otherwise have appeared. In a word, I thence perceive a no less amiable than grand uniformity of design, in all the works of God, from first to last. Whereas, should I shut my eyes against the light issuing thence, I am immediately lost in an unfathomable abyss of absurdities.

“ I KNOW then, assuredly, when I hear these illiterate men, attended by supernatural power, bearing witness to the fact, declaring the import of it, and speaking (τα μεγαλεια τῶ θεῶ) “ the grand “ things of God,” I hear God himself speaking; I hear the voice and testimony of God. Divine wisdom and divine power, which are indeed inseparable, present themselves to my conscience at once; my pride is abashed; my reasonings are silenced, and hope arises to me from a new and unexpected source*.

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* “ Were such a majestic personage as is described by JOHN, in the tenth chapter of the *Apocalypse*, to appear publicly to our view, would not all our former ideas of human grandeur vanish at his presence? Have the wise men, of almost every succeeding age, exploded the principles maintained by their predecessors both in ethics and in physics? and should it seem a thing incredible to

“ I am fully satisfied, then, in agreement with the Witnesses, to hold the meaning they have given of the resurrection of Jesus, for the *gospel*, the *word*, and the *testimony* of God ; and to call it, by way of eminence, **THE TRUTH**, in opposition to every false gloss on the scriptures, and every false reasoning about the light or law of nature, or about any of the works or ways of God. This Truth opens for me a plain path, and affords me firm ground for every step : so that I have no occasion to grope among *probabilities* with the Academics, or no less uncertain *feelings* with the Devotees ;—no reason to envy the former the pleasure they propose in their humble, candid, and sincere inquiries after—a phantom, which has hitherto eluded their grasp ; or the latter, the more refined delight they propose in their pious wrestlings and waitings for—a good conceit of themselves :—no reason to be scared by the scornful sneer of those, or the more solemn frown of these. Let this Truth be my companion, and I will not be ashamed in the presence of all the sons of **SOCRATES**, though joined with those of **GAMALIEL**.

“ In company with this Truth, I dare act the part proper to man. I dare give free scope to
my

us, that when God, no longer winking at the times of ignorance, was to commence a public speaker and writer to men, he should explode the wisdom of all the teachers, who formerly taught mankind ? And if we willingly hear wise men tracing to us the order and connection of facts and appearances in the course of nature, why should we not hear God explaining to us supernatural facts ? This seems to be a province proper for the Author and Controller of nature. It was surely far above the fishers of *Galilee*.

my conscience before God, and look into his perfect law, as knowing, that, however heavy the charge turn out against me, the resurrection of Jesus affords “the answer of a good conscience toward God,” as it shews a righteousness to be already finished, by which God can appear just in justifying me, even in the very worst view I can have of myself; or, which is more, even in the worst view I can appear in before Him, who knows all things. By being thus encouraged to look into “the perfect law of liberty,” and continue therein, I see the extent of it to be vastly wider than I was hitherto willing to notice. And, by seeing what a righteousness was requisite to honour it, and what expense was needful to expiate every the least transgression of it, I am led to hold every precept of it more sacred than ever I did before. I know that I cannot disregard any precept of it, without, at the same time, disregarding the revealed righteousness. I consider the perfect law, the law that requires godliness and humanity in perfection, as the sacred and invariable rule of correspondence with God. And though on this side the grave I cannot come before God at any time, and say, *I have no sin*, yet the TRUTH both binds and encourages me to aim at no less than perfection.

“While I keep the perfect law in my view, which, like a faithful mirror, discovers all my deformity, I can find no reason to glory over the most infamous of mankind. The nearer I come to the light, which makes *manifest all things that*

that are reprov'd, I have the more reason to say, *Behold, I am vile*. I can have no room for glorying then but in the bare TRUTH: and I have good reason confidently to oppose the righteousness revealed there, to all that is admired, in its stead, among men.

“ I NOW see plainly, that all my former reasonings against Jesus and his character, were at the same time pointed against the divine law, and against the natural dictates of my own conscience. I chose to confine the exercise of my conscience to what might distinguish me from others. I took pleasure in reflecting *what I was not*, in comparison with others; but was averse to notice *what I was* before God. When any uneasy question, in this last respect, arose in my heart, I was careful to turn it aside by more agreeable reasonings. If I might, for *once*, call that which properly distinguishes man from other animals, namely, his conscience, by the name of REASON, I would vary the stile of the received maxim, and say, *Reason pursued is despair, and faith, or the knowledge of the truth, is the cure of despair*. Before I knew the cure, I found nothing but pain and misery, in listening to the simple dictates of my conscience. And, sure I am, neither conscience nor argument directed me to the cure. But it came to me, unexpectedly, from heaven, by supernatural revelation; that is, when I heard God, by the mouths of the witnesses, laying open the meaning of a supernatural fact; a fact that had
not

not only awakened fresh disturbance in my conscience, but also demolished all my arguments.

“ I was convinced then, that the revealed Truth, which not only awakened my conscience, and made me sensible of my malady, but also brought such relief as was sufficient to satisfy it when most awakened, must have come from the same God who formed it, and whose law is naturally impressed there. I found I had hitherto neglected and resisted the natural notices of the true God there, and framed to myself another god by reasonings;—that I had been all along as one half asleep or intoxicated; and who chooses to be so, as not finding his circumstances in so good order as to give him pleasure and satisfaction in his soberest and coolest moments.

And indeed, who would incline to give place to such apprehensions of God and of himself, as can yield no pleasure or satisfaction; but, on the contrary, the greatest of all pains; yea must, without the knowledge of the cure, serve to fill his mind with the most repining hatred of God?

“ I HAVE great reason then to value the gospel, as it enables me to reflect, without pain, that I am a human creature;—as it presents me with such an amiable view of the inflexibly just God, as that I may think of him, when fully awake; and need not court the momentary quiet, or rather insensibility, which is procured by resisting the natural notices of God in the conscience, or the more explicit declaration of his will in his written law. The gospel, while
it

it enforces the law of God, and makes the conscience more sensible to the conviction of sin, conveys likewise the most refreshing remedy; so answers to the majesty of the living and true God, who says, *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.*

“Nor do I think I have any apology to make to men, for renouncing my former *ways and thoughts*, however righteous they appeared to myself and others, upon my being found guilty, beyond reply, by the *one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy*; and demonstrated to be *wicked and unrighteous* in respect of both, by his irresistible work and testimony. I do not think it beneath the dignity of the wisest human creature, to be convinced of his mistake, by Him, whom it well becomes to say, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

“I used to admire it as a fine imagination, that were Truth and Virtue to be presented before our eyes in all their native charms, the beautiful splendor would be too transporting, too dazzling to be beheld by us, but through some veil. —The experiment has been tried, and that in a manner far surpassing the reach of fancy. The un sullied perfection of both has appeared in the world, in all their native charms indeed, yet so

as not to hurt the weakest eye.—But what was the result? We “saw no form nor comeliness in him; no beauty, that we should desire him.” We turned aside our faces from him, as from a disagreeable object. The most wise and virtuous among us were the foremost to set him at nought. Yet however strange it may seem, true it is, that some of the most base and stupid among us were, upon this occasion, struck with such an apprehension of divine beauty, as far exceeds all the raptures of imagination. *The WORD was made flesh, said they, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

“I HAVE said, the resurrection of Jesus serves me, as a new principle of knowledge or reasoning. I do not set out from conjectures, to inquire after truth; but I set out with the light of undoubted truth, to observe what path it opens for me to walk in. I do not set out from human maxims or presumptions, to inquire how I shall form a God to myself; but I set out from heavenly truth, stamped with the divine character, to inquire how I shall form my heart and life suitably to it. I do not set out upon the inquiry, What I shall do to placate the divine Majesty; or, as the phrase is, How I shall make my peace with God; but I set out, from the persuasion that God is just in justifying the ungodly, to inquire, what service he has for me,—to prove “what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

“All

“ All my religious principles and practices are so many inferences from the aforementioned fact ; yet I have no ground to value myself, as a *reasoner*, even on this new footing. For I could find no satisfactory meaning at all in that fact, till I was first taught it by the illiterate *Galileans*. And, what is more, I can deduce no inference from thence, till I be first taught it by one or other of the inspired Witnesses. But when I hear them displaying the manifold wisdom of God from that source, I perceive a wonderful propriety and force in the whole of their reasoning. Thus God sees meet to abase my pride of understanding, by the very means he uses for conveying to me the most useful and comfortable of all knowledge. And herein, I am persuaded, he consults my real benefit. For were I left to indulge my natural itch for reasoning, even on this new footing, I am sensible I should soon act the same part with this supernatural revelation, as I formerly did with the light of nature. When I reflect, where all my own wisdom, and that of the greatest sages landed me ; and that, in the height of my wisdom, I turned out the greatest fool ; I am now fully satisfied, that my safest and wisest course is, simply to believe just as I am told, and submissively to do just as I am bidden, without murmuring or disputing. However foolish then my rule of faith and practice may appear in the eyes of the WISE, and however weak in the eyes of the DEVOUT, I find myself kept in countenance by the apostolic maxim,

maxim,

maxim, *The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*"

Thus far JONATHAN.

LET us now take a view of the character of the Pharisees, in the light thrown upon it by the resurrection of Jesus. It is evident, then, that those who held the first rank for righteousness among men, mortally hated the righteousness which pleased God. Those who sought to be found righteous, AS IT WERE, by the works of the law, hated the real and genuine works of the law. Those who had the highest zeal for the letter of the law, shewed the greatest spite against the spirit and end of it. For what else was the character of Jesus, but the spirit and perfection of the divine law, copied out in the temper of his mind and the tenor of his actions? Those who worshipped, *as it were*, the true God, hated his real character; even as Jesus said,—*Now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.—They hated me without a cause.* Those who were eminently distinguished by their zeal for the God of Israel, were proved to be as much idolaters as their fathers before the captivity. Accordingly we find PAUL comparing the time of ELIAS with his own time. For taking notice of the answer of God to ELIAS, (who complained he was left alone in the general defection to idolatry) that a remnant of *seven thousand* were reserved; he adds, *Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace.*

It requires no long process of reasoning to shew that all idolatry lands in *self-adoration*, since it is the worshipping of a God of *our own making*: for men never yet made any image for God, or, which is the same thing, invented any idea of him, but what served greatly to deface the glory of the original, and no less to elevate their own pride. Hence it is, that God, intending to exhibit his own image and character himself, issues the severest prohibitions against all idolatry. Hence he takes to himself the title of the JEALOUS God. This matter is set forth in a variety of lights in scripture. I have no occasion for more than a summary view of it at present.

Since man was subjected to misery, by the curse of the divine law, whatever it be that he considers as his refuge from misery, or the ground of his hope, that is to him the standard and measure of the divine character; even as he whose sole ground of hope is the work of Christ, draws his character of God from thence, and rejoices in God as manifested in that work.

Man was not left at first to form his own notion of God, merely by what he knew naturally, or might learn by reflecting and reasoning on the works he saw; but it was settled for him, by the law of dependence, impressed on his conscience by the voice of God. That law served to fix on his mind the notion of God as the author and giver of all things, as the sovereign of life and death, that none could once disobey him and live, that none could deliver out of his hand. Being naturally the favourite of God, he was
happy

happy in this notion of him, while he did nothing to offend him. But this notion of God can yield no comfort to sinners. It could never enter into the heart of sinful man, that deliverance could come to him from this God; and far less could he retain the true notion of this God, and expect deliverance any where else. Here lies the grand impossibility with men, which the all-sufficient God hath found out a way to dissolve. He hath done that which must for ever have appeared impossible in the eyes of men.

In the gospel, or the history of Jesus Christ, we find the original idea of the divine authority and opposition to sin fully preserved, yet complete deliverance wrought for men. The gospel reconciles men to the JUST GOD, by shewing him to be the SAVIOUR. It reconciles them to have the same dependence on God for the support of their hearts, or for their righteousness, as man, while upright, was taught to have for his food; the justifying righteousness being no less the peculiar workmanship and gift of God, than was the garden of Eden.

Aside from the gospel, nothing remained for sinful man but despair, or a temporary refuge in some kind of idolatry. It behoved his conscience and his happiness to stand in the strongest opposition to each other. He must then be averse to admit any notion of God, but in comfortable channel, or to extend his views the divine character farther than is consisteth with his ease and quiet. Hence arise all the fine reasonings, for which we chiefly value our-

felves as rational beings. Hence it is, that all men, who know not the gospel, measure their character of God by what is most agreeable to their own taste. Hence proceed all the differences among men, about the divine character, from the *strict* God of the Pharisees, who must be served with suitable zeal, down to what the bold satirist calls, a *Deity that's perfectly well-bred*, who is pleased with politeness.

It is much the same, whether I set up the meanest print or the finest statue of a king, when my business is to try how gracefully I can make my honours before it. The superstitious pilgrim may sometimes find his devotion as much enlivened by the meanest relic, as by the best adorned shrine. It does not signify much by what means one brings his deity present to his eyes or his thoughts: for all men who know not the true God, of whom Jesus Christ is the perfect image, losing nothing of the living majesty of the *original* in the representation, have no other use for a God, but to be an *auxiliary* to their pride or favourite passion; or such an use, as, according to the forementioned satirist, FLAVIA has for her glass:

AS FLAVIA in her glass an angel spies,
Pride whispers in her ear pernicious lies;
 Tells her, while she surveys a face so fine,
 There's no satiety of charms divine.

WHEN men have once settled their notion of the divine character from that wherein, if I may
 so

so speak, their *self-importance* is made to lie, it is very natural for them to have a new and additional pleasure in reflecting upon this their God. We can be at no loss, then, to see what is the source of this pleasure, and where it terminates.

He who finds nothing that can give him any importance, but the work of Christ, rejoices in knowing that the divine good pleasure rests there. So his happiness arises wholly from that which God has provided, without his concurrence in any respect; and the grateful sense of his happiness always terminates in that work.

The Pharisees, who knew not the true God, “being ignorant of his righteousness, sought to establish their own.” The letter of the law, or that notion of it which was subservient to their purpose, of distinguishing themselves from other men, was their measure of the character of God. To this they sincerely endeavoured to conform their lives; and no doubt they thought to balance their failings by fasting and prayer, and a careful observance of the ordinances about sacrifice and washing. So we find, it gave them no small satisfaction to reflect, how agreeable they were to their God.

We must take this along with us, that while they gloried in that character which was their shame before the true God, or an abomination in his sight, they, at the same time, had an attentive eye to their worldly interest, regarding earthly happiness more than the life lying in his favour, pursuing that species of idolatry which

is called the *service of mammon*. So they answered to the character given to those of their number, who crept into the first churches, unpurged from their former leaven,—*whose God is their BELLY, and whose GLORY is in their SHAME.*

As for us Christians, generally speaking, we seek acceptance with God *as it were* by the obedience of Christ, but in reality by our own works;—*as it were by faith*, but in reality by the acting of something called by that name. We speak of God as already well pleased in Jesus Christ, or placated by what he had done; yet we hold it necessary, that some advance should be made on our part, and some good endeavours exerted, in order to begin our friendly correspondence with him. At bottom we consider the gospel, as presenting to us a God *almost* placated, and requiring something of us to make him *fully so*; yet very ready to help us out with that something, provided we set about it in good earnest. Or, to vary the expression, we look on God as become *fully well pleased*, through the atonement, *to assist* our feeblest effort to attain the qualifications necessary to gain his favour.

But alas! what a poor use is this for the atonement? At this rate, all our concern about the gospel must turn out to—much ado about nothing. For what great benefit do we reap from it? I think it must amount to this, that we have now an authentic divine revelation assuring us, that the divine character is such as the
pride

pride of man, in all ages, has imagined it to be, namely, *that God is disposed to assist and favour those who are presumed to be the well-disposed.* And none of us will readily admit the thought of himself, that he is altogether ill disposed.

At this rate, the gospel, by all it speaks of grace and atonement, only presents to us the tortoise after the elephant, and leaves us still just where we were, when the pinch comes; even on the same footing with our ancient Pagan fathers, as to the great and primary question, “What shall introduce us into the divine favour? Wherewithal shall we come before God?”

WE Protestants have indeed renounced the gross idolatry of our Popish fathers, even as the Jews, returned from *Babylon*, did that of their forefathers; yet we have closely imitated the Jews, cotemporary with Christ and his apostles, in their notion of the divine character, and in their connecting their temporal interest with their religion, or their zeal for a worldly kingdom to the Messiah*.

Human wisdom has been employed, in all ages, to shorten the distance betwixt God and man. All the various methods that have been
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tried,

* What is above said is not restrained to our churches by law established: for the same dispositions prevail equally among our dissenters; who, like disappointed courtiers, murmur at the proceedings of those in place, and long for nothing more than to enjoy those legal advantages which they judge to be at present so ill bestowed. So that, generally speaking, it may well be said, that it is none of the least of their grievances that they are DISSENTERS.

tried, agree in one respect: They all serve more or less to lower the divine character, and more or less to exalt that of man. And thus it has been thought the distance might be removed, and friendship restored betwixt God and man. Here the gospel differs from all the devices of human wisdom. It shews us the living and true God coming down *the whole of the infinite distance* himself, not to *meet* returning man, but to *overtake* and *prevent* him, when hastening to utter ruin; “to seek and to save them that were “lost.” It shews us God come down to men, IMMANUEL, God with us. The great truth for which we are indebted to the gospel is, that *God was made manifest in the flesh*. In the person of Jesus Christ the distance betwixt God and man is entirely removed. There appeared man in his *lowest* misery that he can either feel or fear. There appeared the just God in his *highest* majesty of character: The fulness of the divine good pleasure rests on him, who became “exceeding “sorrowful, even unto death.” There we see divine vengeance executed against sin to the utmost, yet the eternal God become the refuge of the guilty. There God appears, not working deliverance by halves, not co-operating with sinful man, not restoring his depraved faculties, and assisting him less or more to deliver himself; but working complete deliverance for man, without his concurrence in the least. So that, *according to this time*, it may well be said, *What hath God wrought!* What spirit then shall dare to whisper, that *no comfort or benefit can be derived from*

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the bare persuasion of this? What—But I refrain.

When PAUL gloried only in the work finished by Him who died on the cross, he was not afraid of being guilty of any degree of idolatry, or of derogating in the least from the honour of the true God. He was confident, that he was well kept in countenance by the words of the prophet ISAIAH*, *In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* So he restricts the blessing to *as many as walk according to this rule*, as being the only true Israel, saying, *Peace be on them, and mercy, even upon the Israel of God*†. And to the Philippians‡, he says, *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision; for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* He was in no fear of incurring the curse, or forfeiting the blessing pronounced in these words; *Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.* It may be noticed here, that the awful caution immediately following the curse and blessing now cited, plainly respects what is man's confidence or ground of hope. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Jer. xvii.

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* Chap. xlv. 25.

† Gal. vi. 16.

‡ Chap. iii. 2, 3.

WE know nothing about the work of Christ but by the divine report about it. All the comfort and benefit arising from that work, is conveyed to men by the report of it : so that we can by no means regard them *separately*. When we rejoice in the report, we rejoice in the work reported ; as must necessarily be the case with respect to all *glad tidings* whatever. So that, if the work reported be a beneficial work, my whole joy arises from the assurance of its being true. The effect of a true report is the same as the effect of the persuasion of it : yea, we can have no idea of a true report, but by the persuasion of it. Whatever, then, we say of the persuasion, must equally be said of the report, and of the thing reported. So we find the word FAITH is used indifferently for either of these in scripture. Every divine *work* from the beginning, has always been attended with *speaking*, or some report, declaring the meaning of what was done. Jesus Christ came *doing* and *speaking* ; he came *working* the justifying righteousness, and *declaring* his ability to save. And the progress of his gospel in the world, will always correspond with his personal appearance among men. He came preventing men, setting at nought all their pretended advances toward God ; not teaching men how to work for life, but working himself for them ; giving life to the guiltiest, bringing nigh the remotest by his work. In like manner, by the progress of the divine report among men, is, with great propriety, fulfilled the

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the gracious promise, Isaiah xlvi. 12, 13. *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry.* By it righteousness is conveyed unto men, who were till then stout-hearted, and far from it. It comes unto men always unſent for; not meeting men inquiring after it, but overtaking them when running away; and, according to the ſignificant phraſe of the prophet, as *a voice behind them*: or, to change the ſimilitude, it finds men faſt aſleep, in the deſert, in midnight-darkneſs, among the bones of many lately devoured, and ready to be added to the number. It awakens them as by the voice of thunder, and conducts them in ſafety by its awful, but friendly lightning. It addreſſes them thus: *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.* Men thus relieved I have ſeen, who could give no other reaſon for their comfort but the word of the truth of the goſpel. Methinks I hear one of them ſay, “ When I firſt knew where I was, I found my-
“ ſelf at an utter *impoſſibility* as to all hope. The
“ *juſt God* and *eternal miſery* appeared to me in-
“ ſeparable ideas. But thanks be to God for the
“ ſalutary work! thanks be to God for the glad
“ report! By this report I find, that with the
“ all-ſufficient God nothing ſhall be impoſſible.
“ By this report I am aſſured, that it is highly
“ conſiſtent with the glory of every divine per-
“ fection to ſave me, one of the worſt of men,
“ who have hitherto been an enemy to all that
“ is

“ is good. This report emboldens me to say,
 “ *This is the true God and eternal life!* Hence
 “ every idol! Should an angel from heaven
 “ move the question, *Can this bare persuasion*
 “ *be any manner of advantage to our persons?* I
 “ should immediately suspect a likeness to the
 “ first question of doubt that ever was moved,
 “ *Yea, hath God said so?* But should he pro-
 “ ceed to answer it too, and say, *No, surely;*
 “ I should then confidently conclude it was the
 “ very spirit and stile of him, who, after deceit-
 “ fully undermining the first words that ever
 “ God spake to man, adventured to say, *Ye shall*
 “ NOT SURELY *die.*”

WE Protestants have laid aside the crucifix ;
 we reserve no fragments of the wood of the
 cross. But what have we got instead of these?
 We have got a perverted gospel. We have got
 some insipid sentiment about the cross of Christ,
 that, like the law of works, can do us no good,
 till it be *reduced to practice.* As for the bare
 work finished on the cross, or the bare report
 about it, however true we think it, so far have
 we mistaken it, that, setting aside *our active*
 operations about it, we do not see what comfort
 or benefit can be derived from it; we see “ no
 “ form nor comeliness about it, why we should
 “ desire it;” no manner of advantage that can
 result from it. We consider the gospel as fur-
 nishing us with so many good and excellent ma-
 terials to work upon; and our whole comfort
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and benefit arises from the proper performance and success of our labour.

Let us sum up at once the scope of the popular doctrine under one similitude, including the spirit of the many, by which the teachers seek to decoy us. Let us say, then, that the gospel, which they impiously teach us to call *in itself a dead letter*, is as cold and dead as *flint and steel*; that our hearts are dark and lifeless like *tinder*. We are assured, by the trials that have been made by many before us, that the materials, if properly used, are very fit to produce a lively and comfortable *spark*: yet our hands are so benumbed, we cannot use them to good purpose. However, we must endeavour to use them the best way we can. While we are diligently employed in these endeavours, warmth and vigour are restored to our hands, and we are at last successful in producing the desired spark of consolation. As often as we find ourselves in darkness, or at a loss for comfort, we are to renew the same operation, encouraging ourselves all the while with the reflection, that we once succeeded, and therefore may more readily do so again. To instruct and encourage us about these operations, the body of the popular doctrine is adapted, and, in the careful performance of them, the most serious part of our lives must be employed. But alas! what will all our labour, or all the comfort arising from it, avail us before Him, who says, *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have*

have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.

I do not think I ought to make any apology for my irony as too keen, or my stile as too severe on this subject; seeing I know none, against whom the edge of it points more directly, than it does against myself. For that it may not be thought I am animated against the popular doctrine by any prejudices of education, I am willing to own, that I was brought up from my infancy, in the greatest veneration for the popular preachers;—that my first years of reflection and reading were spent in hearing them, and in a careful perusal of their practical treatises; and that I continued, for a considerable time, by far too long indeed, seriously endeavouring to form my heart upon them.—But I am far from thinking I say any thing extravagant, or in the least injurious to my conscience, when I affirm, that I might have been as profitably employed, and even with as much Christian Piety, in attending the levee of the Lady of *Loretto*.

The highest decency certainly requires, that the difference betwixt what is holy and what is profane should be set forth in the strongest colours; especially when the greatest pains are taken to make that difference disappear, to confound human efforts with the divine righteousness, to confound the froth of human pride with the *most holy faith*.

The prophet ISAIAH, who often speaks of the time when the divine righteousness should be brought near to men, commonly intermixes with
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his accounts of it, the boldest expressions of irony and contempt, against all the self-justifying labour that men would oppose to it; which he generally describes in language borrowed from the ancient Idolatry*. I shall only produce an instance or two, out of many. Chapter xli. the last verse, joined with chapter xlii. 1.—*Behold, they are all vanity, their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* What a lively picture have we of exercised souls, hard at work to accomplish what they call *conversion*, in chapter xliv? The passage is somewhat long. I shall only cite a few words from the beginning of it, ver. 9. *They that make a graven image, are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint, &c.* But, in opposition to all this labour, what saith the Spirit of God, chapter lv? *Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?—Hear, and your soul shall live.* Every one then who is born of the Spirit, lives merely by *what he hears*, without his performing any duty at all; unless
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* This will readily appear to one who compares what is said *Isaiab* lxxv. 1, 5. and *Deut.* xxxii. 21. with the references made to these passages in the New Testament, at the close of *Romans* x.

we shall say, it was the duty of LAZARUS to hear and live, upon the uttering of the call, *Come forth*. He lives, I say, by what he hears: so the sole reason he has to give for his comfort, is a substantial fact reported by irrefragable testimony. And the reason or spring of his comfort, is the influencing principle of his life and practice.—This is the sum of all that the scripture speaks about conversion, regeneration, or the new birth.

OF all the corruptions of the gospel, that is the most dangerous, which brings the divine gift of righteousness seemingly very near to men, yet in effect sets it as high above the reach of one whose conscience is awake, as the perfection required by the divine law itself. By this perverted gospel, many teachers tantalize the souls of men, leading those whose conscience is most easily touched, through a course of the most gloomy kind of anxieties; while the more self-confident have their ears more open to that branch of the doctrine which facilitates the means of reaching the desired comfort; understanding the strong words by which the means and requisites are described, in a sense more suitable to human abilities and inclinations, and indeed more suitable to the spirit and scope of the doctrine, than the others do.

It matters not much, how near these teachers bring the gift of righteousness to me, if still it must cost me as much labour to come within reach of it, as to conform my heart to the law
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of God. This being plainly the case, what advantage have we by the gospel? We may say, it indeed brings a righteousness considerably near to us, yet, in order to come within reach of it, we must have all those good dispositions that are necessary for the fulfilling of the law. I apprehend, it would be no great difficulty to prove, that the scripture itself will warrant any man to hope for acceptance with God by his own righteousness, who is influenced by all those good dispositions toward the law, which ASPASIO considers as requisites for coming to Christ. He who can say, *I feel an aversion to sin, and prize the holy law above all things; the prevailing bias of my affections is to the divine law, and the habitual breathing of my soul after a conformity to its precepts; is, I think, in a fair way to fulfil the law, so as to live by his own obedience; according to what is said, Ezek. xxxiii. 14, to 19. If the wicked turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right,—he shall surely live,—he shall not die; none of his sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live,—he shall live thereby.* Thus the dispositions made necessary for our obtaining life by Christ, are sufficient to make us live without him, and to supersede the necessity of any Christ, or atonement at all.

While this passage of EZEKIEL is before us, it may not be amiss to take a short and summary view of God's reasoning with *Israel*, in the

XVIIIth and XXXIIIrd chapters*. Wherein, I think, we shall find due consideration paid to the most notable objections that ever were framed by the heart of man, against the revealed method of acceptance with God. I shall only premise, what I think I need not take time to illustrate at present, That God had hitherto, by his visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, kept up in *Israel* a standing pledge and memorial of his great purpose of saving men by the transferring of guilt. The *Israelites* were, in EZEKIEL'S time, suffering the manifest tokens of the divine displeasure, for the sins of their fathers, as well as their own. Their complaint against the *way of God*, as *hard* and *unequal*, was twofold. First, They thought it unreasonable that a son should suffer for the sins of his parents, however well he himself should behave :
for

* Some have thought that I have considered the reasoning with *Israel* in these chapters as sarcastical. For my part, I know nothing in the whole argument that can come under that notion, but the profane sarcasm of the *four grapes*, which God first repels as impious in itself and unreasonable at first instance, by asserting his own sovereignty in these words, *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine.* Then he condescends to reason with them on their own notions of equity, giving the most solemn assurance to every objector, that it should fare with him according to his own future conduct. Even as Jesus solemnly declares to one, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;* and to another, *This do, and thou shalt live.* We cannot seriously maintain that *death* is the wages of sin, unless with equal seriousness we maintain that *life* is due to the righteous. Those indeed who pretend to be righteous while they are not, expose themselves to worse than ridicule. But this can by no means serve to throw any air of levity on the divine law, nor on God's procedure with men, which, in the distribution of either justice or mercy, most solemnly and invariably establishes the law.

for men always presume they will do better than those before them; yea, better than they themselves have formerly done. This complaint corresponds exactly with that which we make against suffering for the sin of ADAM. To obviate this complaint, God proposes to take away the ground of it. He assures them, he would set aside that extraordinary providence, under which they had hitherto been conducted, and whose main end and view I have already hinted at;—that since they found fault with *his way*, as unequal, he would deal with them according to *their own*, namely, according to what they counted equity;—that they should have no more occasion to say, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge*;—that if a wicked father should beget a righteous son, that son should surely live; and that every man should suffer only for his own fault. Secondly, They also thought it very hard, that if a man had once led a bad life, no encouragement should be given for his reformation, however well disposed he should be for the time to come. For all men generally propose to do better, when once it shall be more convenient for them. They thought, to what purpose shall we reform, or hearken to the prophet's warning, to turn from our evil way, while our former transgressions still stand upon record against us?—Let us do ever so well for the time to come, we must be treated as criminals for what is past.—God also removes the ground of this complaint. He assures every man, who shall sincerely repent, or “turn from

“ his evil way, and do that which is lawful and “ right,” that he shall be happy, and no mention made of his former faults. All this he confirms by his oath, that there might be no remaining doubt or hesitation in the minds of men about their acceptance with him, as soon as they reformed. The complaint and the answer stand together in these words, chapter xxxiii. 10, 11. *Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus speak ye, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? &c.* Then follow the words quoted in the foregoing paragraph.

But to have a proper view of this matter, one must read the whole two chapters; whence it will appear, that the divine reasoning in them proceeds wholly on the objection, that the Lord’s way was not equal; which indeed comprehends the force of all the objections that have since been made against the gospel.—If nothing but *equity* had appeared in the divine character, nothing but *misery* could have been looked for by the guilty.—To men who are dissatisfied with *his way*, as unequal, God proposes to deal with them according to any rule of equity insisted upon among them. Chapter xxxiii. 20. *Ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal: O ye house of Israel, I will judge every one of you after his ways.*

So

So likewise it appears from the New Testament, that every one who is found guilty at last, shall be condemned out of his own mouth, or for walking unsuitably to his own maxim.

The field then is left fair and open for every one who wills, to run. Every let or hindrance, every objection that the reasoning faculty of man can frame, is entirely removed. Let all the well-disposed, all the friends of virtue avail themselves of the free declaration; God himself hath set his oath to it, that every one who turns from evil to do good, shall be happy. He who does this, may warrantably expect all countenance and encouragement from his Maker, whose pleasure ever lies on the side of righteousness. Many think they do so. Let them enjoy themselves. Christians have no occasion to quarrel with them. If they do well, no doubt they shall be accepted. The gospel is only a gracious provision, made, by the supreme royal prerogative, for the guilty and the desperate. Jesus Christ came only to bring relief to the vicious and the ungodly, without infringing the privileges of the righteous in the least. So these last, who are rich, have no reason whatsoever to grudge at the alms provided for the starving poor, seeing it is done no way at their cost or expence*. As for those who

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are

* When we endeavour, at any time, to set forth the divine grace toward the guilty in its proper light, I see no occasion we have to stop our course, to pay a tender regard to the scrupulous objections of those guardians of virtue, who, affecting great jealousy for her interests, quite over-act their part, and express no
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are sincerely well inclined, I have no doubt but they will do that which is lawful and right; even as I make no question but those who are averse to sin, will avoid it; for I have no notion, either from scripture or experience, of any impotency in man to do good, but what arises from his aversion to it; or of any readiness in him to do evil, but what arises from his love to it. The gospel then, or the *way of God*, which will always appear unequal in some respect or other, in the eyes of the well-inclined, can never be acceptable to any, but those who are ungodly, and without strength, even those who can have no hope according to any rule of equity.

If it be still said, that there is this difference betwixt the law and the gospel, that the latter furnishes friendly and powerful assistance to the candidate for happiness, whereas the former does not; I shall only reply, that an attentive reader of the two chapters will be at no loss to prove, that he who is sincerely inclined to fulfil the law, shall be favoured with the divine countenance, no less than he who is sincerely inclined to comply with what are called the terms or requisites of the gospel.

I HAVE chosen the rather to take notice of these passages in EZEKIEL, because I find nothing
more

small concern, lest they should be any way injured by the grace of the gospel, and a door be opened for licentiousness: for as those objections were never made by any, but such as were impelled by manifest disaffection to all truth, godliness, and humanity, the short apostolic reply to the makers of them is abundantly sufficient, *Their damnation is just.*

more vehemently insisted upon by the popular preachers, when they would encourage their hearers in their self-justifying labour, than the above mentioned divine oath. And I make no doubt but the Jewish doctors made the same use of it to their pupils. And no question they reckoned a man converted, when once they found him sincerely disposed to obey the law. The variation of a few names makes no material difference in this matter.

I think we may form an idea of the popular doctrine, by alluding to some of the similitudes most familiarly used by the teachers. The gospel, we shall say, is like a rope or a ladder, let down into a pit for the deliverance of some men who are in hazard of perishing at the bottom of it;—let down, I say, considerably near to them; yet at such a distance as they are scarce able, by their greatest efforts, and utmost stretching, to touch by the point of their finger, the mean of their escape; yet it is their duty to continue labouring to get hold of it, waiting for supernatural assistance. Now, it does not signify much, by what name we call the mean of escape, whether we call it the Law or the Gospel; for the great concern we have with either of these, is to obtain a righteousness, or title to life. I apprehend then, that the great difficulty is over, when once a man has fairly got hold of the rope, or his foot on the first step of the ladder; that is, when he has got his aversion to righteousness overcome, and pointed the other way, toward sin. The

whole ascent after this must certainly be much easier.

I say, it does not signify much, whether we call our mean of escape the Law or the Gospel : For, according both to the Jewish and popular doctrine, it is not the bare knowledge of the Law or the Gospel that can do us any service, but *the use we make of them*. The bare persuasion of the truth contained in either, *unless reduced to practice*, can be no manner of advantage to our persons *. This is likewise common to both, that they convey happiness, or afford hope to the well-disposed. And the exercise of the candidates must be much the same with respect to either ; that is, to endeavour to attain a due sense of former deficiencies, with a proper value and esteem for the mean of escape ; or, in other words, to attain to the hatred of sin, and the love of righteousness. And we need make no question, but the Jewish teachers, who were well skilled in the business of making proselytes or converts, knew as well as our popular preachers, how to awaken concern, and to suggest comfort, by heightening and lowering the terms and requisites by turns, according to the various cases of their hearers. And it would seem, that the zealous Jews, as well as modern Christians, laid no small stress

* I am here reminded of a fixed maxim among our popular preachers, That *an unapplied Christ is no Christ or Saviour at all*. Just so it may be said of the law, that an unfulfilled law, or a law not actually applied and reduced to practice, can give no life at all. So that, generally speaking, it may well be said, that we differ from the Jews more about words than things.

strefs on the diligent attendance they gave in hearing sound doctrine, and the motions thereby produced in their hearts. PAUL insinuates no less, when he says to the Jews, *Not the HEARERS OF THE LAW are just before God, but the DOERS OF THE LAW shall be justified.* The more attentively we consider this matter, we shall find the more reason to conclude, what has been oftener than once hinted, that it is of no great moment what name or thing we make use of, or what materials we work upon, to excite and gratify the darling sense of self-importance; the operation and the effect being in all cases nearly the same, while we are the agents, and the comfort is to arise, more or less, from our labour.

THE source of all this self-justifying labour, as grafted upon Christianity, I take to be this. The gospel, or the report concerning the work of Christ, wears the same uniform aspect towards all, considering all mankind as perfectly on a level; regarding even those whom it relieves, as children of wrath, even as others. The pride of man, which must always have some distinguishing qualification to feed upon, cannot digest this. So each one reasons thus: “ Seeing many shall perish,
 “ and seeing the gospel says nothing to me, but
 “ what it says to every one, what comfort can I
 “ reap from it, unless I can find about myself, at
 “ least one grain of odds, casting the balance in
 “ my favour, in comparison with others, or in
 “ comparison with what I myself have hitherto
 “ been !” Here let me adopt the words of Mr
 PRIOR,

PRIOR, which will serve my purpose as well as his :

That cruel something unpossess'd,
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.

Nor is it, though more soothing, less noxious when possessed.—Our attention is so much ingrossed in the pursuit of this *something*, that we mistake, neglect, and despise the simple report of the gospel : So cannot find the comfort which it yields to every one who understands and holds it for true. And indeed a cruel something it is; for it stings to death all who covet, and all who have it ; all who bewail the want, and all who rejoice in the possession of it. The former it leads through a tiresome and gloomy path unto utter darkness; the latter it lulls asleep on the top of a precipice, soothes them awhile with pleasing dreams, then throws them down headlong at last. Those of the former class have no ear to give to any thing that can be said of the truth and certainty of the gospel, and the grand things of God reported there. Every thing about it appears dark, lifeless, and insipid, for want of the wished-for something. And indeed they seldom meet with any teachers, but such as sympathize with, and so encourage them in their impious complaining and murmuring against God, for want of a righteousness, as if this were the exercise of godliness. With respect to the other class, who presume they have got something that turns the balance

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lance in their favour, we may accommodate the distich thus.

That fav'rite something, when poss'est,
Spreads light and joy o'er all the rest.

So they walk in the light of this something. The whole gospel now appears to them a very lovely and joyful scheme; because they find some reason, why all its comforts should bear a peculiar direction or respect towards them, in distinction from others. So we may find them talking, in a very high strain, of the gospel, with great satisfaction and delight, and even in raptures about it. Not that they are much concerned about the truth or certainty of it; for as this is not the source of their joy, they scarce know what it is to have any doubt about it. They are generally satisfied to hold this as they received it by tradition from their fathers.—And who could move any doubt about this, but Infidels or Atheists!—But let their favourite distinction be once called in question, and they will immediately remonstrate against this, as *raising the foundation*. And in this respect, it must be owned, they speak with great propriety; for this is indeed the foundation, light, and life of their whole religion. No sooner are they possessed of this, but they begin to look down with a solemn pride upon the rest of mankind, as profane; and to complain aloud of the prevalency of infidelity and irreligion; regretting, no doubt, that for which they value themselves, is not sufficiently esteemed by the rest of mankind.

kind. This is indeed the great centre of the popular doctrine, the very axis on which it turns. Here all its lines are united. All the divine attributes, works, and words, are introduced as handmaids subservient to this favourite distinction. The power and cunning of Satan is to be guarded against, chiefly, as opposed to this.—But if we turn our eyes to the scripture, it will appear, that this something is the great engine employed to blind the minds of men, lest “the light of the
 “gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the
 “image of God,” should shine unto them. It will appear, that if we imagine we possess, or desire to attain any requisite to our acceptance with God, either aside from, or in connection with the bare work of Christ,—Christ is become of no effect unto us,—Christ shall profit us nothing.

The Jewish and Christian teachers, then, have agreed thus far, that they have both taught their disciples to become *followers after righteousness*. But what shall we say, if it should appear from the scripture, that all who attain to righteousness, are such as were not seeking after it? The scripture indeed asserts it. But I am not obliged to account for it. PAUL himself, while he plainly asserts it as a certain matter of fact, introduces it with a question of solemn surprise. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is*
of.

*of faith**: *But Israel, which followed,—bath not attained.* And he calls ISAIAH very bold, for declaring the same truth: *I was found of them that*

* It is plain from this passage, that that form of expression which occurs so often in PAUL's epistles, *the righteousness of faith*, or *the righteousness which is of faith*, must denote rather the way how righteousness comes unto us, than how we come to it; seeing they who followed not after it, are said to attain to it. And indeed nothing is more frequent in common life, than the conveyance of joy or sorrow to us by unexpected news. Accordingly we find it to be the current and familiar stile of the scripture, concerning the conveyance of righteousness, salvation, or blessedness to men, or, which is the same thing, the word of God concerning it, that IT COMES or IS SENT to them. So it is compared to the rain and the snow coming down from heaven: and it as effectually produces hearing and understanding, as these produce moisture in the parched earth. The divine report, and the hearing of faith, are so closely connected together, that the same Greek expression (*ακουη*) seems to be used in the New Testament for both: at least our translators have thought so; for they sometimes render it by *hearing*, and sometimes by *report*. And by either of these it may, with great propriety, be said, that *faith comes to us*; for we cannot consider them separately. When one gives tokens of satisfaction at the unexpected approach of agreeable music, as I can be at no loss to perceive what gives him pleasure, I would think it impertinent to suspend his attention, by inquiries about the motion produced in the air conveying the sound, and its action on the organs of hearing, and thence on his mind, at a time when he is much more agreeably entertained.

We can have no clearer notion of a free gift, than in the conveyance of a comfortable point of knowledge to one who knows nothing at present but what makes him unhappy; especially if the encouraging truth or report be conveyed by the voice of him who performed the generous deed reported: *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.* And must it not be highly encouraging to one who considered the divine justice as an unsurmountable objection to his hope, to understand how the unchangeable God can appear unexceptionably just in receiving him into favour, guilty as he stands? But what signifies all this, says the proud devotee, unless I can find some reason about myself why the Deity should distinguish me as his favourite beyond other men? And thus he treats the bare truth of the gospel with scorn and contempt.

that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me, Rom. ix. 10. ASPASIO's friend, Mr ERSKINE, not choosing to deny this altogether, has fallen upon a most ingenious method to extract from it an argument, *à fortiori*, for encouraging his disciples in their labour, thus: "He is sometimes found of them
 " that seek him not, as PAUL, ZACCHEUS;—
 " much more will he be found of them that
 " seek him in the ways of his appointment *." It is not my business to dispute the fineness of this reasoning. Let it avail with whom it may avail. PAUL, in the words I have quoted, is not reasoning, but declaring a surprising matter of fact, which happened in his own time, quite contrary to his prejudice, which was strong in favour of *Israel*. Times and sentiments have greatly changed since. I doubt not but our modern teacher reasoned, according to the general appearance of the fact, in his time; only let the difference of facts, likened to one another, be well attended to. Thus, I am ready to allow it consisted with his experience, that his hearers generally succeeded best in following the course which anciently proved unsuccessful to *Israel*. Moreover, his argument has this advantage, that it removes all occasion for surprise. For what can be more natural or rational than to say, If God sometimes, out of royal prerogative, issues out a pardon to a hardened criminal; how much more

* See a volume of his sermons published, Edinburgh, 1755, p. 129.

more will he be kind and beneficent to the righteous, or those who are seriously disposed to be so? But if we are for a scheme of religion quite equal, rational, and suitable to our own good dispositions, we may soon find as able masters of reasoning as the popular teachers; who will conduct us by a shorter and more expeditious process of reasoning, than they generally do; without retarding our course, by intangling us among texts of scripture: And in that case indeed we had much better lay aside the gospel altogether. For even some of our best philosophers, who pretended to believe it, make a most childish figure when they begin to measure it with their scale.

On the whole, I think there is more excuse to be made for the Jewish, than for the Christian teachers in this respect. The former endeavoured to lower the high demand of the divine law, so as sinful men might have some hope to come up to it; the latter labour to set at a distance the heavenly gift which the gospel brings near or home to the most profane, in order to give full room for the pride of the devotee to avail itself in making the approach, and so as to render the matter as difficult to an awakened conscience, as it is to love righteousness and hate iniquity, or to fulfil the law. So their doctrine serves to elevate the proud, and to crush the poor and needy: And I must say, it required no small energy of deceit to darken the clearest and most comfortable revelation that ever God made to men;—to change
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the gospel of the glory of the blessed God into a doctrine of self-dependence.

I SHALL now close my remarks on the zealous Jews, by taking notice of the reason the apostle gives why they came short of righteousness, or acceptance with God. He tells us, that while they sought it, *as it were, by the works of the law, they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* They considered the bare report concerning Christ crucified, as too weak a bottom to stand on before God; they were disgusted at it, as one would be at the proposal to venture his life on the water in a basket. They would willingly have followed a Messiah that would have given them some employment in the matter; and they would have given a ready ear to him, teaching them how they might work the works of God; but they could not bear the thought, that all their good motions and desires should be utterly set at nought: So they could neither understand nor believe that Jesus came down from heaven to work the work of God for men by himself alone.

The same disgust is evidently to be seen still among those who have the greatest repute for Christian orthodoxy and piety. But if it be necessary that I should be still more plain, I am very willing to avoid all ambiguity, and freely own, I have no where observed the Jewish disgust at the bare truth, or, which is the same thing, the bare
work

work of Christ, more evident than among the admirers of the doctrine of Mess. MARSHALL, BOSTON, ERSKINES, WHITEFIELD, WESLEY, and such like. I am far from denying, that there are some among these, who, *not knowing the depths* of such doctrine, find all their comfort in the simple truth; even as I am far from denying, that when the Messiah was born, there were some even among the sect of the Pharisees, who “waited for the consolation of *Israel*,” and avoided the pernicious maxims of their party.

I am, &c.



LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN I thought of proceeding to a more particular examination of ASPASIO'S sentiments, I found it needful to explain myself on some points further than I have hitherto done, to prevent my being misunderstood. I shall therefore occupy this letter with reflections on *Mystery*, on *Reason*, and on *Spirit*.

On MYSTERY.

AS perhaps it may be thought I have not used this scriptural expression with sufficient respect on some occasions, I am content to bestow

some time in considering what use the scripture makes of it, and how it has been used by Christian teachers.

Since Christianity has been formed into a capital science under the name of *Theology*, as the sister of *Philosophy*, its teachers, despising the apostolic weapons, as too weak and contemptible to support their cause, and give it a creditable appearance, have borrowed all the arts of the schools to enable them to step forth in a decent figure, on a footing with their cousins the philosophers. Among other arts we may rank this as one, that they have made much the like use of the word *mystery*, as their kinsmen for a long time made of *occult quality*. After they have done their best to accommodate the Christian religion to the pride of men, whenever they come to a strait, they shelter themselves in the word *mystery*. So that *the mysteries of our holy religion*, or of revealed religion*, has become a fixed stile, and been used as a solemn phrase of sacred obscurity, to hold at a distance all profane inquirers. — But instead of dwelling on the common use, or rather gross abuse of this expression, let us notice how it is used in the scripture.

Upon a general view of all the passages where this word occurs, it will appear, that it is a relative expression, much resembling *interpretation*, or the common use of the word *antitype*, and
always

* According to the common use of the word *mystery*, it is not easy to answer the question sometimes put by Free-thinkers, What do we mean by revealed mysteries?

always refers to some obscure hint that went before, either by word, thing, or action, of which it is the real intent and meaning. Every figurative or emblematical speech or action, contains some secret meaning beside what is first presented to the senses ; and that secret meaning is the *mystery* of it. So that when once the *meaning* is made known to me, I find the figure, emblem, or parable, to be divested of every idea of secrecy, intricacy, or doubtfulness. When one tells me a *mystery*, then, he tells me a plain, clear, and intelligible truth, throwing light upon some obscure saying or action that went before. And this method of instruction, as has been often observed, is, of all others, the most satisfying and delightful to the mind, as well as the fittest to awaken attention. A parable may be fitly compared to a shell inclosing a pearl, or a box containing a jewel ; when once the cover is opened, I am fully satisfied about the contents. Every one of Æsop's Fables contains a moral ; and that moral is the whole mystery of it. Many sayings, things, and facts in the Old Testament, contain a secondary or secret sense, which the New Testament clearly unfolds, and so enables us to know the mystery of them. And when a mystery is once known, it is no more secret, intricate, or doubtful.

Jesus Christ delivered many parables concerning the kingdom of heaven, and he explained the meaning of them to his disciples ; “ because, said he, it is given unto you to know the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven.” In like manner,

the visions presented to the apostle JOHN in the isle *Patmos*, contained *mysteries* under them. I shall content myself with producing a specimen: Rev. i. 20. *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.* In PAUL'S Epistles, *mystery* always refers to some ancient figure. Christ's love to his church was prefigured by the first institution of marriage, so, is the mystery of it. The whole redeemed company out of all nations was prefigured by, so, is the mystery of *Israel after the flesh*. And accordingly PAUL affirms that *all Israel shall be saved*. That Christ's people who remain alive at his second coming, shall not *sleep, but be changed*, was prefigured by the translation of ENOCH and ELIJAH, and is accordingly called a *mystery*. *God made manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, &c.** is the truth, spirit, or ultimate meaning, not only of the *Shechinah*, but of all the occasional appearances of God to men; so they who worship God as thus manifested, worship him "in spirit and in truth." And this manifestation of God is called *the great mystery of godliness*.

PAUL

* *Manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit.* As the former of these two phrases points to the condition of Christ while under the law, and the latter to his condition as raised from the dead; when I have occasion to make a general reference to this text, I shall content myself, for brevity's sake, with saying, *God manifest in manhood*, or any other general expression including the two-fold view of the apostle.

PAUL often calls the plain simple gospel which he preached, *a mystery*, as being the true scope and sense of many ancient types and figures ; so he calls it *the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest*. — Were it needful, I might easily shew that the *Greek* fathers used the word *mystery* in the same sense with the apostles, as referring to some type, symbol, or parable ; even as the *Latins* used in its stead *sacramentum*, in the same sense also.

From what has been said then it will appear, that nothing can be more foolish or absurd than to join the epithets of *incomprehensible*, *obscure*, or *unintelligible*, to a mystery *after* it is declared : For the plainest facts recorded in the gospel are the great mysteries manifested by it. The Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, were prefigured by many types, and are therefore *mysteries* ; yet no facts can be better attested than these : And had they not been formerly veiled under types, figures, and parables, they had never been called mysteries in the New Testament. The *calling* of the Gentiles is a *mystery* much accounted of in PAUL'S Epistles ; yet it was a notorious matter of fact, obvious to the eyes of friends and foes, giving cause of wonder and praise to the former, and provoking the envy of the latter.

Christians then have no occasion to beg the peace of *reasoners*, as to the clearness and certainty of the articles of their creed ; far less to use any mean arts to evade their ridicule, which in the

issue must only serve to provoke it the more, by giving some just handle for it. Christianity is indeed, as it pretends to be, a supernatural scheme, so cannot be measured by the line of nature. This is the sum of all that its enemies have to say against it. Yet there is as plain, uniform, and regular a connection, in all the parts of this scheme, as in any branch of the course of nature. And in general, it is incumbered with much fewer, and far less important difficulties, than are daily found in tracing the course of nature. It is true, those who hope to be happy in following nature, find no occasion for the gospel, and therefore must always be objectors against it. And it would ill become us to grudge them this liberty, while the Author of nature and of the gospel suffers them.

Men have agreed to consider that as the surest and most valuable knowledge, which is gathered from often repeated facts and experiments ; yet great mistakes have often been made in drawing wrong inferences from the plainest facts. Here the Christian creed has the advantage of all other knowledge, that it rests upon the surest facts, without the hazard of the mistakes committed by inattentive or ignorant observers.

ALL divine Revelation rests on supernatural facts. The general method by which God has chosen to make himself known to men, has been that which is most suited to their frame. He hath awakened attention by some supernatural appearance, so as to produce in the mind of the observers, the question of surprise, What meaneth this!

this ! Hereupon he hath always provided, by means equally above the power of nature, a clear and satisfying account of that which occasioned surprize; so as the result should be the joint appearance of divine wisdom and divine power to the mind of the observers. And this result has, in the leading instances, been contrary to the general expectations and reasonings of mankind. We may add, it was necessary this should be the case, if any revelation from God was necessary to men : For if the result had been according to the previous reasonings of men, it could not have been manifest that any interposition was made by the Author and Controller of nature.

But the truth is, those accounted the wiser part of mankind, who lead the rest, see no necessity at bottom of any divine revelation; and therefore it may well be expected they will rather choose to continue reasoning against the clearest facts, than admit the doctrine built upon them, which displays the glory of God, and promotes the happiness of men, at the rate of abasing human pride. Some indeed of our modern wise men have thought it prudent to profess a regard to revelation, considering it as a confirmation of their own conjectures about virtue and happiness ; or, which is the same thing, the sayings of the ancient philosophers : For whatever honour they pay to their predecessors, returns back again to themselves. But it is easy to see through the disguise of these moderns, while they thus pay their public compliments to revelation, to avoid being marked with the name of *Infidels*, which happens to be

odious among the populace, and which in former times would have exposed them to great inconveniencies from the resentment of the Christian teachers.—But to proceed :

Whereas it is often difficult to state the connection or analogy of a number of facts or appearances upon which some principle or point of knowledge is to be established ; revelation has this advantage, that as the facts on which it proceeds are very numerous, so the connection of them, or the unity of design, is well established. There is one capital or central fact, which collects the evidence of all that went before, and is supported by all that follow, even the Resurrection of Jesus. Here all the lines of divine revelation are united. So the apostle PETER sums up to us the evidence of revelation thus : *We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the prophetic word more firm, or more confirmed, &c.*

This apostle, in his first Epistle, chap. i. 11. tells us, that the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed upon them, were the scope of all the prophets ; even as Jesus had said before, *Luke xxiv. 25, 27.*

On

On the holy mount, PETER, and two other apostles, beheld the glory that was to follow on the sufferings of Christ, when they were eye-witnesses of his majesty. What the prophets had spoken concerning his resurrection, could not be completely fulfilled, without his being received up into glory. The three apostles there had a view of him beforehand in the condition he was to appear in after his resurrection ; that is, they saw him in his glorified state. So MATTHEW tells us, chap. xvii. 9. *Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.* And LUKE says, chap. ix. 36. *They kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.* And indeed they could not make the proper use of it, while, as MARK tells us, chap. ix. 10. *They questioned one with another what the resurrection from the dead should mean.*

The intent of this vision was illustrated to them when Jesus, after his resurrection, was taken up, and a *cloud** received him out of their sight. It would now appear, that, on the holy mount, they had seen within the cloud that which on the day of ascension the cloud removed from their sight.

The *bright cloud*, or *the excellent glory*, from whence the three apostles heard the Father's voice,

* It is said concerning the second coming of Christ, Rev. i. 7. *Behold, he cometh with CLOUDS.* This corresponds with what the angels said at the ascension of Jesus, Acts i. 11. *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

voice, was the well-known ancient symbol of the divine presence. This cloud attended on Jesus appearing in majesty, “his face shining as the sun, “and his raiment white as the light.” So the apostles beheld the same *glory of the Lord* that had been so often seen by MOSES and the ancient prophets; or we may rather say, they beheld the ultimate end and perfection of all the ancient appearances of the divine glory. MOSES beheld the *similitude of the Lord* when he conversed with him *face to face*. And EZEKIEL, in the close of his first chapter, describing to us *the likeness of the glory of the Lord*, calls it *the likeness as the appearance of a man, having brightness round about*. The apostles, then, saw more than all the ancient prophets, when they beheld the real man Jesus appearing in that same glory which served of old to shew forth the future divine majesty of the great Messiah, the Son of God. Thus, all the grand descriptions of the divine majesty in the Psalms, and other scriptures, are illustrated to us; as when he is said to “cover himself with “light as with a garment, and to dwell in light “which no man can approach unto.” Hence also we may find the true reason why so often mention is made, as well of the members of the human body, as of the human passions, in the descriptions of God in the scripture; it being the great design of the Deity to make himself fully manifest in human nature.

When the apostles saw, appearing in *his glory*, MOSES, whose body was then in the grave, and ELIAS, who had never undergone the separation
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of soul and body, they had a view of Jesus as *Lord of the dead and living*; and at the same time they had a view of the condition of saints raised from the dead, having their bodies glorified, exemplified in ELIAS; and of the condition of departed souls “present with the Lord, while “absent from the body,” exemplified in MOSES, who appeared in glory as well as ELIAS. Of this last condition PAUL speaks, when he says, *For we know, that if our earthly house of tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,* 2 Cor. v. 1. He is in that passage plainly speaking of Christians being clothed with an *house*, when divested of the *tabernacle*. So that, whatever philosophers have imagined, the scripture does not furnish us with any notion of the human soul subsisting in a state altogether unbodied, or, to retain the apostolic expression, *unclothed*. But to proceed :

WHEN they saw the lawgiver, who had so often conversed with Him of old in a figure, and whose law was in a special manner pointed against every likeness of God that men could imagine; when they saw the greatest succeeding prophet, who was distinguished by his being “very jealous “for the honour of the one God, who shares “not his glory with another:” when, I say, they beheld these two eminent men attending upon Jesus in his glory, and illuminated thereby, they had an undeniable proof that he was truly God; that he was the great scope and end of the
law

law given by the former, and of all the zeal shewn by the latter.

But it was not left to the apostles to sum up the evidence afforded by what they saw, and to draw the necessary conclusion: For the true meaning of what they saw, was intimated to them by what they heard. They were taught to know what the *excellent glory* meant, by the voice which proceeded from it, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED: Though this instruction had not its full effect upon them till after the resurrection, to which it referred.

As the resurrection of Jesus is the capital fact referred to by all the other works of God, so the voice which came from the excellent glory may, with great propriety, be accounted the capital or central saying, wherein the whole of divine revelation is summed up, and set before us in one single point of view.

The subject of conversation to which this voice referred, was the death of Jesus; for MOSES and ELIAS were talking with him of this event before the voice came.

Now, to have a proper view of the use PETER makes of what he then saw and heard, when he says, *We made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as eye and ear witnesses; it is necessary that we reflect on the state of the controversy betwixt the apostles and the Jews concerning the coming of the Messiah.

The

The ancient prophets, who foretold the coming of the Messiah, described him often as a glorious and powerful king.—Such a king the Jews expected in their own sense of glory and power : And not finding in Jesus any thing answerable to their expectations, they still affirmed that the promised Messiah was not yet come. The apostles, on the other hand, maintained, that he was come, and that JESUS was HE. But they could not, in any consistency with the prophecies, make known the *coming* of the Messiah, or make it evident, that he was really come, without, at the same time, making known his *power* and *majesty*. Without this the Jewish objections were unanswerable. The apostles then were enabled, by the vision on the mount, which coincided with what they saw on the day of ascension, to make known the power of the Messiah manifest in Jesus, as corresponding exactly with the ancient prophecies, though very different from the Jewish apprehensions of it. For whereas the Jews expected the Messiah would be dignified with earthly power and glory, the apostles made known the power of the Lord Jesus as heavenly, and as the power of an endless life. And we may add, that what the apostles saw and heard, was a sure pledge of his second appearance, “ sitting on the right hand of power, “ and coming in the clouds of heaven ;” according as he declared before the Jewish rulers. But PETER speaks of this by itself in the close of his second Epistle.

The

The great reason why the Jews stumbled or were offended at Jesus, and why they could not own him as the true Messiah, was the weakness of his appearance, and more especially his shameful death on the cross, when he was *crucified in weakness*, without any interposition of power to save him from death. On this account they held him in the greatest contempt. But on this very account he received from God the Father honour and glory. Here is manifest the great difference betwixt the taste of God and that of men. When PETER once shewed his aversion to the sufferings of his Lord, from the most plausible of all pretexts, namely, regard to his honour, he received this severe rebuke, *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

The excellent glory which shined on the person of Jesus, as well as the voice which proceeded from it, plainly respected his death on the cross, where his righteousness was completed. When Jesus at his baptism undertook to fulfil all righteousness; the divine approbation of his undertaking was expressed from heaven in the same words, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;* and the Spirit of God descended upon him in the form of the harmless dove, qualifying him for suffering, and filling him with the spirit of patience unto death: But now, when the divine approbation of his finished work is set before us, the Spirit of God rests upon him as the spirit of glory.

glory. He appeared then in weakness and patience; now he appears in power and glory. We saw him then animated to endure sufferings; now we behold him as comforted, and triumphing after them. Then the heaven was opened, and a prospect of glory afforded at a distance; in consequence of which Jesus continued patient unto death for the joy that was set before him: Now he is received up into glory; the glory surrounds his person, and thence the joyful sound is uttered. Now is answered his expectation, expressed in these words, Psal. xvi. 11. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

PAUL, speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, says, he was raised up from the dead by the *glory of the Father*. Here it is that the fullest view of God is to be had. All the divine perfections are summed up in goodness, or love: For God is love. If we say, then, that he is infinitely good, we must at the same time say, that he is as opposite to all evil as he is good; even as the purest light is to the grossest darkness. So we find his wrath, which is nothing else but the opposition of perfect goodness or love to all evil or malignity, is pointed forth to us in scripture under the notion of jealousy, the inseparable attribute of love; at least we may say, where there is no love, there can be no jealousy. But however necessary the punishment of sin be to support the dignity of the divine character, and to shew us what God is not; we could never have known what he is,

unless an adequate object had been found for the fulness of his delight and complacence to rest upon; so as what PAUL calls (*ευδοκία της αγαθωσύνης*) *the good pleasure of goodness*, might be manifest to men.—From JESUS CHRIST raised from the dead, after suffering the divine wrath for sin, the apostles bring us this message, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*; that the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. As the preternatural darkness attending the death of Christ, was a fit sign of the divine frown against sin, which made him exceeding sorrowful unto death; so the glory into which he was received after his sufferings, was a fit sign of the divine complacence in the righteousness which he finished in his death.

This glory, then, is the appearance of the divine smile of approbation and delight, and the voice is the language of it. When God smiles, or lifts up the light of his countenance, he says, *I am well pleased*. The testimony of the apostles concerning God well pleased in his beloved Son, conveys to the ends of the earth the knowledge of what they saw. Every one who believes their testimony, or is persuaded that it is true, has “the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” even as the apostles had the *sight* of it. And this knowledge gives light, or a ray of good hope toward God in the heart, where nothing but darkness or despair took place before. So all who have this knowledge, are said to be called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

THE voice from the excellent glory shews us the real intent of all the expressions of divine satisfaction used concerning the ancient sacrifices; and that God had no regard to them, but as they prefigured “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” So PAUL, speaking of them in contrast with the true sacrifice, quotes the words adapted for the Messiah in the XLth Psalm, to shew that God had no regard to them considered by themselves: Heb. x. 6. 7. *In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin (ἐν εὐδοκίαις) thou wast not well pleased: Then said I, Lo I come, &c.* And while he sets before us the offering of the body of Jesus Christ as the true sacrifice, in opposition to the former, he says, *He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.* The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then, is distinguished from all others, by the peculiar testimony of the divine delight therein, *I am well pleased.*

The glory which shines on Jesus Christ, is the united splendor of justice and mercy in perfection. Till he appeared, we could only see the dark side of justice and judgment pursuing sin unto death: But in him we see the fulfilment of the ancient promise, Psal. xciv. 15. *Judgment shall return unto righteousness.* It now returns from the pursuit of sin, after having abolished it in the death of Christ, with a smiling aspect to exert its utmost in rewarding unspotted righteousness. Yet in him we behold a glory superior to that of equity and judgment. All our notions of equity must be measured by the divine law. Now, according to the law, which said, *The*

man which doth these things shall live by them, and made no provision for one man's being benefited by the righteousness of another, Jesus Christ could only obtain life for himself alone by his own obedience ; but according to that sovereign grace, which, acting, not contrary to law, but beyond the line of it, and high above it, placed him, " who thought it no robbery to be equal with God," under the law, as the substitute of the guilty, to redeem them by being made a curse for them, he receives power over all flesh, to bestow eternal life on as many as were given him to be redeemed by him.

While we thus view him as the representative of sinners, we behold him rewarded according to grace, as well as according to equity. So we find him often in the Psalms praying for deliverance, according to justice, and according to mercy.— It is impossible to find a proper similitude for this.— Yet, if a great king should send his only son to a distant country, to deliver an enslaved people, and then reward his successful fatigues with such abundant wealth, as should enable him to be no less conspicuous among them for his bounty, in spreading the blessings of peace, than he had been for his patience and valour in sustaining the calamities of war; would it not be making a very poor and low account of this reward, should we only say, that the king who bestowed it had done a very just and equitable action, seeing no less was adequate to the services of his son? Would not such an action naturally extort from our hearts a higher encomium? While we approved

proved his equity, we should be constrained to admire his goodness, and say, that, in bestowing the reward, he had crowned and perfected the royal bounty, the undeserved kindness, which began to appear in the sending of his son. It behoved us to say, that both the services and the reward came of mere mercy and compassion to the once unhappy people.—So the fulness of the divine grace is bestowed upon Jesus Christ; yet he may, with the greatest propriety, call it MY GRACE, as being found worthy to inherit it all.

THE divine glory, then, according to the shortest, and most comprehensive description of it, is that of *grace reigning through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Or, to join some images used to the same purpose, we may say, The throne of God is the throne of grace, “and righteousness and judgment are the habitation or establishment of his throne.” So when the time is spoken of, when the divine glory should dwell among men, Psal. lxxxv. the description runs thus; *Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* Here are verified the ancient names given to the emblematical glory, such as, *the beauty of Jehovah,* and *the beauty of holiness.* So when they praised the beauty of holiness, they said, *Praise ye the Lord, for he is good: For his mercy endureth for ever.*

We may take this opportunity to observe, that the first approach of the divine grace to men, is

made by presenting to their view the gift of righteousness. So, in the formentioned Psalm, where the procession of the salvation of God to men is spoken of; it is said, *Righteousness shall go before him.* Our first notion of grace must arise from beholding the gift bestowed. Hence we infer the gracious disposition of the giver. So PAUL, Romans v. speaks of these as inseparable. He first mentions the *free gift* by itself, then *the grace of God, and the gift by grace; and they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* All then who know the free gift, or are persuaded that the justifying righteousness is already wrought, know the grace of God in truth. To such PETER, in the close of his first Epistle, says, *I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying, that this is the TRUE grace of God wherein ye stand;* plainly intimating, that they were in hazard of being deceived by counterfeits of that grace.

Therefore when we hear men who are pained about acceptance with God, taught to expect and pray for grace, to help them to convictions, faith, repentance, or any thing else, in order to their finding relief in Christ's righteousness; we may be very sure, that this is not the *true* grace of God, but the *false*, or a corruption of the true. And we may be as sure, that God will regard no prayer but that of faith. The popular preachers themselves finding some difficulty here, to reconcile their self justifying labour to scripture-language, incline to talk to us of some preliminary faith, as necessary to introduce the principal faith,
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that is, a faith in God's ability to work faith in us. And thus, after their usual manner, they set the difficulty one step farther off, drawing a curtain over what is not fit to bear the light ; for if the question were properly urged, instead of one preliminary act, we should find occasion for an endless series of acts of faith.—But not to insist on this at present :

THE divine voice directed peculiarly to Jesus, distinguishing him from all others, was an explicit and full decision of the whole controversy betwixt him and the Jews. When he was on the cross, the Jews insulted him in this manner: *He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him: For he said, I am the Son of God.* But now HE who, “ looking down from heaven upon the “ children of men, to see if there were any that “ did understand and seek God,” returned this verdict, upon the general survey, *There is none that doth good, no not one* ; declares his full satisfaction in Jesus, espouses his character as his own, and vindicates all his claims. Did Jesus lift up his eyes to heaven, and, addressing the Father, say, *I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me ?* &c. The Father approves, and bestows the requested glory. Did Jesus on the cross say, *It is finished ?* Now we may consider the Father as saying, in the most solemn form, *Amen.* In sum, the voice proceeding from the glory, is no less than the motto of the broad seal of heaven, stamping the person, character,

character, works, and words of Jesus, as all truly divine, ratifying every word he spoke as infallible truth, and sustaining all his works as perfect; or, to say all in one word, we may use the expression of the apostle JOHN, chapter vi. 27. (τεταυ γαρ ο πατηρ εσφραγισεν, ο θεος) *For him the Father hath sealed, GOD.*

When we think of the voice directed to Jesus as a public person, or a representative, we must consider it as no less powerful to convey the life which lies in the divine favour, to all supernaturally connected with him, than the ancient sanction of the law given to ADAM, *Thou shalt surely die*, was to convey death to all naturally connected with him.—The angels, giving glory to God on the prospect that was opened by the birth of Jesus, conclude, or, we may say, sum up their ascription of praise in these words, (εν ανθρωποις ευδοκια), *Good pleasure in men.* So likewise it is said of the Church, who borrows her name from him “who loved her and gave himself “for her,” that she should be called *Hephzi-bah*, Isaiah lxii. 4. What a grand and engaging view is here presented to us of the divine glory, when we find it is all summed up in philanthropy, or complacence in men!

By the *speaking glory*, we find the blessing mentioned in the promise to ABRAHAM, which comprehends all the following great and precious promises, now pronounced and bestowed on the person of Jesus. PAUL speaking of the conveyance of the blessing, takes very particular notice
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of the words recorded by MOSES concerning it ; and he carefully marks the peculiar direction it bare to Jesus Christ. Gal. iii. 16. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* The very mention of *blessing* in the promise to ABRAHAM, implied, that men were then exposed to the curse or displeasure of God, for want of a righteousness. And we find, that what ABRAHAM “ believed, was imputed to him for righteousness.”

But the law of MOSES, which came after the promise, set forth more strongly than the natural conscience, the extent of the curse, as well as the necessary terms of acceptance with God, or the righteousness requisite to obtain the blessing. We find the scope of the law often set before us in language to this effect : Psal. xxiv. 4, 5. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully : He shall receive the blessing from the Lord.* The Saviour of the world came under this law, where the condemning power of sin was most strongly evinced, as well as the perfection of obedience most peremptorily insisted upon ; that so his righteousness, arising forth to the view of men, from the severest trial, might, like gold from the furnace, shine forth with the most unexceptionable splendor and dignity. PAUL gives us his paraphrase on the promise to ABRAHAM, while he declares its accomplishment, when he says, Gal. iii. 13, 14. *Christ hath*

*redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us :—That the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.—*Righteousness being only found in Jesus Christ, the substitute for the guilty, to him alone the blessing has respect ; in him alone God declares himself *well pleased*. The blessing rests only on his righteousness, and follows it wherever it goes. To whomsoever it extends, the blessing is also conveyed.

In vain shall any sinner expect to find about himself any reason why God should be well pleased with him, or even better pleased with him than with others.—In vain shall he pray to God for grace to enable him to find any such reason.—In vain shall he expect to hear one syllable more from God, to encourage him to draw nigh to him, than that he is well pleased in his beloved Son ; that JEHOVAH is well pleased for his righteousness sake.—He who is persuaded, that Christ hath done enough to procure the divine good pleasure for the guiltiest of mankind, loves that truth, and counts all things loss for the excellent knowledge conveyed by it. He who is not satisfied with this, is disaffected to that wherein the fulness of the divine delight rests. He says in his heart, “ I do not believe that
 “ Christ hath done enough ; I do not believe that
 “ God is fully placated by what he hath done,
 “ unless I also can find some reason why the
 “ divine favour should bear a more peculiar di-
 “ rection to me than to others.”—Thus it is that
 men

men give the lie to God, while they believe not the record that God gave of his Son. And must not the jealousy of God burn in favour of his sole delight, and against all disaffection to it? For, say the apostles, when guarding against apostasy from the divine grace, *Our God is a consuming fire.*

When the apostles bare witness, that the blessing contained in the promise to ABRAHAM, which includes all the following promises, was bestowed on Jesus Christ, they could with great propriety declare, *All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.* All the following promises served to illustrate and shew forth the extent of that capital one, in a great variety of views. So when we think of the glory which the apostles saw and heard, we may well say, What good thing can be wanting, where the divine complacence wholly rests? Did that question concerning God fill our minds with the most fearful forebodings, *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* Did the inspired answer, *Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath,* complete our despair, by assuring us, that it came nothing short of the deepest impression of fear that his power to avenge can make upon us? Was our despair ratified, by hearing these words, *He is in one mind, and who can turn him?* And shall it give us no comfort to hear the apostles demonstrating, that the divine anger hath proceeded to its utmost extent, and found a boundary, from which no objection can be drawn against its infinite extent? Seeing we can
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no more measure the dignity of the sufferer, than the majesty of the avenger ;—shall it give us no comfort to hear, that what seemed the dark side of the character of God, even judgment against sin, now rests for *a light to the nations?* So as we might affirm, with the greatest certainty, that *in him is no darkness at all* ; and at the same time be assured, that *with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* : Though, in order to our knowing his character, it is necessary that one part of his work appear before the other ; even as it was necessary, that the earth should be first created a dark confused mass, that he might appear, by his working, the God, not of darkness and confusion, but of light and order.

I do not intend at present to take a general view of the promises which follow that to ABRAHAM ;—but when we read such passages as these, *Isai. lvii. 15. Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, &c. And chap. lxvi. 1, 2. Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : Where is the house that ye build unto me ? And where is the place of my rest ? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord : But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word* ; does not the voice which came from the excellent glory to Jesus, readily occur to our thoughts ? And must it not yield much more solid comfort to the self-condemned, to
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read the scriptures in this view, than to be urged, by the popular doctrine, to the hard labour of squeezing at their own hearts, in order to extract thence some one or other of the qualifications included in the promises? Many passages in the prophets, big with comfort to the desperate, have been abused, to encourage men in this fruitless labour; and we may add, almost the whole book of Psalms, which were originally intended to set before us the sufferings of the Messiah, and the following glory, as Jesus himself declares. If we give heed to many popular treatises, we are left to understand the far greater part of the Psalms, as taken up with descriptions of the ebbings and flowings of the pride of the devotee: We are left to the poor and insipid employment of singing these in the grandest part of divine service; the most sublime matter of song being removed far from our thoughts, while the very words pregnant with it are in our mouths.

Now that the symbols of the divine presence are no where to be found in any grove, mountain, tabernacle, or temple on the earth, but rest on the body of JESUS CHRIST in heaven; we have a clear document, that the seat of worship is changed, and that where He is, there is the house of prayer for all nations. Wherever the glory resided of old, there God was said to put his name; and thither all sacrifice was to be brought, and all worship directed.

Many great things were spoken, many expressions of the divine delight uttered, with regard
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to the place of the divine residence ; but we must say the same thing of these, as of those uttered concerning the ancient sacrifices. When we hear such words as these, P^sal. cxxxii. 13, 14. *The Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: Here will I dwell, for I have desired it;* they lose all meaning, except when referred to the body of JESUS: For the Holy Ghost emboldens us to say, as absolutely, and with as little reserve, that *the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as that he taketh no pleasure to drink the blood of bulls and goats.* In the temple of SOLOMON, at the height of its grandeur, there was only a shadow of what was to be found bodily or really in Christ; *for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

Accordingly Christ tells the woman of Samaria, that the time was at hand, when there would be no more occasion for disputing what was the proper worshipping-place on the earth, seeing the Spirit * and Truth was now to take place of all
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* *John* iv. 24. πνευμα ὁ Θεός. It does not appear that Jesus here intended, as some think, to furnish the woman with a metaphysical idea of spiritual substance abstracted from matter; yea the scripture no where gives us any idea of spirit, but as acting in some place or body. Nor does it appear, as others apprehend, that he is here reasoning with her about the Deity of that divine person called the Holy Spirit. He is evidently instructing her about the character of God, where he delights to dwell, and manifest his presence; where he is to be approached to, and found propitious. And he gives her to understand, that the true character of God, was the Spirit of what the Jews and Samaritans contended about: And that this Spirit was soon to be fully exhibited, and
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the ancient appearances of God, which at any
time

had even now already begun to appear in view, namely, in his own person, with whom she was then conversing. Without minding then the niceties of those who contend about the order wherein the Greek words ought to be translated, as whether we should say, *God is Spirit*, or, *The Spirit is God*; we may warrantably conclude the sense to be, that the true and full exhibition of the divine character and presence was only to be found in the person of the Messiah. In support of this it is observable, that *Spirit* and *Truth* are used in this passage as words of like import, illustrating each other. For if the spirit and ultimate scope of the divine abode in the temple of Jerusalem had not been manifested, the grand things spoken concerning that temple would not have been verified. So that the apostle JOHN'S saying in his first Epistle, may very properly, as well as agreeably to his sense, be applied here, *τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀληθεία*, *The Spirit is the Truth*.

They who worship God as thus manifested, worship him *in Spirit and in Truth*. And by all the tokens that God gave of his temporary presence in the earthly temple, he was *seeking such to worship him*. To *walk in the spirit*, or *after the spirit*, and to *walk in the truth*, are expressions of the same import in the New Testament. They who *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, are said to *worship God in the spirit*, by PAUL; who hereby encourages the Philippians to consider themselves as the true circumcision, while they had no confidence *in the flesh*, and did not hanker after the peculiarities wherein the Jewish nation gloried. The same apostle, speaking of the spirit and scope veiled under the Mosaic institutions, says, *Now the Lord is that Spirit*.

To sum up what has been said, The great design of the Deity from the beginning, according to all the scriptures, was, to make himself, his character and attributes, fully visible to his creatures in a perfect image, losing nothing of the original in the representation. The most full and grand idea of the object of worship that ever was or will be presented to the thoughts of angels or men, is that of A GLORIFIED MAN EXERCISING AND DISPLAYING EVERY DIVINE PERFECTION. All who in worshipping have not their minds fixed on this object, may very warrantably be said to *worship they know not what*.

On this occasion can one avoid exclaiming? How dispiriting, how debasing to human nature, is every scheme of virtue and happiness, but the Christian, which not only with *such* certainty exalts it *so* high, but also opens for the basest of the sons of ADAM the prospect of being conformed in glory and blessedness to the SON OF THE HIGHEST!

time occasioned one place to be deemed more holy than another. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find the earthly tabernacle, service, and priesthood, set aside, to give place to the truth and substance of all these ancient shadows. The destruction of Jerusalem, according to the divine prediction, concurred with the doctrine of the apostles to abolish them. Christ then is the only true tabernacle, minister of the sanctuary, altar, sacrifice, priest, &c. to be acknowledged by all Christians who hear the apostles, and who maintain with them, that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh. They who hear the apostles, forsake the shadows, because the substance is come. They who more or less revive the use of the shadows, so far deny that the substance is come; they in effect deny that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, while they seek to establish what he came in the flesh to abolish, and zealously adhere to those things whose very use was to declare that he was not yet come.

True Christians then agree with the apostles in saying, *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, is not of God: And this is that spirit of antichrist, &c.* The apostolic creed is summed up in this, that JESUS is the CHRIST; and, says JOHN, *Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* The great antichrist foretold by the apostles, has now appeared; yet at no time has he refused to put these two words together, and say, *Jesus is the Christ.*

But

But he denies the apostolic import of them, and speaks and acts in many respects as if the Messiah were not yet come : So he is a liar, and may be convicted of speaking falsehood in what he denies, by the part of the truth which he professes to hold. Thus we find antichrist professing to admit the truth of all the facts recorded in the gospel, and hold the apostolic writings as divinely inspired, and yet zealously promoting a poor imitation of all the abolished shadows.

The national righteousness and happiness of Israel are now sought after, in opposition to Christ, *the end of the law for righteousness*, and the heavenly life to which he rose from the dead. We fondly apply the ancient prophecies to national churches established by the laws of earthly states and kingdoms, (a poor imitation indeed of that national church which was established of old by the divine law): And it would give many of us no pleasure to hear, that the prophecies concerning the nations had their most notable accomplishment in the infancy of Christianity, (as they choose to speak), when God at the first did visit the nations to take out of them a people for his name, even though the inspired apostles should solemnly declare, that *to this agree the words of the prophets*. We have also got earthly altars and sacrifices, holy places made with hands, mortal priests and ministers of the sanctuary, &c. : in short, every token to shew that Jesus was not the Christ come in the flesh, except it be that we still stupidly put these two words together ; even as the Jews, to this day, with

with no less stupidity, maintain the credit of those books which prove to demonstration that JESUS is the CHRIST.

We Protestants have generally been ashamed of the extravagant height to which our Roman Catholic fathers carried their imitation of the Jewish worship and hierarchy. We have found it proper to Judaize more moderately in several instances *; and for this moderation we are indebted to the divine providence, and the wisdom of our rulers, who have taught and obliged us in many respects to lower our stile, and to contract within narrower bounds the meaning of several words and titles which we choose still to retain. Yet it must be owned that it is with great reluctance that we learn any lesson of sobriety; for almost every the meanest preacher in the poorest dissenting congregation still affects
to

* In later times, the Christian leaders have shewn no less address in gradually abating their pretensions, as necessity urges, than formerly in advancing them. Accordingly we find the art of trimming, compounding and halving of matters, has been cultivated with great care. Hence we have seen half-persecution, half-temples, half-sacrifices, priests, &c. But as this art does not proceed upon any fixed rules, but rather consists in a dexterous deviation from all rules, as occasion requires, it has proved the means of no small division among the leaders, and consequently of freeing the people from their dominion. If we should compare the period of the advancement of their pretensions to the building of the tower in the plain of Shinar, methinks we might call this latter period, not improperly, *the confusion of tongues*. Hence it is, that all schemes of *comprehension*, or attempts to restore uniformity, meet with great obstructions. But whatever sort of religious comprehension shall at any time take place, Christians who hear the apostles, have no reason to be anxious about it; for whoever be comprehended, they are sure to be excluded.

to be called *The Reverend*; from the same principle which leads the first clergyman in Europe to take the title of *His Holiness*. The bulk of the Christian leaders, from the highest to the lowest, have shewed an inclination to share more or less of the worship due to Him whom we praise, saying, *Holy and reverend is HIS NAME*. I may seem to be somewhat nice in taking notice of these titles, which are sometimes very big with meaning, and sometimes explained away to a very subordinate sense, as occasion requires; yet I cannot appear to any reasonable man to be nicer than he who said, *Why callest thou me good*?* *There is none good but one, that is, God.*

I have chosen to consider jointly what relates to the sanctuary, and the minister thereof; as all the grand things said of both corresponded to each other, had the closest connection in the shadows, are united in the substance, and are for the most part closely connected together in the absurd modern imitation; so that such modern ministers of the sanctuary, as acknowledge no holy places made with hands, have been obliged to strain the harder by other methods to keep up the sacred distinction of their character and office.

As a Protestant, I cannot help blushing on this occasion, to find one of our serious writers

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applying

* Yet some, I doubt not, fond of the shell of religious homage, for the sake of its wonted contents, will be ready to insinuate, that REVEREND SIR! Would have proved a more acceptable address, and less obnoxious to reprehension, than GOOD MASTER!

applying to certain edifices planned and built by modern artificers, the language used in scripture concerning the temple of SOLOMON *, which was built according to divine inspiration, for a shadow of Christ's body, or the incarnate person of the Messiah; so as the grand things spoken of the former, can only be verified by the latter. These grand things belong to what is of greater dignity than SOLOMON'S temple, yea than the heaven of heavens; they belong to no less than the object of worship, even to Him of whom the apostles said, *The Word was made flesh, and (ἐσθηνώσεν) tabernacled among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.* To this the words of SOLOMON pointed, when he said, 2 Chron. vi. 18. *But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!* These words plainly signify his astonishment on the glimpse he had, by the type, of God's intention of *dwelling in very deed with men on the earth.*—All the works of creation afford but a very partial and imperfect view of God; but *in Christ*, we can say with the utmost propriety, *dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, or in very deed. To this purpose are these words in Isaiah, chapter lxvi. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest?*
For

* See *Meditations among the Tombs*, near the beginning.

For all those things bath mine hand MADE, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: But to this man will I look, &c.—No where but in Christ crucified could there be found a place for the just God and the Saviour to rest with men. All things or places else are rejected as unfit; for this very reason, because his hand had made them. The divine glory could no where be contained or fully manifested, but in Him who was truly God.

STEPHEN, giving the sense of the words I have just now quoted, says, *The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands*, even though built and consecrated according to his own direction.—If PAUL said to such Gentile Christians as had been persuaded to observe days, &c. which had been sanctified by divine appointment, *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain*; if he said at last to the Hebrew Christians, *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle*; what would he have said to Christians indulging a religious dread at the “gloomy aspect” of houses having nothing to sanctify them but the breath of mortal men?—to Christians looking devoutly at stone walls of modern architecture, and saying, “Having adored that eternal Majesty, who, far from being confined to [STEPHEN says, *who dwelleth not in*] temples made with hands, has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool?” What would he have said to Christians paying adoration to the Deity, as manifesting

festing his character or putting his name any where but in Christ Jesus, to whom it well becomes *every knee to bow, and every tongue to give thanks?*

Methinks we Protestants may gratify our itch for idolatry sufficiently, in forming idols by speculation, in imitation of the later Jews, though we leave entirely to our old friends in the south of Europe the business of framing idols and shrines for the Deity, by the hands of masons, carpenters, and priests. Is it indeed possible, that any Christian, or even any attentive reader of the scriptures, can seriously think that the “*benedictive presence*” of the Deity has any connection with *St Paul’s*, more than with the meanest garret or cellar in London? But if after all, through fondness for our stately edifices, and for the honour of our consecrating priests, we scruple to affirm roundly, with STEPHEN, *that the Most High DWELLETH NOT in temples made with hands*; methinks, in point of decency, we ought at least to shew some uniformity in our regard to the *carnal commandment*, which appointed the shadows, and not cut and carve upon it also through mere fancy, presuming, by our own private notions of *usefulness* and *fitness*, to convert the temples of the Lord of hosts into receptacles of *rottenness and dead mens bones*. What horror, what indignation, would not a devout Israelite have conceived at the proposal to change the temple of the living God into a sepulchre for the dead! If we still choose rather to strike out a middle path by our own wisdom,
and

and say, “ The Most High is not confined to
 “ temples made with hands ;” we ought, for
 uniformity’s sake, to proceed in the same manner
 with all the other types, and say, “ The com-
 “ munication of the divine favour is not confined
 “ to the intercession of mortal priests; The divine
 “ pleasure is not confined to the blood of bulls
 “ and goats, &c. ;” and so leave it to every man’s
 own wisdom and discretion, to share his regard
 betwixt all the shadows and the substance in
 every instance as to him shall seem most con-
 venient.

ON the holy mount we see ratified and put in
 force, the sovereign edict or law by which the
 kingdom of heaven, or New-Testament church
 is established, and their eternal salvation secured;
 even that law foretold Isaiah li. 4 — 6. *Hearken
 unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my
 nation : For a law shall proceed from me, and I
 will make my judgment to rest for a light of the
 people. My righteousness is near : My salvation is
 gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people :
 The isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall
 they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and
 look upon the earth beneath : For the heavens shall
 vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax
 old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall
 die in like manner ; but my salvation shall be for
 ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished ;
 even the commandment so often made mention
 of by Jesus, John x. I lay down my life for the
 sheep. This commandment have I received of my
 N 3 Father.*

Father. John xii. 49, 50. *I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.* John xiv. 31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

From the law given by MOSES, this commandment of grace is thus distinguished. The former ministered condemnation, this ministers righteousness; that demanded, this bestows righteousness. According to that law, which said, *The man that doth these things shall live by them;* no man could obtain life but by his own personal obedience. But here, by the gracious and sovereign edict of Him, whom it becomes to act above and beyond all law for the relief of the guilty, commandment is given to the Son of the Highest, to fulfil the law given by MOSES for the transgressors, so as they might live together with him by his righteousness. Jesus Christ, in the days of his humiliation, knew that the certain issue of this commandment was life everlasting. When we behold him glorified, we see the life-giving power thereof exerted; we see the grace that gave him to be obedient, reigning through his perfect obedience unto eternal life. This commandment, or royal grant of life through righteousness, was ratified by the blood of Christ when he died as a sacrifice for sin; so takes the
 notion

notion of a covenant, in reference to the temporary and typical one formerly made with Israel. It is also set before us under the notion of a testament, as conveying an inheritance by the death of a testator;—and as our sense of condemnation arose from the notion of a law, it is also presented to us in that view, and is confirmed by the divine oath, that we might have strong consolation. So PAUL says, *The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Agreeably to this, the apostle JOHN says, *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son; not that we should do any thing to obtain life, but that we should live by what he hath done.* It is a commandment not requiring any thing of us, but bestowing life by the knowledge which it conveys: For the belief or knowledge of Christ is happiness; as Jesus says, *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* The belief or knowledge of a comfortable truth, is not work or labour, but rest and peace; and the heavenly gift is conveyed unto men, even as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, in this manner, *Be it known unto you.*

As sin reigned unto death in these words, *The soul that sinneth shall die*, or somewhat equivalent to them, in the conscience of every man; so grace reigns through righteousness in these words, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;*

pleased; with the force of an irresistible law to begin, carry forward, and complete the eternal salvation of the whole church of the living God. The church of God, established by this law, needs no other law to support it, nor can it be endangered by any other law or power whatsoever.

Jesus said before the Roman governor, *My kingdom is not of this world*. But a learned prelate of the church of England (Bp HOADLEY) hath already, upwards of thirty years ago, with the greatest perspicuity, set forth the scriptural import of these words, to the full conviction of all who have any ear to give to the scriptures. And his doctrine on this head, though it met with no answer, but such as was dictated by manifest disaffection to the scriptures, has been rejected with great indignation by all zealous ecclesiastics.—Had that great man understood the truth pointed at in the subsequent answer of Jesus, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*; he would have been able to shew from the scriptures, what the kingdom of Christ is, as clearly as he has shewn what it is not; and consequently had become, with the apostles and first Christians, a *brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. However, his deficiency in this respect was supplied not long after by a minister of the church of Scotland, who was
ejected

ejected on that account *. And indeed any one who will dare to acknowledge Christianity, as taught in the New Testament, must make but a very indifferent figure in any national church by Law Established, or yet in any party of Dissenters lamenting the want of such establishment ; at least he will find no room to glory in his situation.

What would PAUL have said to one adopting his words about *glorying only in the cross*, and yet glorying in being the member or minister † of a church established by the approbation of the world, or the laws of earthly states and kingdoms ? We may well suppose he would at least have applauded the prudence of such a one, in forbearing to adopt the rest of his sentence, *by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*. PAUL once gloried in being the member of a national church established by the divine law ; but when he knew CHRIST, he renounced all glorying but in his cross. He now understood, that the carnal church, the carnal commandment, by which it was established, the worldly sanctuary, and all the earthly blessings, were so many *shadows* of heavenly things. And he speaks of all who, in his time, walked

* The doctrine he maintained, may be seen in a small treatise, called, *The testimony of the King of martyrs concerning his kingdom*, John xviii. 36, 37. explained, &c. Edinburgh 1729, and in several other tracts of later date. A new impression of his writings, containing several pieces not before printed, is now (1762) published at Edinburgh, in 4 vols 8vo, intitled, *The works of Mr John Glas*.

† See the PREFACE to the *Dialogues*.

walked after his former temper of mind, as glorying in the *flesh*, in opposition to the *spirit*: For these contrasts, letter and spirit, flesh and spirit, shadow and body, earthly and heavenly, are all used in the New Testament to the same purpose. And sometimes the contrast is signified by joining the epithet *true* to the type, as the true vine, the true bread, the true tabernacle, &c.

They who, in PAUL's time, gloried in the flesh, gloried in what took its rise from divine appointment, and had a copious fund for the most specious kind of arguments on their side. But such as now imitate them without their fund, cannot even with propriety claim the honour of glorying in the flesh as they did; but must be considered as glorying in mere human forgeries, and *changing the truth of God into a lie*, without any other authority than their own imaginations and worldly lusts. Yet it appears by PAUL's Epistles, that he thought no epithet too severe, to describe those who in his time gloried in the flesh. What then would he have said of us modern Christians? PAUL indeed, 2 *Cor.* xi. shews us how he could glory in the flesh; but he desires us beforehand to bear with him a little in his folly. He tells us, he is going to play the fool, when he is going to act the gravest and most solemn part of his revered antagonists at Corinth; and indeed he far outshines them in his fund for glorying.—But all this he does to introduce his own true ground of glorying, which Jesus furnished him with, in these words,

My

My grace is sufficient for thee : My strength is made perfect in weakness.

This grace which reigns through the obedience of Jesus Christ, and so may with all propriety be called his, PAUL had already known and preached, as sufficient to strengthen the weakest heart, in every case he had either experienced himself, or thought of in others. Yet it seemed good to his Lord to bring him, even after his return from the third heaven, into such a strait as that he needed a fresh assurance of the first lesson in Christianity, even to be certified that the grace which had relieved him at the first was sufficient for his help in this extraordinary case. So that PAUL, in the deepest of all his distresses, was relieved by that very faith, which we modern Christians, in the height of our complaisance, choose only to call, “ of the enfeebled “ and infantile kind.” On this bottom, however feeble it seems to us, PAUL steps forth, in the height of his glorying, and discovers the greatest excellency of the Christian character. And it may be added, that, even after he came from the third heaven, in order “ to finish his education,” he stood in need of that lesson, which to us appears of very small weight, and at best to be but weak and childish.

WHEREAS national churches flourish or decay by the smiles or frowns of princes, the true church is established by the smile of the MOST HIGH. And though the members thereof on the earth may be persecuted unto death ; yet
neither

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. In this church, the greatest king can be of no more consequence than the meanest of his subjects. This church will receive no establishment on the earth, till the resurrection of the just, when the whole redeemed company shall reign with Christ a thousand years on the earth, after which they shall inherit the new heavens and the new earth for ever.

The members of this church, who are yet in this mortal state, are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having here no continuing city or establishment, as the Jews had before the destruction of Jerusalem; but having, in opposition to those Judaizers who minded earthly things, their (πολιτευμα) establishment in heaven, from whence “they look for the Saviour to change “their bodies,” *Philippians* iii. 20. Whatever alterations may happen in the course of the world, depressing one religious party, and raising another, they expect no revolution in their favour till Christ comes the second time; for they can find no encouragement from the scriptures, to pay any regard to those old Rabbinical notions which have been revived and new-modelled by modern Christians, concerning some glorious flourishing appearance of the Messiah’s kingdom yet to be expected in this mortal

mortal

mortal state, by a general conversion of Jews and Gentiles*.

Every particular society of Christians, joined together according to the order prescribed by the apostles, and meeting in one place, as at Colosse, Ephesus, or Philippi, to eat the Lord's supper, is called a *church*, in the same sense as the bread and wine in that supper are called Christ's body and blood, namely, as being a *representation* of the one invisible church. The members of such particular societies may be persecuted

* The chief, if not the only passage of scripture that can, with any colour of reasoning, be insisted on as a foundation for expecting some such general conversion of Jews and Gentiles as is commonly thought of, is in *Romans*, chapter xi. ; where PAUL, reasoning at large to check the religious pride of the believing Romans, which he foresaw would one day rise to the same height, and be attended with the same dismal consequences, as that of the Jews in his time, says to them concerning the Jews, ver. 23. *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in : For God is able to graft them in again.* Jesus Christ, in like manner, in order to check the rising envy of PETER, addressed him thus concerning JOHN the beloved disciple, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? Follow thou me.* As from this saying of Jesus an opinion took place among the disciples, that JOHN should not die ; so, from the forementioned saying of PAUL, an opinion has prevailed among the professors of Christianity concerning some general conversion of the Jews. But it cannot appear, that JESUS CHRIST or PAUL ever intended to give ground for either of these opinions, so long as the sayings pleaded as a foundation for them are prefaced with an *if*. — But not to enlarge on this subject at present, I shall only observe, that the expectation of some general conversion of Jews and Gentiles, and of worldly prosperity attending the profession of Christianity, though extremely opposite to the whole tenor of the scriptures, has taken place, instead of the ancient hope of Christ's second coming, and the reign of the saints, by which the first Christians were animated in their patience unto death, and corresponds exactly with the expectations framed by the Jews concerning his first coming.

secuted and dispersed, like those of Jerusalem ; but such persecution or dispersion will always tend to the benefit, never to the hurt of the one true church or kingdom of heaven. PAUL himself, who was commissioned to carry the gospel to the nations, was often scourged, bound, and imprisoned, yea and loaded with reproach and infamy ; yet we never find him complaining as if the gospel suffered any damage by this means, but rather taking occasion from thence to rejoice, that the word of God was *not* bound ; and that what happened to him fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

It was the will of the Captain of salvation who “ was made perfect through sufferings, “ that all his subjects should through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” — PAUL, warning TIMOTHY against the corruption of Christianity which was to take place, first sets before him his own godly life, and then lays down this general maxim, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, &c.* All national establishments of Christianity have been devised to accommodate that religion to the pride and lusts of men. Certain articles are drawn up by human wisdom to stand for a creed ; no matter what they be, sound or unsound ; there are worldly advantages connected with them sufficient to draw multitudes, on whom the gospel has no manner of influence, to feign an acquiescence in them.

them. But what ancient Christian would ever have imagined, that a preacher of salvation through the cross of Christ, having one eye on the authority of certain human creed-makers, and the other on a renowned poet*, as espousing the same doctrine with their creed, would say, “ This must surely give a sanction wherever our “ religious *establishment* is revered, or polite “ *literature* is held in repute † ?” Will reverence for the reigning religion, and the fashionable taste in literature, indeed condescend to serve as handmaids to introduce us to the cross of Christ, and commend it to our esteem ? This will be a very new and strange employment for them, to which they have been hitherto quite unaccustomed. The apostles, low-bred mortals, knew no such lures to draw men to the cross, no such trappings to adorn it withal ; and indeed, little as they seemed in the eyes of men, they yet thought it far beneath them to hide the shame of the cross by any such gawdy veils, and they bestowed the severest rebukes on all who attempted to do so.

The matter was, they loved the cross best in its naked simplicity. Why ? Because there they saw the glory of God !—They never made their
court

* However *matchless* MILTON's *poetry* may be, it would certainly be rash in any lover of the ancient gospel, to pronounce with ASPASIO, in the end of the Ninth *Dialogue*, his *divinity* to be *faultless*, if he has read the first four or five pages of the third and eleventh books of *Paradise Lost* ; where his doctrine favours much more of the grace magnified by popular preachers, than of the true grace of God preached by PAUL.

† PREFACE to *Theron and Aspasio*.

court to the religious or polite world, nor sought to commend Christianity by the handle of their favourite sentiments or prejudices: And they well knew, that, ridiculous and shocking as the bare cross did appear unto men, no decorations could ever separate from it the ideas of mortification and shame, but might well serve to make it more ridiculous, yea justly so, in the eyes of the more discerning part of mankind. They would not have persuaded any writer for the imputed righteousness to deprecate the censure of the public, and, courting their favour, “hope,” that his “*whole* performance will not be cashiered for “*one* difference in sentiment; and beg, that the “sentiment itself may not be hastily rejected, “without a serious hearing *;” because he can produce many human suffrages to keep him in countenance. They would not have encouraged him to apologize to the public for speaking “magnificently of the blood of Christ, and its “unknown efficacy to expiate guilt †;” and, as one half ashamed, plead the concurrence of wits and great men.

Though we may flatter ourselves that such behaviour holds of a becoming modesty, it will be found, if we try ourselves by the gospel, that it proceeds from some diffidence in the truth; from our being somewhat over-awed in this respect by the “formidable banter,” and the “*irrefragable* smile ‡,” however much we may despise

* See *Meditations*, vol. i. p. 272.

† Ibid. p. 281.

‡ See *Meditations*, vol. ii. p. 101.

despise those weapons when pointed against our character for devotion in other respects. The apostles loved to see men resolved to take their part with the truth at all events, and determined to sink or swim with it ;—to see them boldly risking their *whole* reputation among mankind upon the *one* capital difference in sentiment, by which Christians were from the beginning distinguished from all others, and ready to scorn all reputation they might enjoy at the expence of this one thing.

In opposition to reverence for the *religious* or *polite* world, the scripture teaches us, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. But then I am told, that “even this sanction” to the Christian doctrine which is drawn from these two sources, when “compared with the oracle of revelation, is only like a range of ciphers connected with the initial figure; which, were they *detached*, would be insignificant; but in such a *subordination* are considerable.” Let then the oracle of revelation be represented by the figure denoting *one*, and let the other two objects of our attention, connected with it as ciphers, make a hundred; and let these three be jointly urged as motives upon the minds of men; it will be found upon the trial, that the latter two, which in certain contrasts we choose to call ciphers, but which do indeed include all that is admired and all that is coveted in the world, will have weight on the human mind against revelation, as ninety-nine to one: And I may add, that if we shall now and then find one in whose

mind revelation bears the sway, we shall more easily find ninety-nine led by the motives of reputation, wealth, and power. For what else but the ideas of wealth and power can draw our reverence to any religious *Establishment*, more than to the most despicable society of Dissenters? —I have no pleasure in distorting any similitude aside from the sentiment it was brought to illustrate. My obvious intention is, to shew the mistake in the sentiment itself, and how vain a thing it is to imagine, that those objects which naturally inflame the passions of men, can be ranged in subordination to the gospel, so as to exert their influence in its favour, or that the gospel stands in need of any such crutches. Many methods have been devised to render the gospel acceptable unto men, but the effect of all these has been to make us lose sight of the gospel itself. Our wisest course therefore will be, to let it stand in the simple dress wherein it was left by the apostles, without any other recommendation than its native charms, intrusting the success thereof wholly to Heaven, from whence it came.

IF by *church* we understand *society*, what society do we mean, when we glory in being members of any church established by human laws; the church of England, for instance? Do we glory in being members of a society, where, as to the *foundation*, the grand article of the imputed righteousness “ seems to be little understood, and less regarded, if not much mistaken, “ and

“ and almost forgotten ;”—where, as to the *superstructure*, “ vice becomes predominant and
 “ irreligion almost epidemical ;—the sabbaths of
 “ a jealous God are notoriously profaned ;—the
 “ worship of the great Creator and Preserver of
 “ mankind is banished from many of the most
 “ *conspicuous families* ; and it is deemed a piece
 “ of rude impertinence, so much as to mention
 “ the gracious Redeemer in our *genteel inter-*
 “ *views* ;—it passes for an elegant freedom of be-
 “ haviour, to ridicule the mysteries of Christia-
 “ nity ;—and many of those that wear the
 “ *professors garb*, are destitute of the power,
 “ and content themselves with the mere form of
 “ godliness * ?”

As such reflections have an air of lamentation, the ground of our glorying must certainly lie somewhere else. Do we glory in this, then, that we have laws, making it the interest of the nation to pay some public deference to the religion which they ridicule in private ? That multitudes are drawn to subscribe the Articles, and submit to the Forms of that religion, in like manner, and from the same principle, as importers of French wines swear they brought them from Bilboa in Spain ; by which they secretly mean a place in France, which they have chosen to call by that name ? How long shall we zealously cherish the roots of irreligion, and still complain of its growth ? How long shall we hold forth strong drink unto men, and still bemoan their

* *Meditations*, vol. ii. p. 75.

intemperance? How long shall we pray that the cause may flourish, and the natural effects decrease? We have been at great pains to sweeten and gild the Christian religion, to make it palatable; yet men still slyly lick off the sweet, and pocket the gold, and after all throw away the pill, complaining of its bitterness. Melancholy case indeed! What a pity is it that Christianity is not more fashionable, that so we zealous Christians, instead of bearing the cross after Christ, and patiently submitting to the hatred and contempt of the world, like his first followers, who knew no better, may be in the top of the fashion, and have our importance and weight duly considered among mankind? With what a lovely piety and sincere devotion might we shine forth, if our “most conspicuous families,” who rule the fashion, would only animate us by their concurrence*; and, by the weight of their character
and

* Let us observe with what a heavy heart Mr ERSKINE bewails the want of worldly encouragement to Christianity, by the countenance of great men. See p. 492. of a volume of his Sermons printed at Edinburgh, 1755, in a Sermon intitled, *The kingdom of God within the soul of man*. “What was it that made parliaments
“and assemblies, and people of all ranks, go so clean to work
“about the year 1638, and the year that followed it, to advance
“a work of reformation, and to engage themselves by solemn
“covenant to maintain it? And what makes the work go on so
“slowly now? Why, if folk, especially men of influence and
“power, had the kingdom of God within them, (which, alas!
“is much wanting now-a-days, otherwise there would not be so
“much daubing with untempered mortar as there is). O Sirs,
“if ever ye would see the Lord’s work thrive again in the land,
“pray that the same Spirit may be poured out from on high, that
“he may lay the foundation of the work, by setting up his king-
“dom

and station, check the impertinence of profane wits? And how readily would we *set our affections on the things that are above*, were we only disincumbered of all inconveniencies in our concerns below! And what a charming sight would it be, to behold these two ideas, which appeared irreconcilable to Jesus and his apostles, now beautifully harmonising together under the joint appellation of the CHRISTIAN WORLD!

But whence was it, that the apostles were so great strangers to that public-spirited zeal which fits so gracefully upon us? It would seem, they wanted the proper address to recommend Christianity to people of condition; for not many of that class gave ear to them. Or they were so much occupied in teaching Christians patience in suffering, that they quite forgot to lay down any rules for reigning Christianity. We must either say this, or that they got no instructions to that end; for certain it is, they have left none upon record. Some people indeed, after their decease, alledged, that, by second or third hand, from some of their private discourses, which they had neglected to write, they had got some hints concerning

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cerning

“ dom in the hearts of kings, nobles, gentry, ministers, elders,
 “ and all ranks of people in the land; and then the hearts of the
 “ children will be turned to their fathers; and we may expect
 “ to see the church of Christ in this land looking forth as the
 “ morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an
 “ army with banners, *Song vi. 10* ” Terrible indeed would be
 the situation of Britain, especially in the way of vengeance against
 the friends of the ancient gospel, could such men obtain their
 wishes!

*Terrible indeed to the friends of the ancient gospel
 to have the hearts of kings, nobles, gentry, ministers, elders,
 all ranks of people in the land, turned to their fathers.*

cerning this reign, which began, in that of the Christian teachers, first over one another, then over the rest of the Christian brotherhood. But as these hints are scarcely well vouched, they can never be of sufficient weight to end any dispute.

This capital defect, as it may seem, in the apostolic writings; though it cannot justly be assigned as the true cause of the many violent controversies which have arisen among later Christians, about what is commonly called *church-government*, and about the proper limits betwixt it and the civil power, or the connection of both; may yet be considered as one reason why contending parties, otherwise agreed as to the articles of their creed, have had so little success in convincing one another in these matters. And indeed the more moderate on either side are now ready to own, that the New Testament is silent in this respect.

Yet seeing the law, which constituted the national church of Israel, settled, in so clear and particular a manner, every thing relating to the subordination and privileges of those who presided in holy things, and the influence they were to have in the state; one is apt, at first view, to be surpris'd to find the New Testament so deficient on this head, seeing order and peace is no less necessary in Christian churches, than it was in the nation of Israel;—till he considers, that the first churches, intended as patterns of all that should follow, were formed by the influence of the gospel operating on the minds of individuals

duals of every class of men, and not on corporations or bodies-politic;—that the apostles taught them by *love* to *serve* one another, as the proper expression of the great article of their creed, that Jesus Christ came not *to be served*, but *to serve*; that every such society was, by the truth which joined them together, placed in such circumstances, as that nothing but the hand of God could maintain their union; that as no common worldly interest could be promoted by their union, they had no motives, no encouragements to make them fond of it, but what came from heaven, and the prospects of the life to come: that in every church the apostles appointed the men who were best skilled in the motives to serve, had greatest courage to utter them, and were most influenced by them, to lead the rest in the joint purpose of counting all things loss, that they might have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; and thus, distinguishing them into *younger* and *elder* brethren, left them with this standing rule, *Ye younger, (νεωτεροι) submit yourselves unto the elder, (πρεσβυτεροις.) Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

It is obvious, then, that in a Christian church the progress of preterment went downward; even as he who leads a company down-hill, by being foremost is lowest. Accordingly we find, that the leader in chief of Christians, who himself took the lowest and most ignominious place in service,

service, lays it down as a fundamental law in his kingdom, that the course of preferment should be just the reverse of what takes place in all bodies politic, *Matthew* xx. 25—28. And to this the matter of fact corresponded at the beginning: For the higher a man rose in the kingdom of God, the lower and more despicable a figure he made in the world. This will readily appear to any one who considers the history of the disciples, the deacons, the elders, the apostles, and Jesus Christ. In those days there was no temptation for any man to covet the place of a leader among Christians, nothing to animate him to acquit himself with diligence therein, but the hope of a crown of glory when the chief Shepherd should appear. In this view of the matter, it will appear, that the New Testament was a book well calculated for all the exigencies of those to whom it was written; that it was abundantly full and explicit as to the whole concerns of their union together, so as there was no room to complain of any deficiency therein whatsoever.

WHEN, by the corruption of the gospel, which took place very early, yea, began to work before the death of the apostles, a correspondent change happened in the members composing the Christian assemblies, as well as their numbers, and their union became subservient to some secular purposes, then they began to look out with the appearance of a worldly faction, even long before they got possession of the power and wealth
of

of the Roman empire. So that their minds were fully ripened and prepared for that remarkable change in their circumstances, by the time that it happened. When Christians began to appear as a worldly faction; though they still laboured under the disadvantages attending Dissenters from the Established religion, yet there were motives sufficient, besides the hope of being great after death, to prompt men to aspire after preeminence among them. Many questions now arose concerning subordination, the exercise and extent of authority, and various other matters, necessary to be considered by those who would make a decent and creditable appearance in the world as a religious party. It was in vain to consult the New Testament. A new book of discipline was necessary. Revered fathers gravely told lies, to help on the pious designs. Learned questions also concerning the Christian faith were moved, in such a manner as the apostolic writings, which had been composed for the vulgar, could by no means decide them. The *form of sound words*, which the first Christians were commanded to *hold fast*, as the best preservative against heresy, came now to be in a great measure laid aside, and to give place to the wisdom of words, the wisdom of the scribes and disputers of this world. However, to make the apostles some amends for this neglect, they knighted them, and called them *saints*; even as in latter ages, when the contempt of their doctrine increased, they deified them under that title.

If matters went on thus among Christians while yet the dissenting party, what shall we say of them when their earthly reign began; when their ambition, which had hitherto been confined, in lording over one another, began now to extend itself over the Roman empire? Now comes to be revealed the mystery of iniquity, in its proper opposition to the mystery of godliness. Now takes place spiritual pride, reigning through worldly splendor, wealth, and power, to the deceiving and destroying of mankind. This reign came to its height, when the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was broken having (*μικρὰ γυναικί*) one opinion or creed, agreed to give their power and strength to the Christian leaders, now “the lords of the Gentiles,” united under one head.

The places most noted in scripture for impiety, uncleanness, and idolatry, are only the figures or shadows of this grand religious establishment, which is the mystery of them; so *spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified*, namely, Jerusalem. In opposition to the true church, whose children are begotten by the power of Christ’s word, it is set forth under the notion of an unchaste woman, pretending to be the spouse of Christ, yet committing fornication with the kings of the earth, and having, by their concurrence, multitudes of children, not begotten by his power. We are left at no loss to know what state of things is pointed forth by this woman: For the angel says to JOHN,
Rev.

Rev. xvii. 7. *I will tell thee the mystery of the woman.* Ver. 18. *The woman which thou sawest, is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.* She was prefigured by that great nursery of idolatry, Babylon, the Lady of kingdoms; so has this name written on her forehead, *Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.*

Against this establishment, the vials of the wrath of God are directed. Some people have imagined, that Antichrist is to be destroyed by armies raised by Protestant princes for that purpose. The New Testament, pointing both to his decay and utter ruin, speaks thus, *2 Thess. ii. 8. —Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.* And what we have already seen of the fact, corresponds best with this: For if, by the spirit of his mouth, we understand his *word*, we shall find, that the scriptures, which some ages ago began to be published in the vulgar tongues of Europe, have been the chief means of *consuming* or weakening that monstrous power, after which the world has so long wondered. By these writings, some, in several countries of Europe, were taught to *fear God, and give glory to him*;—to reclaim the many prostituted sacred names, back to the sacred things to which they belonged;—to renounce all reverence for the religious establishment, yea boldly, at the peril of their lives, pronounce all the holy things thereof to be profane;—to assert the rights of sovereign princes and states;—and to main-
tain,

rain, that subjection from every soul, ecclesiastics as well as others, was due to the *higher* powers.

Some, I say, were thus taught ; and much greater numbers, who could not take in the former part of this lesson, readily embraced more or less of the rest. So that whole kingdoms revolted. In these religious factions quickly arose, headed by such as had tasted the sweets of the grand establishment, and made their court to the prince. Only one could succeed in each kingdom or state, so as to obtain an establishment in its favour. These favourite factions were no sooner in quiet possession of their kingdom, than, like genuine daughters, they imitated all the practices of their great mother, as far as the several princes in whose keeping they were, would permit. They had indeed withdrawn abruptly from their mother's house, and found it necessary, in many respects, to expose her shame, in order to secure paramours for themselves. But when once they were settled as mistresses in their several houses, they began to repent of having carried their invectives to too great a height against her. They found, that most of her maxims were necessary for their own support ; and that it was not prudent to be always throwing out reproaches that might easily be retorted.

HOWEVER, by the daughters revolting, and setting up for themselves, the power and influence of the great maternal house was considerably weakened.

weakened. We must likewise bear in mind, that the light which had shone forth from the scriptures, at the time of the rupture, could not be smothered ; but still continued to operate on the minds of many, in almost every region of the *Christian* Empire ; (for long before this time the word *Christian* had acquired a very extensive signification). Some feared God, and suffered accordingly, not a few unto death, even by the hands of the daughters, who still pretended to lead more reformed lives than their mother. More reformed, I say, because even the mother, who seemed to have quite lost the sense of shame, found it necessary to reform a little in some points of decorum. So that, in our time, the difference betwixt her and them is far from being so remarkable, as one would have expected at first, from the violence of the rupture. Many more, who saw not the glory of God in the gospel, so as to embolden them to run all risks for the sake of it, found yet, by means of it, so much light as enabled them to see, and, as far as their timidity for their worldly interest would allow, openly expose the shameful maxims and practices both of the parent and the offspring. The more speculative men of this sort, finding themselves, on the one hand, by the authority of the book then referred to as the last resort by all disputants, entirely freed from all reverence for religious establishments, and not finding themselves bound, on the other, by that peculiar evidence of the Christian truth, which binds the few who believe it, turned out what we may call *Freethinkers*,

or

or *Academics* *. These became leaders in their way, to numbers of others who read little, and think less; but yet are capable of shining in company, by means of some smart and free sayings which they have picked up in conversation. From this source of freethinking, arises a strong balance against the reverence claimed by spiritual pride, as it works, either among those who are *in place*, or those who long to be so.

To reconcile our minds to this, and many other mortifying strokes daily concurring therewith, it must be considered, that, according to the prophecies of the New Testament, the time is
NOW

* It may then, with great justice, be affirmed, that to the scriptures we are indebted for the principles of liberty from ecclesiastical influence; in declaiming on which, many writers have sought to distinguish themselves as men of genius, and which are now pretty generally understood. I find that no less is acknowledged by a noted Freethinker, in a late *History of Great Britain*, vol. i. p. 382. where, describing a certain religious class of people (called *Independents*) who, about the middle of the last century, fell indeed into the same mistake as all those do who connect the Christian religion with politics; but who, notwithstanding, retained so much of that humanity, which they had learned from the scriptures, as to maintain and promote Toleration, or liberty of Conscience; he says, “Of all Christian sects, this was the first, which, during its prosperity, as well as adversity, always adopted the principle of Toleration. And it is remarkable, that so reasonable a doctrine owed its origin, not to reasoning, but to the height of extravagance and enthusiasm.” I need not tell any one acquainted with this author’s style, that these words, *the height of extravagance and enthusiasm*, stand chiefly for *the height of attention to the scriptures, and reverence for the Deity*, whose character is drawn there. But it may be proper to observe, that when this author calls the doctrine of toleration *reasonable*, he means, that, according to reason, toleration ought to be extended towards all, except those who fear the Deity more than men, or regard his precepts more than their own temporal interest. This is abundantly manifest from his historical remarks.

now come, wherein God purposed, in the course of his providence, to pour contempt upon that reverence which had so long taken the place of his fear in the hearts of men : And this grand work of judgment, God accomplishes by means of that very book, which the sons of pride thought they might trifle with at pleasure, and wantonly accommodate to all the purposes of their avarice and ambition. By arguments originally drawn from this book, not a few of the princes and great men of the earth, have been emboldened to jest with freedom at that which formerly made them tremble. By the influence of this book, some have from time to time appeared fearing God, and boldly declaring his judgment against those who presumed to share among them more or less of the fear due to him, withal patiently bearing the effects of the resentment of their enemies ; an evident token of salvation to the former, and of perdition to the latter. By means of hints thrown out from this book, the nations begin to see that they have a right to be what they were before the Christian leaders usurped dominion over them, all the authority and weight of these leaders notwithstanding : And no doubt the Freethinkers and their followers, have as good a right as their Patriarch SOCRATES, to laugh in private at the Establishment, which they pusillanimously truckle to in public for the sake of their interest.

It is meet, in the righteous judgment of God, that those who have drawn over the nations a *form* of godliness, in opposition to the *power* thereof;

thereof, should now be recompensed with a mock-worship, and be revered in hypocrisy. It is a meet and proper sight, to behold those who have consecrated temples made with hands, in opposition to the true tabernacle where God dwells in very deed, polluting them with their own hands, and stowing them with the carcases of the dead. It is meet that we should see those who imagined, that the purity of the Christian doctrine might be better preserved, and insincerity better guarded against, by *creeds* of human composition, than by the ancient form of *sound words*, daily employing those very creeds as the engines of the grossest dissimulation and perjury.

The time is now come for the kings of the earth to hate her whom they have so long aggrandized, and to make her desolate and naked. So that we may hear something like the complaint of "widowhood and loss of children" already begun. We have had for some time past in Britain a succession of the best of kings, who have laid hold on every opportunity, consistent with the public tranquillity, for shortening the horns of ecclesiastical power. This, together with the wit of Freethinkers, the graver opposition of dissenting factions, and, to crown all, the free declarations that have been made of the scriptural doctrine concerning the kingdom of heaven, has served greatly to harass the ministers of that power, and to fill their kingdom with darkness. What a dreadful shock was given to the whole fabric of ecclesiastical power in England,
by

by one branch of that doctrine, setting forth the plain import of these words of Jesus, *My kingdom is not of this world*? It proved like the shock of an earthquake, loosing the foundations, and rending the walls of the building, so as that it can never be repaired. In consequence of this, many gnawed their tongues for pain, and (by reproaching the doctrine concerning his heavenly kingdom) blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. The bitter exclamations of impotent chagrin, which are to this day conveyed to our ears by the press, are sufficient indications, that the smart of this stroke is still very sensibly felt. And who shall sympathise with them? Christians dare not: For thus runs the inspired proclamation; *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

Nor will the apostles encourage us to join in the lamenting outcry against Freethinkers, whom the Clergy have thought proper to brand with the name of *Infidels*, as a mark of infamy on such as renounce allegiance to them, and reject the book which they have made the charter for national Christianity. For if, turning our eyes to the ancient gospel, and distinguishing the faithful by professed attachment to it, by infidels we should mean all who with open mouth oppose the gospel which PAUL preached, we may find them as numerous among those who reverence, as among those who scoff at our religious establishments; yea, we shall find the clergy themselves

to be the chief promoters of infidelity ; though at the same time many of them shew as great aversion at being seen in company with a professed *unbeliever*, as if they thought their sacred persons would be defiled by conversing with him.

And why should it grieve a Christian to see freethinking prevailing, instead of what is fully as opposite to the fear of God, yea of more efficacious and extensive influence to the deceiving and destroying of mankind ? But perhaps it will be said, that every nation must have some public leading in religion to supply the defects of civil government. Be it so ; yet it is well known, that other religions have answered this purpose as well as the Christian *. The Christian, said I ? it is absurd to imagine, that the religion taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles, ever was or can be established in the earth till the resurrection of the just ; however it may in various shapes be corrupted, and accommodated to the inclinations of the people, so as to serve every worldly purpose, as well as any other religion. Agreeably to what is now said, we find it fashionable with gentlemen, who openly count it ridiculous to worship Jesus Christ as God, to declare seriously, “ that though one may have “ difficulties about the evidence of Christianity, “ yet

* I presume that no man will take upon him to affirm, that the obligation of an oath, for instance, has at present more weight on the minds of either clergy or laity of any established church in Europe, than it had on the ancient Roman soldiers before the Christian æra began.

“ yet surely such a person, if he had any regard
 “ for the good of mankind, would be careful
 “ not to weaken the credit of a religion so ex-
 “ cellently calculated to promote public and
 “ private happiness, unless he had power and
 “ authority to establish a better in its stead*.”

The reason here given, is undoubtedly sufficient to make this way of speaking always reputable, and to remove all fear that it will become popular to reproach Christianity, name and thing, however much the pride of speculation may overrule every other consideration in the minds of a few. We find now, that the freest thinkers have fallen upon a method to profess themselves very zealous Christians. A late writer of *Memoirs* †, describing some Christians of his own stamp, says, “ They hearken to the great IM-
 “ MANUEL within, the word and voice of ever-
 “ lasting reason, and are as blessed and happy as
 “ creatures can be by the redeeming power of
 “ the holy Jesus.” Christianity is now become so very pliable a thing, that it is not worth any man’s while to be an apostate from it. We have already got avowed Christian Deists, and we may as conveniently have Christian Atheists : For as every man claims the privilege of using words, especially those of fixed repute, in his own sense, one has no more to do but understand by IM-
 MANUEL “ the eternal fitness of things, the soul
 P 2 “ of

* See *Monthly Review for February 1755*, p. 99.

† See *Memoirs of several Ladies of Great Britain*, p. 345.

“ of the world, or even, if he pleases, everlasting reason.”

THE apostles were strangers to the modern advantages of Christianity; they neither taught nor found them *; they left the care of kingdoms and states in the hands of the powers ordained of God for that purpose; they preached remission of sins to all sorts of men, so considered all men as sinners; but they concerned themselves as little about the vices of great men, as about those of slaves; they formed no party to make head against the religious establishment of any country; they only declared, as they still do by their writings, that all not hearkening to them shall perish in the next world.

The effect of this was, some, moved with the fear of evils not seen as yet, gave ear to them, and followed them; others laughed at them; and many, being provoked, persecuted them. The apostles were no way disconcerted upon this; they knew it was the genuine effect of their testimony; and would be so to the end of the world. We never find them murmuring at

* If we attend to many eminent Christian writers, describing to us the persecuted rise and subsequent flourishing progress of Christianity, we shall be led to consider the sufferings of the apostles and first Christians, in much the same light with the hardness of the more early Romans, namely, as laying a foundation for that worldly ease and grandeur to their posterity or successors, which difficult times and circumstances denied to themselves.

at the prevalence of infidelity, or the small success the gospel had in the world. It gave them no disturbance, to see unbelievers neglecting the Lord's supper, the Lord's day, and the rest of the Christian institutions; nor did they call upon any such to observe them. These institutions were then sacred to the honour of Christ, and not, as now, to that of the Christian teachers. So the apostles desired to see none pretending regard to these institutions, but such as depended on Christ for the remission of sin, and the hope of eternal life. It gave them no concern what sort of men *wore the professor's garb*. They were so overjoyed with the company of the little societies, which they gathered in different places, chiefly out of the dregs of mankind, that they neither sought after men of quality, priests or philosophers, nor regretted the want of their company; and I may add, neither did they court the favour of the mob: And though it was with difficulty they could escape from one city to another with whole bones; yet we find them rejoicing in the success of the gospel as universal, *2 Corinthians ii. 14. Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

They openly evinced the falshood of the religion established in every country where they came; yet they had neither the will nor the power to establish any other in its stead. All religions, except theirs, were political; all political religions, except the Jewish, were human contri-

vances for the temporal benefit of particular states and kingdoms, and had no other object in view but worldly happiness. The apostles, in propagating their religion, had no other object in view, but happiness on the other side of death to men of all nations. And this object they steadily pursued in every state or kingdom where they came, without giving any other cause of umbrage to those of the established religion, than the impression made on the minds of individuals of different classes by the simple force of the truth of their doctrine; which was destitute of all allurements to the passions of men, and had no tendency to spirit up any worldly faction against either the established church or the state. They preached and practised that scheme of the most universal benevolence, which drew upon them, and will always draw upon their followers, the contempt and hatred of all sorts of men. And why should their followers be greatly disturbed, whatever party prevail or rule the fashion in this world? Is it not enough for them if they shall reign in the next?

They proposed no worldly happiness, public or private, to their followers; they displayed none of those ingredients which compose the delicious philter which reigning Christianity holds forth in her golden cup, and which the Apocalypse calls *the wine of her fornication with the kings of the earth*; whereby she so allures and intoxicates the nations, that it is almost to as little purpose to mention the ancient doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, even in the hearing
of

of our most orthodox Christians, as it would be to deliver a lecture concerning sobriety in the midst of a company inflamed with wine. The principles of the connection betwixt church and state, having a very natural hold of every avenue to their hearts, are far dearer to them than any thing the kingdom of heaven contains. They can be in raptures with dreams about national reformation ; they can even indulge a melancholy kind of pleasure, in bewailing a sinful land and degenerate age, because it gratifies their religious pride to appear in the character of mediators and intercessors for people whom they imagine to be much worse than themselves. But as for the ancient doctrine of the connection betwixt Christianity and the cross, it might do very well in the infancy of the church, when times were bad ; —they know better things. And indeed were I not writing to one who holds the sacred text for the initial figure in all his computations, I might have spared myself the trouble of touching upon this subject.

It may be noted here as a proof of what is above said, that it has been imagined, in opposition to all history and daily observation, that the world has been much improved in goodness by means of Christianity ; —that the spirit of that religion has been nationally diffused into the lives and manners of the people in the countries where it has been established. The state of the world, when Christ came, has been considered, and the epidemical vices displayed : And it has been imagined, that Jesus Christ, by condemning

those vices, abolished the practice of them; and by recommending the opposite virtues, infused the spirit of them into nations. There had been no great marvel in one's dreaming so, nor yet in his telling his dream in the most open manner, even from the pulpit *; but that such a dream should not only be gravely received by the public for truth, but even admired, I dare say you will readily agree with me, cannot be accounted for on any other principles than those already mentioned.

BUT perhaps when we value ourselves on our religious establishments, the stress of our glorying does not lie so much in our legal advantages, nor in the society formed upon them, as in the soundness of our creed, composed by our venerable ancestors, and daily receiving additional weight from the many eminent personages who have supported it with distinguished learning and abilities. If this be the case, methinks the ground of our glorying would still be more solid, should we return again into the bosom of the Roman church, which we are sure was once *founded on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*; whereas the utmost that can be said of
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* See a Sermon by Dr ROBERTSON, intitled, *The situation of the world at the time of Christ's appearance, and its connection with the success of his religion, considered*; reviewed with applause, both at London, and at Edinburgh where it was preached, January 6. 1755. At the last mentioned place it was publicly upheld, perhaps justly enough, as a proper specimen, shewing how much the *art* of preaching has of late been improved in Scotland.

any other establishment now in being, is, that it was founded on a creed extracted from them by fallible men, whose skill and fidelity are liable to be questioned. Moreover, we have still extant a true and faithful copy of the Articles of the Roman church's creed in PAUL's Epistle to them, which was once cordially believed and obeyed, and is to this day acknowledged for a divinely-inspired writing by them: And though the true import thereof be now *much mistaken and almost forgotten* among them; yet such of us as loved PAUL's doctrine best, might still value ourselves on being the truest members of the best founded church in the world, as cleaving closest to its original fundamental articles.

Methinks, if we judge it an amiable thing in others, we ought also ourselves, when writing on Christianity, to refrain from "the low singularities of a party *", and confine ourselves to the public authentic maxims of the kingdom of heaven. For, to turn our eyes again toward Rome, were there only two men there holding by the genuine sense of PAUL's Epistle, these, in the eyes of the apostles, would be considered as the only representatives of the ancient Roman church, as the 'only confessors of the catholic faith; and all the rest, as taken up with *low singularities*, unprofitable and vain, however firmly established and highly dignified on the earth.

Moreover,

* *Meditations*, vol. i. p. 148.

Moreover, it ought to be remembered, that very many of the admirers of the doctrine of Messieurs BOSTON and ERSKINES are highly offended at the English hierarchy and worship, and not a few of them sworn enemies thereto: And therefore no unnecessary stumbling-block should be laid in their way to scare them at the doctrine we would commend to their attention; especially when we ourselves are persuaded, that
 “faith and love inspire the breast, and regulate
 “the progress of each *private Christian*. These
 “unite the *whole congregation* of the faithful to
 “God and one another * :” Whereas all other bonds of union, however judiciously framed by men, have always served to divide and alienate them from one another.

It ought also to be considered, that, on account of these singularities, which are indeed extremely low, even as earth is in respect of heaven, the way of truth has been much evil-spoken of, and its native evidence greatly obscured. The apostle PETER, after setting before us the evidence of the truth we have been considering, plainly prophesies, that a handle would be given for this evil-speaking by self-seeking Christian teachers, and the multitudes following them. The great majority of our champions against infidelity, have undertaken the defence of national Christianity, and have magnified the gospel as a scheme nobly adapted for promoting
 national

* *Meditations*, vol. ii. p. 232.

national happiness ; by which means they have had both the apostles and the freethinkers for their antagonists at once ; an opposition by far too formidable for any set of men to cope with, now that the magistrate suffers no means of deciding such disputes but by the pen. Many standing in awe of the philosophers, have been ashamed of every thing in the gospel offensive to them, and so have endeavoured to recommend Christianity to them, as the completest system, or an improvement of their maxims. They have studied to soften or dissemble every thing about it, that they imagined could have given the least disgust to the *divine* PLATO: Yet some philosophers are so saucy as to refuse it after all. In short, our Christian leaders have taken pains to remove from the gospel every thing that anciently proved *a stumbling-block to the Jew, or foolishness to the Greek* : And still they complain of the decay of true Christianity. However, both they who speak evil of the way of truth, and they who furnish the occasion, are, though far from intending so, jointly conspiring to fulfil the prophecies of the New Testament, and to strengthen the evidence of the truth in the minds of them who believe it ; even as all parties among the Jews in their joint opposition to Jesus, conspired to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning him, and to assure his disciples that he was *the Christ*.

I might now proceed to consider, how on the holy mount, or in Jesus Christ glorified, appeared the meaning of the institution of the ancient oracle,

oracles, the anointing of kings, priests, and prophets, with oil, which made *the face to shine, &c.* whence many useful observations might arise to us in confirmation of the more ancient scriptures, and serving to illustrate the difference betwixt primitive and modern Christianity: But to take in all the views which are centred in this grand event, would require a general survey of the whole scriptures, the great and leading design of which is, to set before us the sufferings of Christ issuing in his glory.

If we take our station on the holy mount, we have a prospect backward to the beginning of time, and forward to the end thereof, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and all old things give place to the new heavens and the new earth, containing the new Jerusalem, which shall be illuminated by the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ; when the whole company of them who were redeemed from among men, and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, shall fully experience what meaneth *grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

METHINKS it is time for us now to acknowledge, that, with great propriety, and on the solidest grounds, the apostle PETER on this occasion asserts, that the prophetic word, or all that the prophets had written, had now received additional confirmation. For thus I presume a
young

young scholar would give the literal version of his words :

Και εχομεν βεβαιωτερον τον προφητικον λογον.

And we have more firm the prophetic word.*

It was no small recommendation of the truth of the apostolic testimony concerning Jesus being the Christ, that it confirmed and established the writings of the ancient prophets. The prophetic word, after all the evidence it formerly had of coming from God, was to be verified, and so to receive additional confirmation by its accomplishment. Aside from its accomplishment in Jesus, we cannot find therein any fixed sense or unity of design : But when we see all its lines meeting in Jesus, like the rays of the sun collected in a focus, there arises thence the brightest and strongest evidence of the truth of what the apostles witnessed concerning the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the old and the new revelation tallying exactly together in such a number and variety of circumstances, as utterly exclude all suspicion of human contrivance, serve mutually to support and strengthen each other, and so to establish beyond all doubt that great truth,

* Is it not surprising to reflect how much has been written by learned disputants on this text, laboriously contending with each other in what sense the prophetic word might be said to be *more sure* than the most solemn and august revelation that ever was delivered from God to men, namely, that on the holy mount ? But there are few who incline to observe the import of this grand revelation.

truth, which alone can support the heart of man in his last agonies.

The apostles were traduced as forsaking Moses and the prophets ; but they could with a good grace assert, that they held their writings by a firmer handle, and so had a greater reverence for them than any of their adversaries. Accordingly PETER commends, and enforces the attention Christians were then giving to the prophetic word, and so furnishes the true key of interpretation to all Christians to the end of the world, when he says, *they did well giving heed to it, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day should dawn, and the day-star arise in their hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake, moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, &c.* They gave heed to it as to a fainter and more confined light, referring to a clearer and more extensive one that was come, and which they found exhibited to them in the testimony of the apostles concerning Jesus. They considered it as a *light shining in a dark place, until the day should dawn*; as giving a fainter view, like a lamp in the night, of the same things that were to be more clearly seen by the new revelation, which is compared to the dawning day and day-star ; even as PETER, near the close of this Epistle, calls the state of things after Christ's second coming the *day of God*, when that glory which now
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only dawns to men in the report concerning it, shall shine forth in broad day, and so supersede the use of the clearest revelation or testimony that can be given of it.

But then, the prophetic word referred not only to a clearer revelation, but also to the effect it was to have on believers, which PETER calls the *day-star* arising in their hearts : And to the same purpose he says to Christians in his first Epistle, *The prophets prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, when they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* They who believed the gospel, so beheld the divine glory therein, and were led by the power and evidence thereof to obey it from the heart, and patiently suffer for its sake, received, according to Christ's promise, the Comforter, *the Spirit of God bearing witness with their spirits that they were the children of God* ; and as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so did their consolation also abound by him. While they were thus influenced by the love of the truth, and had their joy enlarged in the midst of those circumstances which naturally make the hearts of men to die within them, they had in their hearts a begun experience or sensible proof of the glory following the sufferings of Christ ; so enjoyed the utmost confirmation of the prophetic word that can take place in this mortal state. They had the foretaste of life from the dead, the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, ascertaining their entrance into the joy of their Lord, even as the day-star ushers in the day. Thus, by means
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of the gospel revelation, as the day-star arising in their hearts, they knew in themselves the accomplishment of the prophetic word; they had an inward proof of the power and coming of Christ; very different indeed from what the Jews thought of, but perfectly agreeable to the true sense of the prophecies.

· IT remains that we take some notice of the rule which PETER lays down as a first principle, to be carefully attended to in all the use we make of the prophetic word, either for understanding the doctrine of the Messiah, or enjoying the comforts thereof in our hearts. We must proceed, KNOWING THIS FIRST, *that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation: For, &c.* Now, the apostle leaves us at no loss to know what he means by *private interpretation*, while he plainly states an opposition betwixt the will of man and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The apostle's argument, then, must run thus: Whereas prophecy came not by the will of man, it is not to be understood according to the fancy or pleasure of men, but according to the interpretation given of it by God himself, from whom it came. And this interpretation God himself gave, when that notable voice, *This is my beloved Son, &c.* bearing a manifest reference to many passages in the prophets, more especially *Isaiab* xlii. 1. came from heaven to Jesus at his baptism; was uttered again from the glory surrounding his person, in the presence of MOSES, ELIAS, and three apostles; and was illustrated at large by
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the testimony of the apostles, inspired for that purpose by the same Spirit which breathed in the prophets.

In this saying is set forth the great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus. So we find him making constant reference to it, saying, *I have told you the truth, which I have heard of God. I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him:* And praying for his disciples, — *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.* The same thing is confirmed to us by them who heard him, God bearing them witness according to his own will. In their testimony is displayed the full proof, with the whole import and use of what he began to speak. And in the foresight of false teachers, who would interpret the word of prophecy according to their own will, the apostles committed the things they testified to writing, that Christians might be able, after their decease, to have these things always in remembrance, and so be fortified against every private interpretation of the prophetic writings.

We are then to look on the New Testament as the only public and authentic commentary on the Old : And every gloss on the Old not agreeable to the New, must be thrown aside among Jewish traditions, or more modern legends. If the whole Jewish sanhedrim had agreed on the sense of a prophecy, in opposition to the inspired apostles, it must have passed for a private interpretation among Christians, and accordingly be rejected. And should an œcumenical council

of Christian teachers unanimously agree to accommodate the prophecies of the Old Testament to any other things than those revealed in the New, we ought to regard their decision as at best but a private interpretation, and despise it as a low singularity. For PETER does not here oppose *private interpretation* to any sense of the prophecies that might be authorised by Christian teachers, and approved by the multitudes following them; but he opposes it to the public interpretation given of those writings by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament: Yea, in the warning he here gives against private interpretation, he seems plainly, by the context, to have his eye on Christian teachers followed by many, who would corrupt the Christian profession, by interpreting the Old Testament according to their own will, in opposition to the will of God declared in the New.

And thus indeed the corruption of Christianity was privily introduced, under the colour of divine authority produced from the Old Testament; and when any corruption of the Christian doctrine was once introduced, and found agreeable to the passions of men, it was easy, by the help of tradition, and a little punning on words and phrases, to accommodate the New Testament thereto; or, if that could not readily be done, to set it aside as deficient in that respect. Accordingly we find there have been, and still are, many Christian teachers much followed, confidently applying the prophecies of the Old Testament to a sort of worldly power and coming of Christ, very different from what the apostles made

made

made known to their hearers and followers. Their interpretation of these writings, however agreeable to our notions of national and worldly happiness, is very unsuitable to that conformity to Christ in suffering here, and glory hereafter, unto which his whole church is predestinated, and which the apostles made known as the true sense and scope of the prophetic word: Yet many zealous professors of Christianity and their teachers are so fond and confident of such interpretations, that they will be ready to charge any one who rejects them with denying the authority of the Old Testament. But the reason is, they find their account in them, and they have their reward.

On how many things foreign to the religion of Jesus has the zeal of later Christians been spent, through their neglecting the warning here given by PETER?—Hence the English priesthood, uninterrupted succession, &c.—Hence the Scots covenanted work of extirpation, for the decayed state of which many devout people still groan, repining against God and the King, because they are deprived of the pious exercise of power to murder their fellow-creatures.—Hence some sanguine critics on the Hebrew scriptures, who would seem to be far better skilled in the sense of them than ever the apostles were, after grossly perverting the sacred doctrine concerning the person of Christ, the character of God, and the ground of our acceptance with him, go about to persuade us to deal with one another, on pretence of heresy, as JOSHUA did with the idolatrous

trous Canaanites: Whereas, were these critics to be judged according to their own impious law, they should suffer capital punishment, for seeking to seduce men from the true faith, not to mention their malicious design against the lives of their fellow-creatures.—Hence the many very learned and very trifling disputes about church-government, or who should be greatest among Christians.—Hence much presumptuous evil-speaking of the powers ordained of God, under pretence of zeal for the headship and sovereignty of Christ.—But it would be tedious to touch on all the topics which present themselves here, and which have afforded a copious fund of reproach against Christianity to its more open enemies. I would only say in the general, that the zeal of our leaders in orthodoxy to establish a kingdom for the Messiah, in imitation of God's ancient kingdom in Canaan, can be equalled in absurdity by nothing but the attempts of our more fashionable clergy to accommodate the New Testament to the Greek philosophy, or something equivalent.

Yet if, holding every other source of knowledge suspected, we can, by the light of the apostolic writings, illustrating to us the ancient scriptures, distinguish the way of truth from every false way, we shall find every handle of reproach given to its avowed enemies, from any quarter in the world called *Christian*, serving to confirm and establish our minds in the truth, even as we shall perceive every source of error operating exactly as the apostles foretold. And far from having occasion to join in the common,
indolent,

indolent, and fruitless complaint, of the badness and darkness of the times, as if we expected better in this mortal state ; we shall find reason to adore the divine providence, over-ruling the course of this present evil world, and making light to arise to us on all sides ;—we shall find no change of affairs worth the waiting for, but the appearance of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now, to the general reflections on the evidence of the truth, which introduced the consideration of the above passage in PETER, it may be added, that as all the sacred doctrines arise from divine works, we can know no more about the things of God, than he is pleased to shew us by his explanation of his own works. They who would push their inquiries further, intruding into those things which they have not seen, must be left to enjoy all the pleasure that the pride of reasoning, and their boasted liberty of doubting, can afford them. But such as pretend to admit the divine works, and yet are dissatisfied with the doctrine given along with them, so go about to frame some other, more suitable to their taste, act both an absurd and disingenuous part ; absurd, while, by reasonings drawn from what they see in nature, they go about to explain facts, which manifestly reverse the course, and surpass the sphere thereof altogether ; disingenuous, because they are obliged to use every artifice to disguise or dissemble the plain and simple doctrine, connected with those facts in the scripture. Let us just point at an instance or two.

THE scripture, while it manifests one God, in opposition to all idols, and infinitely eminent above all creatures, at the same time discovers, in the one divine nature or Godhead, such a distinction as is betwixt the sender and the sent among men, such a distinction as admits of the reciprocal use of the personal pronouns, *I, thou;* and *he* ; and such phrases as these, *Let us make — One of us — We are one, &c.* ; and so, for brevity's sake, has been called personal. Now, we, who are not capable of knowing what it is that constitutes different persons among the creatures, cannot expect the scripture should teach us what lies at the bottom of this distinction of divine persons. We can only learn from thence, how they appear to be different by their several offices, relations, &c. And this is all we can know of the difference of persons, who cannot be distinguished by the common properties of their nature. We can find no likenesses to the personal distinction in the Deity among angels or men : And this is the force of all the objections against the account given of it in scripture. We cannot find two or more persons, who are one angel, or one man. And there was no necessity for this, seeing another angel or man might be made to answer all the purposes for which such a distinction could be supposed needful. But without such a distinction in the Deity, there could never have appeared such all-sufficiency and perfection of character, as the scripture sets before us for the object of our worship; nor could there ever have been any ground of hope for the guilty.

guilty. And indeed it is only those whose comfort depends entirely on it, who will heartily approve the revealed account of the Deity. While the scripture clearly distinguishes those works wherein the Deity appears acting alone, it also points forth THREE, who are often declared to be ONE, as acting each his part in the same work, even in all the works by which the one true God is distinguished from all idols and creatures. And particular care is taken to ascribe every divine work and perfection to him who humbled himself unto death, that the evidence might be very clear, where the objection might seem strongest ; and this not in a few more obscure passages, but in the most open manner throughout the scripture ; and far more suitable to strike the conscience, than any artful cautious form of words framed by the wisdom of men.

Yet though this doctrine does by no means rest upon the skill of the critic ; and though the most crafty reasoner, however much he might divert himself by playing on his own words, was never able to fix the least inconsistency upon it ; we may find many, who pretend no small regard to the scripture, ready to urge the same question with the Jews on the like occasion, *How long dost thou make us to doubt ? Tell us plainly.* They can shew us how it ought to have been expressed, in order to be worthy of their belief ; and appear ready to credit it, had it been so expressed. But shall we believe them ? May we not rather judge they would exclaim against it as blasphemy, as the Jewish rulers did, when Jesus, in the most

explicit manner, so as to supersede all occasion for any more questions, declared who he was in their presence?

But what I had chiefly in view, in touching on this subject, was to note the strange use such men make of the scripture. If we hearken to them, we are at a loss to see God at all in the book, which, at first sight, seemed to glow with a discovery of his peculiar glory, from beginning to end. We lose sight of the infinite eminence of the Deity above all creatures, by seeing a creature set up before us, who is almost God, and who must receive worship almost equal to what is due to the Most High. Yea, we cannot see God alone appearing to us in any work. So we are left at the mercy of these gentlemen, to tell us what God is, what is his character, and what peculiar homage we must pay him: For, according to them, we shall find little else in the scripture, but something like the creed of our eastern neighbours, “The great God, “and Mahomet his prophet.” Yet we shall find the Christian piety of such men respected by those who profess to hold the revealed distinction in the Deity. But not every contender for the Athanasian creed loves the forementioned doctrine, as held forth in the scriptures. I shall only add here, that it is no small commendation of this doctrine to the conscience of man, that whereas Polytheism infinitely debases every divine perfection, this opens to view an unexpected grandeur and all-sufficiency in the Deity, far surpassing all the most exalted thoughts of the wisest

wisest men, yea, drawing the utmost admiration of angels.

I SHALL only mention another instance. The scripture clearly asserts the sovereignty of God, as having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardening whom he will; and repels the strongest objection that ever was made against it, *Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?* It is well known, that in point of reasoning, aside from the authority of revelation, the opposite doctrine is pressed with difficulties at least equal to those which affect this. Yet many who profess to reverence the scriptures as a divine revelation, reject this doctrine with scorn, though it be revealed there as clear as words can make it; and that not in one or two passages, but interwoven with the whole stile of the scriptures, and supported by a variety of facts recorded there. They reject it, why? Because they know not what it is to be God, and to have understanding and power like him. They can entertain no notion of human freedom, unless it be altogether independent on God. They cannot raise their thoughts of God so high, as to admit, that he can make creatures, having a will of their own, or freedom of choice, so as to be praise or blame-worthy in the exercise thereof; yet all the while living, moving, and having their being in dependence on Him, “who worketh all things after
“the counsel of his own will,” and over-rules the motions of his creatures, in a manner far beyond what they are conscious of, and such as no
way

way enters into their consideration, among the thoughts or motives which immediately influence their conduct *. Why? Because whatever machines

* It may warrantably be said, that man has a will or freedom of choice of his own, distinct from that of the Deity. But he who imagines he has any will, liberty, or power of action, altogether independent of the Deity, may, to borrow an expression from a late writer, justly be said to have a very *deceitful* sense or feeling thereof; for both the works and words of God concur with the natural conscience of man, to shew the vanity of any such imagination. Yet it cannot be denied, that human nature is, in its present state, affected with a twofold deceitful sense of liberty and power. Man, not apprehending any compulsive restraint upon his choice of right or wrong, or, to speak more properly, depriving him of choice, presumes he may take the liberty to disobey the dictates of his conscience, or the known will of God, with hopes of impunity; for this presumptuous imagination is the spring of all his disobedience. And he likewise readily imagines, he has power to compass his own designs, independently of the secret purpose and predetermination of the Deity, and his sovereign direction of all events. Both these imaginations are closely connected together, and took place in human nature at the same time, from the same source. They were instilled into it by the first Deceiver, who, by artful reasoning, corrupted man's natural or original sense of dignity, by filling him with the thought of being as God. This sense of dignity, when corrupted, came justly to be called *pride*. These imaginations then arise from pride. As pride is founded in deceit, all its feelings are deceitful. And they may justly be considered as *counter-feelings* to the natural ones, namely, the dictates of conscience, implanted in man's original frame by the Deity. All mankind are conducted by these counter-feelings, except those in whom they are overruled by the evidence of the truth of the gospel, which alone can teach men, how unre-served submission to the Deity can be consistent with their happiness. Since man thought of being as God, and, in consequence of this, disappointment and misery have attended all his schemes of happiness, it has proved matter of endless disputes among mankind, to reconcile the remaining traces of the dignity of human nature, once framed for better circumstances, with the various continued tokens and notices of the majesty and sovereignty of the supreme being, which the unwearied efforts of the pride of men, in all ages, have never yet been able to efface. Some, exalting
man,

machines they can make, they cannot imitate God in this; and because they cannot see among the creatures any subordination resembling this. But we have instances in scripture, both of repentance and despair in men, who, after they sinned, knew that their sin was infallibly foretold; yet neither he who repented, nor he who despaired, drew the least alleviation of his guilt (but the contrary) from the divine prediction; as well knowing, that it no way entered into his thoughts as a motive to sin. And indeed the conscience of every man must first and last bear witness to this, that when he sins he “is not tempted of God, but drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

The objectors are not willing to allow any superiority to God, but such as one creature may be supposed to have over others. They incline still to think of God as resembling the first magistrate in a free state, who is bound himself to observe the laws he enforces upon others. Hence the many idle reasonings we have heard about the ends of government, which men with great assurance apply to God; not reflecting, that of every

man, lose sight of the Deity; others, admitting the existence of the Deity, lose sight of human nature. The former, while they would have man to “be as God, knowing good and evil,” can find no place for the divine sovereignty. The latter, admitting some notion of the divine sovereignty, are at a loss to see how man is capable of doing good or evil, or of being praise or blame worthy in his actions. The reasonings of the former lead to speculative, those of the latter to practical Atheism. The former lead us to *think* there is no God, the latter to *act* as if there were none.

every earthly potentate it must be said, that his very being as a prince, his dignity, wealth, and power, consist in his having subjects. Yet mortals, as once was said of the haughty prince of Tyre, set their hearts as the heart of God, and think of circumscribing him by the same laws by which they themselves are bound. But how shall that law which commands devotion to what is above us, and our regard to our equals, be applied to the Deity? For thus runs the sum of the divine law to man, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.* Can we find a superior, to whom the Deity owes reverence? Or an equal, to whom he owes affection?

The objectors are not satisfied, how God can say, as he does to CYRUS, (Isaiah xlv. 7.) in opposition to the two principles of the Persians, *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these.* They are not satisfied how he creates the latter, in order to shew his glory, and proper delight in opposing, defeating, and making them give place to the former, so as to appear the Author *
of

* *Author*, when applied to the Deity, is an expression borrowed from the works of men, referring to the appearance they have of genius, contrivance, and design, and denotes the *contriver*. For we do not inquire who is the author of a heap of rubbish, or any disorderly assemblage of things, wherein no design appears. MOSES'S description of the first condition of the earth, is variously rendered by the several Greek translators; but it is manifest they all intend to point out darkness and confusion, or a chaos. Of this, we are informed, God was the cause, or creator. Yet he does not appear to us, causing, creating, or giving it being, under any
notion

of light and peace. They cannot look with
attentive

notion we have, either by nature or revelation, of the operation of power, or of the connection betwixt cause and effect. All that we can know of the matter then is, that he was cause or creator of it, in a manner known only to himself, and which the minds of creatures were never framed to understand. The highest notion given us in scripture of the Deity's operation as a cause is, that *he spake, and it was*; which some way corresponds with our highest idea of the exertion of power among men: *Where the word of a king is, there is power*. Hence the centurion, in the gospel, raised his idea of the divine power of Jesus. But then the Deity is not exhibited to us as speaking, till he commands the light to shine out of darkness. Here God first presents himself to our apprehension as an *author*. His manner of causing, and the effect, are set before us in their connection. The power of the divine Spirit is represented as in readiness to execute what was spoken; and the divine approbation is signified, in beholding with complacence as *good* the work done according to the word spoken.

God never appeared to men, but in operating what is *good*, and in opposing what is *evil*. It is true, the state of darkness and confusion is first related to us. But man never had occasion to be puzzled with the contemplation of this state of things; nor could he be informed of it, till after he was acquainted with *light* and *order*. The information, then, while it carried back his thoughts to chaos, as the remotest point of view, or the boundary of his imagination, served to heighten his idea of the beautiful workmanship he was already acquainted with.

Our apprehension of, or delight in what is good, is always heightened in proportion as we perceive it contrasted with the opposite evil, or as our view of the contrast is enlarged. We have a higher, as well as clearer idea of wisdom and power, in the production of light and order out of opposite principles, than we could have had without such opposition.

It is easy to apply what is now said to the entrance of sin into the world. In the third chapter of *Genesis*, we have the author of sin particularly described to us, as introducing it into the world by deceitful words and actions. At the same time, the Deity appears opposing it, in the most explicit manner. Besides, what else is sin but disaffection to the Deity, in the mind of a creature bound by the highest obligations to obedience? In the very nature of the thing, then, we cannot think of the Deity on the one hand, and sin on the other, without perceiving the greatest opposition betwixt them.

attentive delight on the great architect proceeding in his work, and rearing up to view his beautiful fabrick, out of a confused heap of unshapely materials, till once they be satisfied how he procured these materials, and where he found them so unshapely. And to tell many reasoners he created them, sounds only in their ears like saying, he found them where they were not. Yet thus the first scene of the grand drama of the universe is opened. As soon as the curtain is drawn, or any object offered to our thoughts, or rather when our minds are carried back from the present beauty of the universe, to the remotest point of view, a dark confused mass is presented. And we are informed, by a short prologue, that God was the cause or beginner of the whole, to guard us against imagining any other eternal principle. And this is all we can learn of the matter. To pry farther back, is utterly in vain. But we shall receive all reasonable satisfaction, if we will have patience to attend on God, proceeding in what is more properly called *his work*, which he carries forward in so gradual a manner, and so inviting to our attention, as plainly to shew, he wants to be more especially known to us thereby.

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It may, with great confidence, be said, that never was any word or work of God heard or seen by men, that did not carry in it proofs of his good intention, and opposition to evil. In the New Testament, we see God as an *author*, by what he is said to be the God of; as, *God is not of confusion, but of peace*. To give this expression a familiar turn in English, our translators have said, *God is not the author of confusion, &c.* Accordingly, he often takes the titles of *the God of peace, consolation, all grace, &c.*; and in opposing evil, *the God of vengeance*.

We shall perceive him in every part of his work speaking, acting, and beholding what is made with delight, or seeing it GOOD, in opposition to the state wherein it was before : And this day after day, till he rests with man on the *seventh*, from all his works, which he *created* * TO MAKE, *Gen. ii. 3.*

I scarcely need to add, that the case is the same with respect to the entrance of sin and misery into the world, and the grand design which God is carrying forward, of making thence to arise the
brightest

* Here *creating* is plainly used in its distinguished sense, hinted at in the foregoing note : For it is often used for *making*, and sometimes includes both senses, to wit, the formation of all things, as well as the finding matter to work upon, or the making room for the divine working to appear. Perhaps it includes both these senses, in the summary view given us of the production of all things, in the first verse of the Bible. The Hebrew word for *creating*, is sometimes applied to the actions of men, as *Joshua xvii. 15, 18.* where it seems to be used for clearing out among forests, or making room for beginning a settlement. The Greek translators, not finding any fitter expression for denoting the distinguished sense of this word in the passage of MOSES above referred to, have said, *Which God BEGAN to make.* There is no action among men that affords an idea in any respect similar to the distinguished sense of this word. We must rest satisfied, then, with the information given us, that God is the *beginner* of all things, in a manner peculiar to, and known only to himself ; even as the progress and issue of all things is in his hands. Accordingly he distinguishes himself from all idols and creatures, both in understanding and in power, by taking to himself the title of THE FIRST AND THE LAST.

This is not the only instance of a distinguished sense of words in the first chapter of *Genesis* : For surely we must understand the words, *earth, darkness, deep, and waters,* ver 2. in a sense distinguished from what they signify after the earth is fully formed. And it is evident, that such distinction was unavoidable, in describing to men the first origin and formation of all things.

brightest discovery of righteousness and salvation together * ; as is plainly intimated in the words immediately following the last quotation from ISAIAH. As the sinful state of mankind is often compared to the first condition of the earth, and salvation from sin, to the producing of light and order at the first, I shall only mention one passage, Isaiah lx. 2. *Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people : But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*— Thus we see, that the entrance of sin and misery into the world, was as fixed a part in the scheme of God as the great salvation ; yet we cannot see God in the former, as we do in the latter. We cannot see him, by keeping our eye only on the shade ; but if we love the grand picture, we will not put the murmuring question, Why or how did the shade take place ? The apostle PAUL, speaking of the happiness of those who are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, as not only saved, but saved glorying in God, adds, *Rom. v. 12. (δια τούτο) For this, namely, that this brightest discovery*

* The province of man is to imitate God, and concur with him in his work of bringing good out of evil, in doing the works of righteousness, mercy, and kindness. For in these God manifests his character to us ; in these he exhibits his working to our view, laying open all his designs, so as we might behold and consider his work on every side. But how God creates evil, was never intended for the contemplation of creatures ; nor were their understandings ever framed for such an inquiry. This may be justly considered as that part of the divine agency which is hid behind the curtain, which can only be understood by the mind of him who has power to create ; and the particular knowledge of which must be as far from being of any benefit to creatures, or all who have not power to create, as it is from being suited to their understandings.

discovery of the divine glory, this highest perfection of human happiness might take place, sin entered into the world. But, not to enlarge, methinks we may easily be convinced, that Christians are not very numerous in the world, while we find so few who are fond of this doctrine which fixes the dependence of man upon God exclusive of all reserve* : Yet this very doctrine is the sure refuge of the wretched and the destitute, yea of all who enter into the kingdom of heaven. Though this be indeed the case according to the scripture, we may find some who profess to acknowledge it, holding it

* How far the Deity exhibited in the scriptures is above what is worshipped by a great part of those who bear the Christian name, may appear from such passages as these : Gen. l. 20. JOSEPH says to his brethren, *But as for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.* Exod. ix. 16. it is said to PHARAOH, *And in every deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.* Isaiah x. 5—16. *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation ; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so. For he saith,— Shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols ? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom : For I am prudent. Shall the ax boast itself against him that beweth therewith ? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? &c.* Acts ii. 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* Chap. iii 18. *Those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, be hath so fulfilled.* Chap. xv. 18. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

so very cheap, as to think those who reject it may yet be very good Christians; whereas, if one should treat the writings of CICERO as the Christian enemies of this doctrine do the scriptures, he would be universally hissed at by all the lovers of classical learning. But numbers rule the fashion, and can keep one another in countenance as to any thing. And we must expect no other, while it is the interest of multitudes to honour Christianity in pretence, and to hate it in reality. However, we may frankly say, that such a one as LORD BOLINGBROKE, who hates this doctrine, and therefore rejects the scripture which clearly supports it, acts a far more uniform and consistent part.

BEFORE I conclude these miscellaneous reflections on *mystery*, which have introduced several views of the mystery of godliness, and that of iniquity, we may take some particular notice of the popular preachers; and the rather at it was with men of this sort that the apostles had always the warmest controversy.

As they generally consider their hearers as already persuaded of the truth of the gospel, they have no great occasion to dwell much on the evidence thereof. Their great business is, to animate their people who are already *believers*; nay, but who are supposed to hold the gospel for true, as having never had any question or doubt about it; to animate them, I say, and carry them forward to the grand work of the *believing application*; to conduct them through
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the process of what they call *regeneration* or the *new birth*.—Here it is, that a cabinet full of mysteries is presented, of which the popular preachers keep the key.—Here it is they shew their great dexterity in opening and shutting at their pleasure; now raising blind amazement, then familiarly reasoning; now setting forth as rational or natural a scheme * of justification as any philosopher could wish, then again wrapping up all in the clouds.—But to avoid any ambiguous play on words, as unsuitable to the gravity of the subject, instead of *mysteries* in the sense used by them, I would choose to borrow an expression from some ancient professors of Christianity censured by the apostle JOHN, and substitute the word *depths*. Now, it may be observed of these preachers, that while, on the one hand, they endeavour to regulate by natural principles,

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* Mr BOSTON, as if he had learned to apply mathematics to the Christian doctrine, is ready to shew us by what *ratio* or rule of proportion we are to expect the favours of the divine grace or pardoning mercy to be distributed among men, who are yet acknowledged to be equally destitute of any claim upon that grace: in a Sermon on *Luke xxiii. 42.* intitled, *The extraordinary case of the thief upon the cross, &c.* he says, “It is unreasonable to think, that it should fare at the last with those who have had means of grace all their days, and despised them, as it may do with those who never have such means till they come to die.” In like manner, we must say it is unreasonable to think, that he who owes five hundred pence should be forgiven as frankly as he who owes only fifty. If we hearken to this eminent preacher, and others of his class, we must entertain a *rational* notion of divine grace, and say, Happy are they who have little to be forgiven, but woe to the worthless. And indeed it is very common with them, when they emerge a little out of their depths, to address their hearers thus:—“But we must deal with you as with rational creatures, and work upon you by rational arguments.”

suitable to the pride of any reasoner, that procedure of the divine grace to men, which, according to the apostles, moved without the sphere of nature altogether, and always shewed itself in surprising events, contrary to human expectation; on the other hand, in the place where the scripture holds forth a clear and solid truth for relief to the guilty, they present to our thoughts an unfathomable depth. If we hearken to them, the great point about which our faith is principally concerned, is a matter which turns out to be true, no book nor man can tell how. It does not present itself to us as a truth, but as a matter of no small doubtfulness and anxiety. We must toss it in our hearts for some time by way of a problem, and then hammer it into a truth, as an eager logician squeezes out a conclusion from betwixt a pair of premises, of which the one happens to be a fond and bold conjecture. Yet sometimes they condescend to exert themselves, to make this depth as fordable as possible, and that in a manner which in some sort may be called *mysterious*, as being so closely wrapped up in figures and similitudes, as that if these were removed, little or no meaning would remain behind. I shall give a short specimen.—In the gospel-offer, we are told, is presented to the poor bankrupt a bond or bill indorsed to him, to relieve him from his poverty.—It is not his as yet; however, with much ado he at last lays hold upon it, echoing back to the offer, and saying, *Even so I take it*: Upon which he takes instruments, and places counsel to make payment forthcomring for his
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his relief; so it becomes his to all intents and purposes.—He that is made wiser by this reasoning, may rejoice therein!—But as I may have opportunities of observing further the arts of these gentlemen in the sequel, I shall not enlarge on them at present.

I shall conclude these reflections with observing, that, in the very entrance to the Christian religion, the first step we make carries us beyond the line of nature altogether; that is, when we believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here the course of nature is reversed; here a new order of things quite above it opens to our view. He who admits this fact as circumstanced in the gospel-history, will find as regular and uniform a connection in all the parts of the Christian religion, or in all the things that concern the kingdom of heaven, as is to be found in the course of nature: Yea and more so; seeing the course of nature has been often thwarted by the manifest interposition of its author, not to mention the interruptions of its ordinary course by uncommon events; whereas that kingdom cannot be moved. Seeing then the whole religion of Jesus stands or falls with his resurrection, no man can with a good grace appear in quality of a reasoner against any of its doctrines, but he who disputes that fact. Accordingly some of our boldest enemies to these doctrines have been sensible of this, and, scorning to involve themselves in a continued train of absurdity and self-contradiction, have judged it the shortest and most rational course, to point their battery a-

gainst the fact which supports them; whereas all who pretend to admit the resurrection of Jesus, and yet go about to undermine any of the doctrines delivered by the inspired witnesses thereof, give manifest proofs of gross inattention or disingenuity, or rather both.

O n R E A S O N.

REASON being often contrasted with *mystery* and *faith*, it may be proper to inquire what deserves the name of right reason. I say right reason, because nothing is more obvious, than that men are often influenced in their practice by reasons of which they are ashamed both before and after action; and accordingly are at pains to pretend plausible reasons to cover those which they can neither avow to others, nor approve of themselves.

Not to be tedious, I think we may freely say, that the proper excellency of man above other animals, lies in his conscience, or what he knows without reasoning. It may likewise be said, that man has in common with other animals a reasoning faculty, by which he is capable of recollecting, comparing, and observing the connection, agreement, or difference of the things which he knows. His reasoning faculty, then, having, beyond what he knows in common with other animals, a peculiar and higher province of knowledge wherein to exercise itself, acquires thereby an excellency above the same faculty in them. The like may be said of human passions
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and organs of sensation. The conscience of man, not only affords a peculiar province for the exercise of his animal faculties, but is likewise the authentic director and rightful governor of them all. Thus the conscience of man spreads a dignity and excellency over all the powers of mind and body which he has in common with other animals.

To illustrate what has been said, it may be observed, that some domestic animals bear much the like respect toward man, as man does toward his Creator. They are happy in being caressed by man, and grieved at the tokens of his displeasure; and discover a consciousness of what will please and displease him. In this respect some of them are said to be unruly and vicious, and others tractable and obsequious. Thus their conduct appears to be influenced by reasons, though of a lower order than those which serve to direct the conduct of man. The *spirit of a beast goeth downward*, being conversant only about terrestrial objects; whereas the *spirit of a man goeth upward*, corresponding with his Maker by the dictates of his conscience.

But besides the indelible dictates of conscience, the mind of man has some-how been furnished with other notions on which he reasons; and so much the more fondly, as he finds them necessary to his present quiet: Notions of a more dubious and disputable nature than these dictates, and serving to abate their force, which therefore may be called *presumptions*.

Philosophy, which proposes to teach us from nature such knowledge of the Deity and of ourselves as may lead us to happiness, accounts every sentiment, or conclusion drawn from our sentiments, that serves to make us miserable, to be foolish and absurd ; and every sentiment or conclusion which it finds necessary to our happiness, to be just and true.

“ That God is not perfectly and invariably
 “ just ; that he may suffer sins, at least some of
 “ them, to pass unpunished ; that man has some
 “ liberty or power independent of the Deity ; ”
 and several other notions of the like nature, are fondly adopted by many as first principles in all their reasonings ; and they go about to prove them, by pointing out the absurd or unhappy consequences that would follow on denying them. Yet they may be easily distinguished from the invariable and universal dictates of conscience, by their being somewhat doubtful and disputable, and assuming occasionally various forms to evade objections : For many able reasoners have opposed them with as great confidence, and with as strong arguments, as were ever used in support of them ; whereas no man can with a good grace dispute against the dictates of conscience, and persuade us, for instance, to approve ingratitude, breach of trust, or false swearing.

How these presumptions came to take place in the mind of man, to take root, and grow up so readily there, as to be mistaken by many for
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original plants in his nature, cannot be accounted for any other way so well as by the scripture. If, in allusion to the parable, it should be asked, "Seeing good seed was sown in this field, from whence then hath it tares?" The answer I think must be, "An enemy hath done this."

However, it is manifest, that men generally delight to exercise their reasoning faculty in support of these presumptions, because the simple dictates of conscience afford them no agreeable fund for reasoning. Yet these dictates are the only original standard measures or reasons for the conduct of men. The fair use of these, or the just application of them to particular cases in word or action, is right reasoning, or acting a reasonable part. And he who goes about to shorten or lengthen these measures, to use them deceitfully, or substitute others in their place, is guilty of unfair measuring, or reasoning wrong; so acts an unreasonable part.

The just reasons for our conduct are impressed on our hearts by him who made us, and not invented by men; and to use them aright, is the proper exercise of our reasoning faculty, yea of all our powers both of mind and body. Yet that which men generally glory in, as their distinguishing excellency above other animals, is that exercise of their reasoning faculty which proceeds upon the presumptions of pride, and is employed in supporting them, and drawing soothing inferences from

from them. And thus men glory in their shame.

When the truth of the gospel takes place in the heart of a man, it does by no means set aside the use of his reasoning faculty; but rather, by enlarging the bounds of his knowledge, provides it with a new province, wherein it may exercise itself with greater certainty and delight. It affirms in the strongest manner all the notices of God, all the reasons of duty naturally imprinted in his conscience; and adds to them what was entirely wanting before, namely, a divine *reason of hope*. And thus it disentangles him from the necessity wherewith he found himself pressed, of debasing his own nature, and defacing the divine character, by reasoning on mere presumptions, in order to invent some ground of hope for his temporary support. The strictest reasoner, then, can have no objection against the gospel, unless he will quarrel with it, because it provides guilty man with a source of comfort without the aid of his reasoning faculty, or where all his natural funds for reasoning proved utterly deficient.

Agreeably to this, we may understand how the apostles are said to address themselves, on the part of God, to man. They did not make their court to his reasoning faculty by philosophical arguments, nor to his passions by the insinuating arts of human rhetoric; but, as man is not distinguished from the other animals by either of these, they considered him in his proper
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point of excellency ; and, *by manifestation of the truth* *, *commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* They considered the heart of man as strongly fortified, with presumptuous reasonings, against the knowledge of God, and the doctrine of Christ : And they did not make their address to these ; but they compare their testimony to *weapons, mighty through God for the demolishing* (οχυρωματων) *of fortifications, casting down* (λογισμους) *reasonings, and every* (υψωμα) *eminence exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity* (παν νοημα) *every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

As they exhibit no allurements to the passions of man ; so neither do they enter into any parley of capitulation with his presumptuous reasonings ; but storming and demolishing these, they press forward to his conscience, charge him before God, and converse with him there. They
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* These words refer to the ancient oracle of URIM and THUMMIM, by which the inquirer was assured that the answer came from God, when he saw the miraculous ray of light shining on the breast plate of the priest who pronounced the answer. To support this reference, it is observable, that the common Greek translation of URIM and THUMMIM is by two words signifying *manifestation* and *truth* ; which indeed served well to distinguish the divine from all pretended oracles, which were both obscure and fallacious. So the evidence of the apostolic testimony, which is the true oracle of URIM and THUMMIM, is fitted to strike the conscience with the simplicity and force of a ray of light, and not like the conclusion of a philosophic argument, by which we are often silenced, merely to shew an inconsistency, or the shame of self-contradiction ; and which, at any rate, is too weak to support the mind, when outward calamities, or the near approach of death, give an edge to remorse. The truth of the gospel is ratified in the heart of man, by the same hand which planted there his original notions of right and wrong, which prevent all his reasonings.

clear up, and present, in a striking view, before him, the half-defaced reasons of duty, naturally imprinted in his heart, and shew him at once, how unsuitable to them his thoughts and actions have been. They unshackle his conscience, and make it speak out, and, with the highest demonstration, enforce every thing it speaks. And while they shut up all his imagined sources of light and hope, they furnish him with a supernatural reason of hope, stamped with the divine character.

Now, it must be remembered, that all reasons of duty uncomplied with, turn out to be reasons of condemnation, reasons of misery and despair. But then, who will choose to exercise his reasoning faculty to make himself miserable, by fixing his own condemnation? All men will rather incline to judge every chain of reasoning that would issue in their own misery, by leading them to despair, to be very inconclusive, and most disagreeably absurd. Therefore men in all ages have found it convenient to have recourse to another fund of reasoning than the natural conscience, and to invent other notions than the natural ones. This can only be done, by vitiating these last, and accommodating them to the present circumstances of man, so as he may support himself for a while in this mortal life with some ease and quiet. And though these invented notions do not appear at first view to be so clearly and indisputably true, as the natural ones; yet as men fondly wish them to be true,
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and in many respects find them necessary, they are ready to shew, how many sad and absurd consequences would follow on denying them. And by being accustomed thus to reason backward, from these absurd and unhappy consequences, many come to something like a settled persuasion that they are true; and are fortified in this persuasion, by observing, that the far greater part of learned and judicious men find it necessary to reason in the same way.

Every man who understands the gospel as a reason of hope, hears the voice of God therein. And the voice of God has an evidence and authority attending it, altogether peculiar to itself. Man's sense of duty, or sinful man's sense of misery, flows from the voice of God in his conscience. And therefore no voice, argument, or reason of inferior weight, can bring him effectual relief. That authority which formed the conscience of man, can alone speak peace to it, when troubled with the conviction of sin. Now, if we could for a moment suppose the revealed reason of hope to be divested of its peculiar evidence and authority, and to be coolly referred, on a footing with a philosophic problem or argument, to be examined and discussed by the reasoning faculty of man; the question immediately arises, What notions is man already possessed of, with which he may compare this new revelation, so as to judge of its fitness or unfitness to be admitted? If indeed it contradicted, or served to overthrow any of his natural notions; if, for instance, it represented God as
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less severe against sin than he appears in the natural conscience, he would then have just cause to reject it immediately, and to conclude that it came not from the same God who made him, and formed his conscience. Yet the question still remains, What notions has man, with which he may compare the revealed reason of hope? All his natural notions of duty, if he is a sinner, are so many reasons of despair. They all join in forbidding him to entertain any hope of acceptance with God. On the other hand, the gospel pays no regard to his invented notions, from which he labours to extract hope. It discards them as spurious; it repels them as foolish and groundless imaginations.

Thus it appears, that man has no natural notions with which he may compare the revealed reason of hope, yea, none but reasons of despair, imprinted in his heart by the hand of the Almighty. Therefore a solid reason of hope cannot be conveyed into the heart of man from any inferior hand. It must affect his conscience with that peculiar evidence and authority which attends the voice of the Almighty. And this is indeed the case with the gospel. It affirms all his reasons of duty; it enforces all his reasons of despair; and, removing all impediments and extenuations, shews them in their greatest weight; and yet at the same time provides a divine reason of hope, that fairly outweighs them. Yet the invented notions, or spurious reasons of hope, are found so necessary to support our corrupted sense of dignity, and to encourage our propensity
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toward the forfeited earthly happiness, that it cannot be expected that any man will yield them up, or be willing to see them in their proper light, till his thoughts be over-ruled by the peculiar evidence and authority attending the divine reason of hope.

THE conveyance of the reason of hope to men, may receive some illustration, by being compared with the conveyance of such reasons of duty as God hath occasionally superadded to those original ones which are common to all men. I shall only take notice of two instances, namely, the command given to the parents of mankind, concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the command to ABRAHAM to sacrifice his son. The former carried in it a restraint of man's liberty, in using what he had a natural appetite for. His natural notions could never lead him to make any difference among trees appearing to him equally good; and the prohibited tree appeared every way as fit for his use as any other. His reason for abstaining, then, must have arisen wholly from the authority attending the giving of the command, or the evidence he had of its coming from the author of his life, and who had power to take it away if he transgressed. When once this impression was made on his heart, or this new dictate took place in his conscience, it behoved him, even respecting his own happiness, to judge it more reasonable to comply with a limitation of his freedom, than to forfeit his life and happiness altogether

altogether by transgression. In like manner, as to the case of ABRAHAM, we may be very sure his natural notions could never lead him to put to death his own beloved son, in the prospect of whose issue all his hopes of happiness centered. Yea, if he had not had a higher idea of God than most reasoners have, he must have rejected the command at first hearing. But he knew, that the command came from that same God who had given him ISAAC, after he, and SARAH his wife, were incapable, according to nature, of having children; and who was able to restore him to life again, after he should be slain, and so make good the promise he had formerly made concerning him. And thus his obedience was, in every respect, highly reasonable, and issued in a notable confirmation of his hope. Will the word of a great and liberal prince prove a powerful reason with a man of spirit, to animate him to the most hazardous enterprises, and disintangle him at once from many little schemes and projects, wherein he formerly found it both reasonable and necessary to interest himself? How much more must the word of the Most High, prove a prevailing reason with one who knows he hears his voice? And who can deny, that he who formed the conscience of man, may so speak, as to make the hearer fully sensible who is the speaker?

In this view only, we see reason in the conduct of the apostles, which otherwise must appear, in many respects, unaccountable. Thus their doctrine is fitly called (*λογικον γαλα*) “the only
“rational

“rational nourishment for the mind of man,” and the tenor of life which they enjoined, (λογικη λατρευια) “a reasonable service.” If any one inclines rather to render the Greek epithet, in the two places referred to, by the English one *scriptural* or *evangelical*, I am far from being disposed to contend with him; for *scriptural* and *rational* are words of the same import in the ears of a Christian, or rather, the former ascertains and enlarges the import of the latter. The apostles found all who employed their reasoning faculty against their gospel, to be no less (ατοποι) unreasonable than wicked. The scripture opens a new fund of reasoning to Christians; and the apostles serve as an authentic pattern for the fair use of it, and as a check upon all who would handle the word of God deceitfully.

The utmost length our natural notions can carry us, with regard to the supernatural agency of the Deity, when intimated to us with evidence worthy of our serious attention, is to judge, that what is *impossible with men*, or as to which men cannot conceive how it is possible, is yet *possible with God*. Accordingly, the gospel introduces itself to the consciences of men with this question, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* We have no natural notions helping us to conceive how God can raise one who has suffered death for sin, to an endless life of pleasure, absolutely free from all pain. Neither have we any notions helping us to conceive how God can justify an unjust person, without his doing any

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thing to make himself just ; or how he can impart righteousness to such a one, so as he may be sustained as a righteous person, in all respects, in his presence, and accordingly intitled to eternal happiness. Yet if it appear, by undeniable evidence, that God hath raised one from death to eternal happiness, and the justification of the unjust be declared as the genuine import of this fact, and the same power that was manifest in raising the dead, appear attending this declaration ; then, upon my conviction of the truth of the resurrection, I may conceive how God can also justify the ungodly ; especially if I find it impossible to account for what has actually happened any other way.

If it appear, by the circumstances, that he who died, and rose, was not only a righteous, but also a divine person ; if it appear impossible that such a person should lead a life of painful service, and at last become exceeding sorrowful unto death, unless to expiate the sins of others, and furnish them with a righteousness ; and if it also appear impossible that one suffering death for sin, should be raised again to a happy life, unless the divine displeasure against sin had been fully manifested in his suffering ; or that one undertaking to fulfil all righteousness, should be honoured with a resurrection, if he had failed in his undertaking ; if, at the same time, my conscience condemn me as an unrighteous person, and exclude all hope of relief from any natural source : If, I say, my thoughts come thus to be straitened on every other side, I must find a very sensible relief
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to my mind, in admitting the declaration issued in the bosom of the evidence of the resurrection, namely, that he who died and rose again, *was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* He who has been thus straitened, will find this apostolic declaration to be the only satisfactory, the only rational account that can be given of the forementioned circumstances. He will find such an agreement betwixt the doctrine and the fact, as was intimated in the question, *Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? Or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?*

THOUGH I am not fond of claiming any kindred to philosophers; yet I shall here quote a passage from the well-known *Essays on morality and natural religion*; and the rather, as in Scotland they have lately obtained a considerable share of the public attention. In the following passage, the words *reason* and *reasoning* are obviously both used in the same sense wherein I have been using the last of them. “ To substitute feeling in
 “ place of reason and demonstration, may seem
 “ to put the evidence of the Deity upon too low
 “ a footing. But human reason is not so mighty
 “ an affair as philosophers vainly pretend. It
 “ affords very little aid in making original disco-
 “ veries. The comparing of things together,
 “ and directing our inferences from feeling and
 “ experience, are its proper province. It en-
 “ larges our views of final causes, and of the
 “ prevalence of wisdom and goodness. But the

“ application of the argument from final causes,
 “ to prove the existence of a Deity, and the
 “ force of our conclusion, from the beautiful
 “ and orderly effects to a designing cause, are
 “ not from reason, but from an internal light,
 “ which shows things in their relation of cause
 “ and effect. These conclusions rest entirely
 “ upon sense and feeling. And it is surprising,
 “ that writers should overlook what is so natural
 “ and obvious. But the pride of man’s heart
 “ makes him desire to extend his discoveries
 “ by dint of reasoning: For reasoning is our
 “ own work. There is merit in acuteness and
 “ penetration; and we are better pleased to
 “ assume merit to ourselves, than humbly to
 “ acknowledge, that, to the most important
 “ discoveries, we are directly led by the hand of
 “ the Almighty.”

Philosophy could not teach this writer what
 the scripture readily teaches the most illiterate,
 that is, to follow out the distinction betwixt
 conscience and pride, which he has in part dis-
 covered. Therefore he may be said to have
 pushed his inquiries either too far or too short a
 length; too far to please some philosophers, and
 too short to please those who learn their religion
 simply from the Bible. Accordingly in his
 reasonings about liberty and necessity, in order to
 adjust certain contradictory sentiments or feelings
 which he observed in human nature, he has
 found himself obliged to make use of some ob-
 noxious terms, which even he himself adopts at
 first with some air of diffidence, and which have

ex-

exposed him to the charge of heresy in the eyes of many, no better friends to the ancient gospel, and, perhaps, less attentive to the subject whereof he treats, than himself. No question relating to actions, as worthy of praise or blame, reward or punishment, can justly be carried higher than, Have we done what we ought, or what we ought not, according to our own will, inclination, or choice? If we go further, we transgress the limits prescribed to man, and step into the peculiar province of the Deity ; and then, as we reason without any rule of reasoning, we can neither speak what is true, nor indeed what is clearly intelligible. All those sentiments or feelings acknowledged to be deceitful, are at the same time disloyal; they belong to the presumptions of that pride which leads us both to extenuate our blame, by throwing it partly on the circumstances wherein the Deity placed us, and to glory in what is praise-worthy about us, as if we held it independently of the Deity. But the apostle JAMES has fully handled this plea, and to Christians decided it, marking with strong and pertinently significant expressions of blame*, all those sentiments which stand opposed to that meekness with which the truth of the gospel is admitted by them who understand it.

It may prove no wide digression, to take this occasion of making some comparison betwixt philosophy, as far as it respects religion, and the popular

* Γεπαρτα και περισσεια κακιας, James i. 21.

popular doctrine, in order to shew, that the former has in the main no room for glorying over the latter. And I choose the rather to take this occasion, as I have not seen any scheme of philosophic religion preferable to that contained in those *Essays*, or wherein human nature has been considered with greater attention.

It is the business of philosophy to act the same part toward the natural, as the popular doctrine does toward the revealed truth. The ablest popular preacher is he who can most profoundly, or mysteriously, accommodate the gospel to the religious pride of the devotee. And he is the ablest philosopher who can most ingeniously accommodate the law of nature, or the operations of conscience, to the common corruption of human nature; or who can most commodiously adjust the contradictions evidently observable in the nature of man, for promoting his present quiet and self-satisfaction. In this respect I have not seen our author excelled by any.

He sets out from this principle, [p. 39.], That
 “ the common nature of every class of beings is
 “ felt by us as perfect; and therefore, if in any
 “ instance a particular being swerve from the
 “ common nature of its kind, the action upon
 “ that account is accompanied with a sense of
 “ disorder and wrong. Thus, as we have a sense
 “ of right from every action which is conforma-
 “ ble to this common nature, the laws which
 “ ought to govern every animal, are to be derived
 “ from no other source than the common nature
 “ of the species.”

In surveying the common nature of mankind, he observes two sources of notions, *feelings* or *sentiments*; those proceeding from the one very contradictory to those proceeding from the other, yea, no less opposite than truth and falsehood. One would have thought, that this peculiarity which he observed in human nature, might have stopt him short in his course of reasoning, by way of analogy, from the common nature of any other species of animals or class of beings, which he perceived as perfect, or wherein he observed nothing contradictory: For when we see things contradictory blended together, the idea of disorder and imperfection readily arises in our minds. One would have thought, I say, that this might have led him, though no credit were given to ancient books, to suspect that human nature had undergone some change to the worse, since the time when, according to his own assertion, the Deity beheld it, as well as all his other works, to be *very good*. But instead of suspecting any thing like this, he goes about to adjust our true and our false sentiments in subserviency to each other, and finds so grand purposes promoted by his adjustment, that he at last works himself up into what he calls a noble enthusiasm, in admiration of such wisdom and goodness appearing to him therein, as he scruples not to call *divine*. Yet while he is straitened in answering objections against the divine benevolence, drawn from the appearances of moral evil, he is at pains to reconcile man to the thought of his being an imperfect creature. In some parts of his *Essays* he seems

likewise to allow, that our deceitful or false sentiments are rather secondary or after-thoughts, than primary ones.

To avoid ambiguity in speaking of liberty, we may call that sense or feeling of it which stands opposed to the dependence which all events have on the first cause, the sense of independency ; and that which is opposed to compulsion or constraint, the consciousness of inclination or spontaneous choice. To do this, we are abundantly warranted both by the sense and words of our author. We are likewise allowed to say, that as man knows not the secret intentions of the first cause till they are made manifest by events, his choice is thereby no way hindered from being spontaneous. Moreover, it is not only allowed, but clearly evinced by our author, that a law is given to man for regulating in many respects his spontaneous choice ; and this law is acknowledged to be the voice of the Deity : Whence it follows, that if man shall choose to disobey this law, he must necessarily be exposed to the displeasure of the Deity, or real misery.

Keeping then these things as fixed points in our eye, we may freely say, that while man retains a just sense of his dependence on the Deity, he can never do what is wrong : For he cannot deliberately choose misery. But, as our author justly observes, when we come to action, or to do what is wrong, the feeling begins to vary. “ One fact is certain, that in acting we have a “ feeling of liberty and independency.” Here it must be owned our author has hit on the true

true spring of all disobedience, the true source of all the corruption of human nature, of all the natural and moral evil which prevails in this world, and all the miseries of the world to come. But philosophy could not teach him to consider it in this light : It rather leads him to see some marvellous beauty about it. But, with the good leave of philosophers, methinks one may venture to affirm, that the mind of man is so made, as to approve truth and disapprove falsehood, to see beauty and perfection in the former, deformity and imperfection in the latter ; and not only so, but that he has a sense of obligation on the side of truth, teaching him, that he ought to think and act according to it, and that he does wrong when he thinks or acts otherwise : Yea, our author himself says in his forecited first principle, “ that the laws which ought to govern every animal, are to be derived from no other source than the common nature of the species.”

Now, if it appears that there are some feelings or sentiments common to man, disapproving of certain others also common to him, and readily entertained by him ; if the former bear the stamp of true and right, and the latter of false and wrong ; and the former shew him, that he ought not to entertain the latter, nor be influenced by them : Then it is manifest, even from the common nature of man, that he is not as he ought to be. No wonder then that our author is so greatly embarrassed in persuading us to be pleased with ourselves, and to think that
man

man is presently such as he should be; insinuating, that to think otherwise, would be to reflect on God for making such a creature as man; or as making him what in reality, as far as the notion of wrong or blame can take place, he is conscious he makes himself to be by his own choice, in opposition to the known will of God. If our author's apology for the corruption of human nature has any distinct meaning, it lands in the old question, *Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?* But it is not to be supposed that one can always think distinctly, while he is labouring to make truth and falsehood harmonize together in the same breast.

If then the conduct of man is to be judged of according to truth, the case must stand thus. His conscience suggests to him his duty, and his dependence on the Deity: But so soon as he inclines or chooses to do wrong, we must say, that the sense of his dependence is weakened and set aside by a deceitful sense of independency arising in its stead. Thus he is led to hope that he may gratify his bad inclination with impunity. But as soon as the short-lived gratification is past, he finds himself disappointed; and remorse, or the sense of merited punishment, takes hold of him. Now, remorse does not arise from any deceitful source, nor rest upon any illusive foundation; but it is the punishment which the Deity has made the necessary consequence of the fore-mentioned sense of independency, and every action proceeding from that deceitful disloyal sense. It is true, that when man is galled with

remorse, or with a sense of fear and shame for having spontaneously done what he ought not, he is apt to have recourse to some deceitful sentiments, in order to throw the blame off from himself, as much as he can; and this is what an apostle with great propriety, and according to the strictest truth, calls the redundance or superfluity of wickedness. Besides, according to our author himself, to make remorse to proceed upon any other notion of liberty, than what is implied in our having spontaneously done what we ought not, would be making it proceed on the conviction that man is a whimsical, ridiculous, and unaccountable being, a mere absurdity in nature, whose existence could serve no end.

But it is now time to make our proposed comparison. Our author, speaking of the authority of conscience, (*p.* 63.) says, “ It proceeds from a direct feeling, which we have upon presenting the object, without the intervention of any sort of reflection. And the authority lies in this circumstance, that we feel and perceive the action to be our duty, and what we are indispensably bound to perform. It is in this manner, that the moral sense with regard to some actions, plainly bears upon it the marks of authority over all our appetites and affections. It is the voice of God within us, which commands our strictest obedience, just as much as when his will is declared by express revelation.” Thus far our author speaks according to truth. But, in *p.* 70. he

he affirms, that “ the moral sense, both in the “ direct feeling, and in the act of reflection, “ plainly supposes and implies liberty of action.” It is scarce needful to observe, that here he does not mean that liberty which consists in spontaneous choice : For no body ever doubted, if all actions, praise or blame-worthy, were spontaneously done. He evidently means that deceitful sense of liberty, which coincides with the sense of independency. For a few lines before, in this same page, he uses these two words as of like signification : “ One fact is certain, that in acting we “ have a feeling of liberty and independency * ;” or, in other words, we conceive ourselves to be above the rank of creatures or dependent beings. This conceit of ourselves, though acknowledged to be deceitful and false, he makes to be the hinge on which the operations of conscience turn.

His

* Here it would seem, that *independency* is a much fitter word to give our author a distinct meaning than *liberty* : For as to any liberty or power beyond what lies in doing whatever we please, our author honestly acknowledges we have no idea of it; “ — which “ power, besides that no man was ever conscious of it, seems to “ be an absurdity altogether inconsistent with a rational nature.” But the propriety of *independency* is evident, if we consider that law is the hinge on which all choice turns, as far as the notion of right or wrong takes place : For without a law there would be no choice of right or wrong. Now, if a law be admitted as coming from an almighty lawgiver, it is impossible to think that any man will choose to transgress it, till once the force of it be set aside in his mind by the deceitful sense of independency.

But perhaps this is the place where our author intended to shift hands, and make an artful transition from one idea to another, while he was laying the foundation of his deceitful sense. And where can deceitful artifice be more properly employed than in laying down deceitful principles ?

His scheme then stands in short thus: The authority of conscience lies in our having a direct feeling of our duty and dependence, without the intervention of any sort of reflection; yet conscience, both in the direct feeling, and in the act of reflection, supposes and implies a sense of our independency: Or, we are taught our duty by the voice of truth within us; and the authority of this truth proceeds upon the opposite falsehood. By this extraordinary machinery, he erects his throne for virtue, and throws an effulgence of glory around her. In like manner, the popular doctrine in some sort admits the truth of the gospel: But if we examine the descriptions it gives us of acts of faith, and its directions for exerting them, we shall find, that both the direct and the reflex acts suppose and imply a deceitful sense of our own worth, or a fund of self-dependence. And by this machinery a throne is erected for the popular holiness.

Now, though the holiness chiefly promoted by the popular doctrine, and most applauded by the people, gets the name of hypocrisy in the New Testament; yet we have no reason to despise it in comparison with philosophic virtue, which being still more superficial, as taking less hold of the heart, amounts only to what we may easily understand by *decorum*; a word often used by its votaries in describing it. By keeping this in our eye, we shall have a full view of our author's doctrine, and perceive a propriety in many of his reasonings, which would otherwise be lost; for it is easy to see how high and deceitful thoughts

thoughts of ourselves may by skilful management serve greatly to the promoting of decorum. And if his reader, on hearing how advantageously virtue is seated on her throne, should expect to see her reign accordingly, and be curious to know where her subjects are, he needs only look into the polite assemblies, or genteel interviews, which abound among civilized nations, where he will find the most scrupulous deference paid to decorum by many who are separately engaged in such artful and malicious schemes of undermining and over-reaching each other, as that the relation of them would greatly astonish savages, who shew their friendships and their enmities in a less artificial manner ; consequently more confidence must take place in the former, and the danger arising from the latter be more easily guarded against.

It is the business of philosophy, to remove the fear of God from religion as much as possible. Our author's address this way may be seen in his reflections on our dread of supernatural powers in the dark, on the famous Lucretian maxim about the origin of religion, on the dread which savages have of invisible adverse powers, and on the benevolence of the Deity, among whose perfections he does not incline to place justice. Nothing can be more natural to guilty men, than to dread some invisible adverse power ; yet nothing is more unsuitable to philosophy ; yea, we can think of nothing more unphilosophical than the sacred maxim about the beginning of wisdom. Accordingly we find, that philosophers,
who

who differ widely from each other about many other things, generally agree in discarding that maxim. On this occasion it may be proper to observe, that the philosophic moral sense, though it agrees in many things with the natural conscience, does notwithstanding differ considerably from it. The natural conscience approves of that law which requires godliness and humanity in perfection, or without reserve, and affixes the sense of blame to every deviation from it. Our author's moral sense considers some trespasses as venial, or some as more venial than others; and finds the highest beauty and delight in certain actions, which are not attended with the sense of obligation and duty, nor the neglect of them followed by remorse. Thus it opens a large field for works of supererogation; whereas he who attends to the dictates of his conscience, though he should come up to them in his practice, can never enjoy the philosophic enthusiasm of soaring above his duty. We have then a just and adequate notion of the philosophic moral sense, when we consider it as the prompter or prime counsellor to decorum, and, in conjunction with deceit, the supporter of its throne. Its ultimate object is the temporal prosperity of society, without regard to the real interest of mankind, as depending on the pleasure of the Deity, and conformity to his will.

Had our author wrote for the populace, he had no doubt said, *mysterious*, instead of *deceitful feelings*: But as he wrote for the entertainment of men of enlarged sentiments, who will not readily

readily take umbrage at any ingenious attempt to persuade them that the operations of conscience, especially the most inconvenient of them, remorse, proceed upon an illusive foundation ; he chose to express himself with freedom. In order to persuade with success, it was necessary to remove our disapprobation of deceit, and make it wear a comely aspect, as being natural to us ; and who can refuse to own, that what is natural is also beautiful ? Moreover, the sense of independency, however candidly owned to be deceitful, besides its being natural, is presented to us with other very ample recommendations. It is a noble and elevating sentiment ; it makes man appear to be in all respects his own master ; it gives him the air of Deity on earth ; and is at the same time highly conducive to promote virtue or decorum ; yea to animate generous minds to great and heroic actions, far beyond the sphere of obligation and duty, ready withal to recompense them with the most sublime self-satisfaction.

Thus far we have seen, not only how meet and proper, but also how advantageous it is, to support the credit of the sense of independency, and to act upon it, as to all the purposes of life, as if it were just and true. Now, considering the charming advantages attending the maintaining its credit, it may seem at first view a great excess of candour and generosity in a philosopher, to draw aside the curtain, and fairly shew us, that this darling sense is nothing else but a mere illusion ; till we reflect, that he is abundantly
recompensed

recompensed for this concession, when looking forward into futurity, where this illusion can no more be of any service to him, he perceives the whole dark side of things introduced by remorse, evanish together with it in the light of philosophic truth. And surely it must give no small comfort to many great men, when leaving the stage of the world, to consider the various blemishes of their lives only as so many parts in a dramatic performance, for which it would be as unreasonable to infer their misery in a future state, as to punish a common player for having acted the part of an impostor or a traitor, after he has, along with his mask, thrown off his obnoxious character.

Now, our author sufficiently intimates, that the curtain drawn over the moral world, must not be meddled with on ordinary occasions, nor turned aside, except to serve the most valuable purposes, and chiefly when man has occasion to think of the Deity, in order to give him some agreeable forebodings about a future state. Behind this curtain is the most sacred recess of philosophic mysteries, therefore it does not become unhallowed persons, on common occasions, to approach it, far less to turn it aside, in order to look in. Philosophers themselves, the mystagogues in the temple of decorum, must approach it with reverence, and after all are allowed only to turn it aside a very little. As our author's words on this head are remarkable, I shall here quote a few of them, *p.* 218. "A veil is thrown
" over nature, where it is not useful for him

“ [man] to behold it ; and yet sometimes, by
 “ turning aside that veil a very little, he is ad-
 “ mitted to a fuller view, that his admiration of
 “ nature, and the God of nature, may be in-
 “ creased ; that his curiosity, and love of truth,
 “ may be fed ; and perhaps, that some *augurium*,
 “ some intimation, may be given of his being
 “ designed for a future more exalted period of
 “ being, when attaining the full maturity of his
 “ nature, he shall no longer stand in need of
 “ artificial impressions, but shall feel and act ac-
 “ cording to the strictest truth of things.” No
 wonder that our author’s enthusiasm was kindled,
 when he was thus privileged.

That the charming illusion, which, while it
 appears, and remains in force, brings us many
 advantages, and when it evanishes, abolishes all
 fear of future evils, might not be exposed to the
 objection of singularity, as having nothing in
 nature analogous to it ; our author maintains,
 that our senses deceive us about the sensible or
 secondary qualities of bodies, making us believe,
 that they exist without us, till philosophy unde-
 ceives us, by shewing, that they exist only within
 us. Here it must be observed, that there is a
 kind of jargon * on this head gravely upheld
 among

* For instance, we cannot, according to the truth of things, say,
 that honey is sweet, ice cold, or chalk white : For why, honey
 hath no mouth for tasting, ice no fingers for feeling, nor chalk
 eyes for seeing. Philosophy, the faithful guardian of truth, will
 have us rather to say, that these bodies are composed of particles of
 such a form and size, and so arranged, as to be fit for conveying
 to

among philosophers, which will always appear as absurd and ridiculous * to men of plain common

to the mind, by means of the respective organs, the sensations of sweetness, coldness, and whiteness. Thus we are assured, that when honey is eaten, the eater has all the pleasure, and it none at all in being eaten. Had not philosophers made us this important discovery, we might have remained, like our forefathers, grossly deceived about every object around us. This may be considered as a true and genuine specimen of that wisdom which elevates the philosopher above the vulgar, and which in the New Testament is fitly called *the wisdom of words*, to distinguish it from the knowledge of *things*.

* No less ridiculous is their reasoning about liberty. For though no man could ever conceive a notion of liberty higher than what lies in doing what we please; yet the whole dispute turns upon such unintelligible liberty. They might as well pretend to inform us what sort of beings are situated beyond the sphere of all imaginable space, and then lead us into disputes about the condition of those inhabitants of Utopia. Despising what is plain and intelligible, as being common to them and the vulgar, they delight to frame words to stand for so many no-ideas, and then to dispute about these no-ideas. Our author acknowledges it absurd to think of any liberty beyond the power of doing what we will; yet he says, we have the idea of a power *over* our will, or a power of regulating our will; and that this idea is essential to the moral feeling. Now, if this transcendent regulating power can do either right or wrong, it must have a will over it again to direct it. And thus we are led to talk of power and will alternately over each other without end: To talk, I say; for we are beyond the sphere of thinking altogether.

But as I am averse to suppose our author used words conveying no ideas, his deceitful sense may, I think, have an obvious meaning when we understand it to be the sense of independency. Thus likewise we understand how he makes man to be an accountable creature, when he tells us, that, from this deceitful sense, “the idea of his being an accountable creature arises. Reward *seems* due to merit, punishment to crimes.” That is, he thus becomes self-accountable; or he has a deceitful spring in his nature, which sets him at variance with himself, and gives him inward disquiet when he disturbs the order of society: But when he has served his time in society, the deceitful spring, being now useless, is set aside; so that, having fully accounted to himself for all his good and bad

common sense, as any part of the popular doctrine can do to philosophers. I am far from thinking, that our author acted below the dignity of a philosopher in adopting it; but he appears sometimes so sensible of the vanity of philosophers, that I am persuaded he would have scorned to make use of it, had it not been to serve the most valuable and momentous purpose: And surely there is not a more important concern that can affect the mind of man, than how he may be relieved from remorse.

I have just now mentioned the chief circumstance that gives importance to the dispute about liberty and necessity, or indeed any other dispute, so far as religion is concerned: For we can easily fall upon means of finding ourselves praiseworthy, upon any scheme of principles whatever; but the great difficulty is, how to preserve the sense of blame in due force, to answer the ends of society, and yet get conveniently quit of it when we look beyond society, or are ready to
step

actions, by the pleasure he took in the former, and the pain he felt for the latter, he enters into the next world upon a fair new footing, as if nothing at all had happened in this. For if he seemed to be virtuous, reward seemed due to his merit; and if he seemed to be criminal, punishment seemed due to his crimes. Thus, in our present abode in Fairyland, every shadow seems to correspond with another. That philosopher who endeavoured to shew, that our senses deceive us as to the existence of matter, was but a mere trifler when compared with our author.

One methinks would be apt to conclude, that mankind stand in great need of some divine revelation from the strange propensity of wise men to draw aside the curtain of appearances, and from the no less strange discoveries which they make, after they suppose they have drawn it aside.

step out of it : For then men are generally disposed to think there is no more occasion for it. Now, for address in managing this delicate affair, our author is perhaps excelled by none. What advantage he has over any less artful writer on this subject, may be seen by the following comparison. In the *Scots Magazine* for April 1751, we find a letter on human liberty, subscribed D. W. which is perhaps as clear and as distinct a paper as any philosopher ever wrote on the subject. This writer maintains both liberty and necessity in the highest sense wherein these words were ever understood by any man, and yet reconciles them in the most simple manner, without the least artifice or embarrassment ; shewing withal, that “ the *common ideas* of accountableness are
 “ not founded on a delusive feeling, but on a
 “ *clear perception* of that liberty which we *really*
 “ possess.” But, then, through want of artifice, he has left us destitute of any proper fuel for feeding the sacred flame of devotion which he would kindle at the close of his reasoning. His Letter ends thus : “ But though the knowledge
 “ of universal necessity, considered by itself,
 “ cannot justly prompt a man either to act or
 “ suspend action, it cannot be called an useless
 “ discovery, since it naturally leads the mind to
 “ the most joyful of all truths. That all events
 “ through the past and future periods of immense
 “ duration, concur together in forming a *per-*
 “ *fectly* beautiful and happy system, such as it be-
 “ comes *original* and eternal goodness to contrive
 “ and execute ; and that thus, *whatever is, is best.*”

How much these transporting ideas tend to feed the sacred flame of devotion in the philosophic breast, may be seen in the writings of all those who have thoroughly imbibed them, particularly in the conclusion of the above-mentioned *Essays on the principles of morality and natural religion*.

It is easy to see, that all the purposes and operations of infinite goodness must give joy and delight to one who is not conscious of any evil disposition about himself; because he knows, that though infinite goodness must eternally appear infinitely opposite to all evil, yet it can never appear in opposition to him, but, on the contrary, for his comfort, yea making all the crimes and miseries of the guilty serve for the increase of his happiness: But if one finds himself guilty, and consequently that infinite goodness stands opposed to him, I do not see what joy it can give him to understand, that a perfectly beautiful and happy system is to be formed at last, and remain for ever; and that his guilt and eternal misery are to be subservient to the beauty and happiness thereof. It would seem, then, that this writer, when he concluded his letter, imagined himself fortified with that brazen wall*, which even Heathens thought a necessary security against misery;

A conscience clear, by no remorse dismay'd.

But

* ——— murus æthereus etc.
Nil conficere scilicet, nulla palliescere culpa.

But at it is difficult for a man soberly thinking to find himself thus fortified, our author has certainly acted a much more wise and philosophical part, in contriving matters so as that the weight of remorse should rest upon a convenient flipboard, which in a case of urgent necessity may be withdrawn, and of course all that was erected upon it at once overturned. Though the letter-writer clearly shews, that remorse proceeds upon a just and true sense of liberty; yet he seems not to have thought so much on the weight of remorse, and how the mind is affected under it, as our author. Near the middle of his letter he gives indeed a general description of it, which he sums up in the word *self-aversion*; but this expression is not easy to be understood. It is difficult to think how a man can hate himself. It is more natural to think that he will be averse to every thing that gives him pain and makes him unhappy. As remorse seizes a man against his will, and after he has done his best to secure himself against it by reasonings, we must consider it as the punishment which the Deity has annexed to guilt, or as the previous intimation of deserved punishment, carrying the reason along with it; so it may be said to consist in a sense of shame at being found blame-worthy, or for having done what we ought not *, and fear of the

* Our author maintains, that remorse proceeds on the reflection, that we *might have* acted a better part; and who doubts but we might, *if we had pleased*? But this is the real point on which remorse proceeds, that we pleased or willed to act as we did. For

the just consequence, resembling an indictment
with

what occasion has one for remorse if the action did not flow from his will ? Remorse then proceeds upon a solid truth ; yea, upon what we find to be but too true to our shame : The guilty person finds that it was his leading principle, his supreme faculty, his own self that did the wrong. But then the conviction of his guilt no sooner seizes him, than he sets himself in the way of opposition and reluctance to what gives him pain. And this reluctance has various success during life, according to the various circumstances wherein the guilty person is placed ; sometimes it finds expedients for his temporary quiet, and sometimes it serves only to heighten his agony, and hasten his death.

It was infallibly foretold that JUDAS should betray his master ; yet, very consistently with this, it may be said, that JUDAS might have acted a better part if he had pleased. PAUL, in his voyage to Rome, was assured that no lives would be lost ; yet he was likewise assured, that if the sailors left the ship, the passengers would be lost. Though I were infallibly assured, that a certain chain of a thousand links was to support a certain weight for twenty years, I may consistently with this assurance say, that if any one of the links break the first or second year, the whole weight will then fall to the ground.

The imbarassment in the dispute about liberty wholly arises from the difficulty which men find in conceiving how there can be a Deity so great as to be able to make a man ; and the only reason for this difficulty is, that no artist has yet appeared among men able to make a clock capable of going right or wrong of its own will and choice, and accordingly conscious of pleasure or pain, and yet so as no vibration of its will, or consequence of such vibration, should take place otherwise than as the artist originally intended when he framed it.

Some, to make room for a Deity, degrade man to the rank of beasts ; others, seeking to raise the dignity of man, can find no place for a Deity ; or at best they find a Deity without a character, neither loving righteousness nor hating iniquity.

The contradictions observed, by all writers, in human nature, cannot be accounted for, without admitting the scripture testimony, that man was corrupted by the presumptuous thought of being as God. This presumptuous thought still bewilders men in their reasonings.

Yet as man was made to be the image of God, his nature is still subservient to that great purpose. For whether man be righteous or wicked, his nature still serves, either in the way of concord or contrast, for an index to the character of his maker.

with the sentence of condemnation annexed. But no sooner does this painful sense affect the mind of man, than his aversion to it rises, and he struggles hard to throw it off. He cannot be eased of his fear till he get his sense of shame abated ; so he labours to extenuate his guilt, and to cover it even from his own sight. He presumes that he had, at bottom, some better disposition of heart than what appeared in the guilty action ; that had he been placed in better circumstances, or even had he known what he now knows, he would have acted a better part. And though repeated experience clearly evinces the vanity of all such presumptions, yet he still resumes them as often as his disquiet recurs. So much against nature is it for a man to admit the sense of blame, or consent to his own condemnation. And till a man can find a covering for his shame, or a sense of worth to support him, elsewhere than in the disposition of his own heart, he can never freely admit the sense of blame, and approve the justice of the divine law, nor see the divine goodness unexceptionable in its greatest opposition to evil.

When such a sense of worth takes place, it gives birth to a new principle or disposition in the mind toward it, and produces, as it were, a change or transition of one's self to the new and supernatural ground of confidence ; so that the *person* is capable of being averse to what he finds himself naturally, or to his own character and natural disposition ; because he perceives a new resource of enjoyment opened to him ; not by
his

his own agency or concurrence in any respect, but merely and wholly by divine grace. In this view we understand what the gospel speaks of one's *hating and losing his life, and yet finding it*. Thus, I say, and only thus, is a person capable of being averse to his own character and natural disposition, or, to use the expression of the letter-writer, of *self-aversion* *. For we must still say, that it is impossible for a person to act but with some view to his own happiness, or in the way of reluctance to what he counts the greatest misery.

PASCHAL, whom I mention as a person respected by philosophers for his uncommon abilities, could observe the original dignity of human nature, like that of a decayed palace, from the greatness of its ruins. But our author is charmed with the beauty and order of the ruins themselves. By reading VOLTAIRE'S remarks on PASCHAL'S thoughts, one may see how differently men think, or affect to think on this subject; and may likewise have a good opportunity of trying by his own thoughts, in the contrast of sentiments, which side bears the greatest weight

OR

* But, perhaps, by *self-aversion* the letter-writer intended to denote one of the operations of a mind that is only self-accountable, and is furnished with this inward spring or check, only for the sake of the temporal benefit of society. In that case it does not signify much whether remorse be made to rest on a true or a false foundation, while we consider it as of no use or consequence beyond this life; or while we consider it only as an incitement to make men dance gracefully for three or fourscore years, around the may-pole of decorum, without affecting their condition with regard to their maker.

or appearance of truth. PASCHAL closes some reflections on the blindness and misery of man with these words: "Hence I wonder that
 " mankind are not seized with despair every
 " time they reflect on the wretchedness of their
 " condition." VOLTAIRE rejoins, "With re-
 " gard to myself, when I take a view of London
 " or Paris, I see no cause to plunge into the
 " despair mentioned by PASCHAL. I see a city
 " which does not resemble, in any manner, a de-
 " sert island, but, on the contrary, a populous,
 " rich, and well-governed place, where mankind
 " are as happy as it is consistent with their nature
 " to be."

With the same charming prospect is the mind of our author relieved from all difficulties arising from the dark side of things. He forms to himself a high notion of the difference betwixt the appearance of human nature in its savage, which he calls its original state, and its appearance when refined by education in civilized nations. From the excellency of the latter the dignity and glory of human nature arises to his view. There he beholds the conceptions of the human mind *admirably ordered to exalt virtue to the highest pitch.* There he beholds *virtue enthroned, and a peculiar glory thrown around her.* There the moral sense *acquires its full authority, is openly recognised, and cheerfully submitted to.* There
 " the social affections gain the ascendant, and the
 " morality of actions gets firm possession of the
 " mind. In this improved state, the beauty of
 " the creation makes a strong impression; and
 " we

“ we can never cease admiring the excellency of
 “ that cause, who is the author of so many
 “ beautiful effects. And thus to society we
 “ owe all the blessings of life, and particularly
 “ the knowledge of the Deity, that most in-
 “ estimable branch of human knowledge,” p.
 332. And where can we have a more full
 view of all this beautiful scene than in London
 and Paris, the capitals of the two most civilized
 nations? And in these where to better advan-
 tage than among people of refined taste and
 manners, or those who compose the politest
 assemblies?

Now, if any credit may be given to the history
 of the greatest cities, when at the height of their
 refinement in the arts of life, from Nineveh
 down to those of our own times, we shall find
 that all manner of wickedness has then reigned
 most extensively in them, and that even under
 the wing of decorum. In France, adultery,
 though known, if practised with sufficient caution
 or decency, is considered among polite people
 as no blemish in the character of a gentleman :
 And in Britain we daily think more lightly of it,
 and devise more genteel terms for it, according
 as our taste refines. The most impious perjury,
 in solemnly declaring or subscribing adherence
 to religious creeds, privately laughed at, if done
 to procure interest in church or state, does no
 hurt to one's reputation among people of enlarged
 sentiments. If the various tribes of mankind are
 to confront each other in another world after this,
 the American savages will be able to bear witness
 how

how far the civilized Europeans excelled them in a chearful submission to the moral sense *. As our taste refines, we learn to distinguish nicely, and to sin grossly. Among half a dozen of words, signifying nearly the same thing, we can perhaps mark out so many degrees of decency in the use of them: And to trespass against any established rule of decorum, will hurt the character of a gentleman more than the transgression of any divine law, decently committed.

Yet our author is delighted in reflecting, that “society teaches mankind self-denial,” or to become each others most humble servants. It would lead us into a long detail, to observe how the gratification of malice, revenge, avarice, and every other criminal appetite, may be pursued, in a consistency with a character for politeness. But instead of enlarging on this, I shall content myself with quoting a few words from VOLTAIRE, who cannot, I think, be justly accused of entertaining splenetic views of human nature. In his Nineteenth Letter concerning the English nation, giving the character of Mr CONGREVE as a writer, he says, “The late Mr CONGREVE
“ raised

* To go no further than the Indians situated in the neighbourhood of our own colonies, we are credibly informed, that both British and French captives, who have been detained a few years among them, when, upon a treaty of peace, liberty is granted them to return home, are extremely averse, even though earnestly solicited by their relations, to make use of that liberty, and choose rather to remain among these savages, so much noted for scalping their enemies: A manifest proof that they find among them no less humanity than among their own civilized countrymen. See COLLETT's *History of the Five Nations*.

“ raised the glory of comedy to a greater height
 “ than any English writer before or since his
 “ time. He wrote only a few plays, but they
 “ were all excellent in their kind. The laws of
 “ the drama are strictly observed in them; they
 “ abound with characters, all which are shadow-
 “ ed with the utmost delicacy, and we do not
 “ meet with so much as one low or coarse jest.
 “ The language is every where that of men of
 “ honour, but their actions are those of knaves;
 “ a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted
 “ with human nature, and frequented what we
 “ call polite company.”

But the fullest view of our author's scheme is to be had in his last *Essay*, which treats of our knowledge of the Deity, more especially the latter part, concerning his benevolence. Here our author unravels his mystery. Here we see the use of all the complicated machinery he had before contrived. He proceeds upon this principle, That if natural and moral evil prevailed as much in reality, as they do in appearance, the objections against the divine goodness would stand unanswered. He cannot conceive how the divine goodness can stand unimpeached, if it appear invariably opposite to all evil, or, in other words, if the divine displeasure be pointed against every transgression of that law which requires goodness or love, or if misery be the consequence of every sin. He judges, that if what we call sin, were really so in every view, and misery the certain consequence of it, this would argue malevolence and bad intention in the Being who established the
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the connection, and would represent to us such invisible power, as he says is dreaded by savages. “And,” says he, “I am persuaded, that nothing has been more hurtful to religion than the irregular propensity in our nature to dread such powers.” It had been worth his while to have considered whence proceeded this propensity in our nature, with the irregularity of which he is so much dissatisfied. Perhaps he might have found, that it corresponded exactly with another irregularity. And then, why might he not have perceived the common nature of the human species to be as perfect, with two irregularities exactly corresponding to each other, as with some strange single one, to which he can find no counterpart? But he is now more disposed than formerly to admit some imperfection in human nature.

However, this irregularity is corrected by education, in civilized society. As men get their taste and manners refined, and the rules of decorum by degrees imprinted on their hearts, they arrive at last to the knowledge of a benevolent, that is, of a perfectly complaisant and well-bred Deity. “And thus to society we owe all the blessings of life, and particularly the knowledge of the Deity, that most inestimable branch of human knowledge.” Whereas, with respect to savages, the case stands thus. “Being conscious of nothing but disorder and sensual impulse within, they cannot be conscious of any thing better without them.” What are they conscious of from without? Why, they
are

are afraid of some invisible adverse power: “ For
 “ it is evident, that fear can never be the cause
 “ of our belief of a benevolent (or *complaisant*)
 “ Deity.” Now, that which savages dread from
 without, must be some invisible power that is
 adverse to the disorder they are conscious of within:
 For were it like themselves, or what they are
 conscious of agreeable to it, they would have no
 cause of fear.

Thus we have, as it were by accident, hit
 upon the very truth of the case. And as often as
 either philosophers or preachers speak according
 to nature, they must always say, that our appre-
 hensions of invisible power without us, must
 always correspond with what we are conscious of
 within. Yea, the law given to Israel, which
 confirms the voice of nature, and ascertains it by
 express words, exhibits the language of the Deity
 thus: *If ye walk contrary to me, then will I also
 walk contrary unto you.* I am ready then to agree
 with our author, in maintaining, that he who is
 conscious of no wrong, no disorder within, has
 no reason to entertain uneasy apprehensions about
 any power without him. On the contrary,
 “ having confidence in the good government of
 “ the Deity, he is persuaded, that every thing
 “ happens for the best; and therefore that it is
 “ his duty to submit to whatever happens. This
 “ unfolds a scene so enlivening, and so productive
 “ of chearfulness and good humour, that we
 “ cannot readily think, if there is a benevo-
 “ lent Deity, that he will withhold from his
 “ creatures so invaluable a blessing.” On this
 occasion,

occasion, we may observe, that all sorts of men, from the most subtil philosophers down to the rudest savages, are on some occasions sensible of the necessity of a righteousness, to make their apprehensions of invisible power agreeable and comfortable *.

But our author is more prudent, than to rest our happiness wholly on this bottom. He is sensible, that it must be difficult, even for civilized people, to free themselves altogether from the irregular propensity in their nature, to dread some invisible adverse power; because, notwithstanding their great improvements, they are liable, on some occasions, to be pained with the consciousness of some wrong, some disorder, after all, remaining within them. On some occasions, I say: For “ while the guilty person is in prosperity †, he makes a shift to blunt the stings
“ of

* This observation is confirmed to us by the author [D. HUME, Esq;] of a late *Natural history of religion*, p. 109 — “ After the
“ commission of crimes, there arise remorse, and secret horrors,
“ which give no rest to the mind, but make it have recourse to
“ religious rites and ceremonies, as expiations of its offences.
“ Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame, promotes the
“ interests of superstition: And nothing is more destructive to
“ them than a manly steady virtue.” But woe to that pilot who loses hold of the helm in the time of a storm, when shelves are near. And who can keep long at sea, without being exposed to a storm?

† Without contradicting this sensible observation of our essay-writer, it would appear we have ground to go a step further, and say, That even the common defects of fair characters, such, I mean, as do not seem to be stained with any notable crime, are capable, even in the height of outward prosperity, of causing great depression of mind, yea to such a degree as to render life very uncomfortable, and even burdensome. In VOLTAIRE'S *Age*

“ of his conscience ; but no sooner does he fall
 “ into distress, or into any depression of mind,
 “ than his conscience lays fast hold of him, his
 “ crime stares him in the face, and every ac-
 “ cidental misfortune is converted into a real
 “ punishment.” Therefore, though we have
 had the advantage of being educated among
 civilized people, we often stand in need, after all,
 of the most sublime discoveries that philosophy
 can make, to complete the composure of our
 minds.

Education, in civilized nations, as we have
 already noted, contributes greatly to correct our
 irregular propensity to fear. By occupying our
 attention with the care of our external appear-
 ance, it steals away our thoughts from the
 disquieting perception of inward disorder. And
 while

of Lewis XIV. care is taken to vouch as authentic the following
 letter of Madame DE MAINTENON to her friend Madame DE LA
 MAIFONFORT. “ Why cannot I give you my experience? Why
 “ cannot I make you sensible of the melancholy that devours the
 “ Great, and of the difficulty they have to dispose of their time?
 “ Do not you see that I die of lowness of spirits, though possessed
 “ of a more splendid fortune than ever I could have hoped to ob-
 “ tain? I have been young and handsome; I have tasted pleasures;
 “ I have been universally beloved. In a more advanced age, I
 “ have passed some years in the participation of intellectual
 “ pleasures: I am now arrived at the summit of fortune; and I
 “ assure you that every condition leaves a horrid void in the
 “ soul.” VOLTAIRE adds, “ Could any thing undeceive men
 “ with regard to the pleasures of an exalted station, this letter
 “ certainly would do it. Madame de MAINTENON, who had no
 “ other cause of uneasiness than the uniformity of her life in
 “ the company of a great king, said one day to the Count D’
 “ AUBIGNE, her brother,—*I can bear it no longer, I wish I were*
 “ *dead.*” See *Translation of VOLTAIRE’S works by Dr SMOLLETT*
and others.

while it refines our taste and manners, it furnishes us with the agreeable rising prospect of something so very like righteousness, as to be often mistaken for it. Thus far matters go on pleasantly enough. But then, as even the politest people are liable to fall into distress and depression of mind, their thoughts in that case are very apt to recoil inward upon them ; and if there be any remaining disorder within, to take fast hold of that, and consequently fill their breasts with the most troublesome apprehensions *. Thus, in the minds

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of

* Especially if it be true, that these apprehensions are natural to the human race, as is affirmed in the forementioned *Natural history of religion*, p 110. “ While we abandon ourselves to the
 “ natural, undisciplined suggestions of our timid and anxious
 “ hearts, every kind of barbarity is ascribed to the supreme being,
 “ from the terrors with which we are agitated ; and every kind of
 “ caprice, from the methods which we embrace in order to ap-
 “ pease him. It may be allowed, that the artifices of men aggra-
 “ vate our natural infirmities and follies of this kind, but never
 “ originally beget them. Their root strikes deeper into the mind,
 “ and springs from the essential and universal properties of human
 “ nature.” Here philosophy lends her friendly aid to repel the
 force of nature. But ancient sages have observed, that (*Naturam
 expellas, &c.*) “ though you drive nature out at the door, it will
 “ come in at the window.” Philosophers themselves, at certain
 serious moments, especially when one is taking his last leave of his
 friends, are apt to complain of the impertinent recurring of nature,
 and to chide each other for suffering their philosophy to fail them,
 at the time they have most need of it.

As the *Natural history* contains some remarkable reflections, I shall here take notice of some of them, p. 49, 50. “ Were there
 “ a religion (and we may suspect Mahometanism of this incon-
 “ sistence) which sometimes painted the Deity in the most sublime
 “ colours, as the creator of heaven and earth ; sometimes degraded
 “ him nearly to a level with human creatures, in his powers and
 “ faculties ; while at the same time it ascribed to him suitable in-
 “ firmities, passions, and partialities of the moral kind : That re-
 “ ligion, after it was extinct, would also be cited as an instance of
 “ those

of the most polite, a most formidable objection
is

“ those gross contradictions, which arise from the gross vulgar
“ natural conceptions of mankind, opposed to their continual
“ propensity towards flattery and exaggeration. Nothing indeed
“ would prove more strongly the divine origin of any religion,
“ than to find (and happily this is the case with Christianity) that
“ it is free from a contradiction so incident to human nature.”
Not to mind the low wit in the two parentheses, which shews, at the same time, a fear and contempt of the friends of the established religion. we have no cause to be ashamed of the apostolic testimony concerning the divine majesty and character, manifested in *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, and who prayed for his own people, not for the world. The author justly observes, that this religion, in some future age after it is extinct, will then deserve to be laughed at. For indeed the followers of the apostles have nothing else to support them against the laugh, but an appeal to futurity. All that we can say at present is, that the apostolic testimony has now, for more than a thousand years, withstood the wit of the philosophers on the one hand, and the more pernicious artifices of the clergy on the other, and still remains to this day as a considerable eye-sore to them both.

Page 35, 36. “ And thus, however strong mens propensity to
“ believe an invisible power in nature, their propensity is equally
“ strong to rest their attention on sensible visible objects; and in
“ order to reconcile these opposite inclinations, they are led to
“ unite the invisible power with some visible object.” How admirably then is the Christian religion fitted to relieve human nature, where it is embarrassed with contradictions? It assures us of an invisible power, far superior to the power of nature; and yet exhibits all the perfections of this power in a visible object, even in a man.

Page 95. “ Here therefore is a kind of contradiction betwixt
“ the different principles of human nature, which enter into re-
“ ligion. Our natural terrors present the notion of *an awful*
“ Deity;” [I have here substituted one epithet, instead of two
very coarse ones]; “ our propensity to praise leads us to acknow-
“ ledge an excellent and divine. And the influence of these op-
“ posite principles is various, according to the different situation
“ of the human understanding.” Setting aside somewhat of this
author’s colouring, nothing can be more justly observed, than that human nature has a strong propensity to *dread* some invisible adverse power, and at the same time a propensity, no less strong, to *approve* of that same power. And the opposition or combination of these

is often formed, against their having any interest in the divine favour. Here it is that the great excellency of philosophy shines forth, while it generously presents an answer to this objection, of all others the most disquieting. And this it does, by sagaciously discovering, “ that the
 “ feeling we have of liberty does not correspond
 “ to the truth of things ; and that our peculiar
 U 3 “ manner

two in the human breast, is the very source of man's disquiet. Here again the gospel proves the only reconciler of contradictions. It preserves the majesty of the invisible power, which we naturally dread, and at the same time exhibits that same power full of benignity toward the basest and most obnoxious of mankind. Thus we see, that the God whose character is drawn by the apostles, is not partial, has no respect of persons, like the pure intelligence, or the *το παν*, of the philosophers, which only reveals itself to a few speculative men, and abandons the remaining millions of mankind, who have neither capacity nor opportunity for refined speculation, as a prey to the natural undisciplined suggestions of their own timid and anxious hearts, and as so many wretched dupes to the artifices of their priests.

On this occasion, we might propose the following Inquiry for the consideration of philosophers. Seeing it is a fixed point, that the present state of things is the only rule by which we can judge about the future : That in this state all our ideas of what is good are enlarged, in proportion as we see it contrasted with the opposite evil, that even the standard of taste is approached to, by nicely contrasting beauties with blemishes ; and seeing that, in order to raise the dignity of the philosopher to its proper point of elevation, large portions of the earth are inhabited by savages, and even civilized nations for the most part deluded by their priests : This being the case at present, I say, who knows but, in the next world, when the expected perfect system takes place, the perfection of that system may appear, by a more decisive contrast betwixt good and evil, than in this ? And as no contrast is more evident at present, than that betwixt the God worshipped by the apostles, and the *pure intelligence* of the philosophers ; may it not be expected, that the contest betwixt these two powers and their votaries, will be decided in the next state, that it may at last incontestably appear to friends and foes, what that being is that frames and governs the universe ?

“ manner of conceiving human actions as right
 “ or wrong, and as praise or blame-worthy, is
 “ wholly founded on this deceitful feeling.”

To the same purpose we read, in a former *Essay*,

“ On the system of universal necessity, abstracted
 “ from this feeling, though certain affections
 “ and actions might excite our approbation, and
 “ others our dislike, there could be no place for
 “ blame or remorse. All the ideas would en-
 “ tirely vanish, which at present are suggested by
 “ the words *ought* and *should*, when applied to
 “ moral conduct.” Let us now observe, with

how great satisfaction our author contemplates
 this important discovery. “ This discovery

“ affords a solid answer to an objection, which,
 “ so far as I know, has not hitherto received any
 “ good answer. And it is, that the objection
 “ rests entirely upon a false supposition, as if
 “ human actions were seen in the same light by
 “ the Deity, in which they are seen by men. A
 “ feeling which is not agreeable to the truth of
 “ things, though wisely ordered to correct an im-
 “ perfect constitution in man, cannot be ascribed
 “ to a perfect being. The Deity perceiving all
 “ things as they are, without disguise, knows,
 “ that what is termed moral evil in the language
 “ of man, is, as well as moral good, the result
 “ of general laws, and of a necessary connection
 “ betwixt causes and their effects. Every thing
 “ possesses its proper place in his plan. All our
 “ actions contribute equally to carry on the great
 “ and good designs of providence; and therefore
 “ there is nothing which in his sight is evil, at
 “ least

“ least nothing which is evil upon the whole.
 “ Considering the objection in the above light,
 “ it loses its force.” Thus the righteous and the wicked, when their disguise is set aside, perceive the benevolence of the Deity wearing an equally smiling aspect toward them both. They have both been equally serving him in their several ways, and are accordingly both equally entitled to his favour and protection.

Thus our author, in a manner truly philosophical, opens for men the prospect of happiness in a future state; and thus he clears from all difficulties, the principle of joyful expectation, which he had laid down a little before. For a page or two before, at the close of his answer to the objection against our confidence in the divine favour, or benevolence, arising from natural evil, which is inseparably connected with the other objection, arising from moral evil, he expresses himself thus. “ It will be observed, that, in
 “ answering the above objection, to the benevo-
 “ lence of the Deity, I have avoided urging any
 “ argument from our future existence, though
 “ it affords a fruitful field of comfort, greatly
 “ overbalancing the transitory evils of this life.
 “ But I should scarce think it fair reasoning, to
 “ urge such topics upon this subject, which would
 “ be arguing in a circle; because the benevolence
 “ of the Deity is the only solid principle from
 “ whence we can infer a future existence.” It is here very honestly acknowledged by our author, that it would be unfair reasoning, and arguing in circle, to bring arguments from a future state,
 U 4 whereof

whereof we know nothing, in order to clear up difficulties in the present state: For surely we can at present know nothing about the character of the Deity, further than it has already been manifested to us by some appearance or work. Our author, then, from a survey of the various tokens of divine benevolence to men, which yet all issue in the destroying that life which, for a short period, they cherish and support, establishes a firm foundation, a solid principle, to support the most joyful expectation of happiness in a future state. And this, it must be confessed, is the utmost length that philosophy can go for our encouragement in this matter. But should a generous prince, after having for a course of years heaped many favours on one of his servants, think fit to throw him into a lothesome dungeon, for his ungrateful breach of trust; I should be at a great loss to infer from the whole of the prince's conduct toward his servant, that he entertained the most benevolent designs concerning him, and intended his future promotion. I should be afraid lest the principles on which I proceeded were not very solid. But methinks there is still more reason for being afraid in the other case, where the punishment is capital, and where every other consideration is of the widest extent.

We have seen then what philosophy can do for us, and what its adepts, standing upon each others shoulders, and profiting by the assistance of their predecessors, have been able to discover for our relief, as far down as the year 1751, when
these

these *Essays* were published. I can easily see, that the discoveries our author has made, must have cost him no small labour and expense of thought ; but I am at a loss to see how he finds this expense repaid, or how he finds such refreshment and enjoyment in looking back on them, as he expresses in the first paragraph of the conclusion : “ We have thus gone through
 “ a variety of subjects, not without labour and
 “ expense of thought : And now, like a traveller,
 “ who, after examining the different parts of a
 “ country, ascends some eminence to review the
 “ whole, let us refresh ourselves, by looking
 “ back, and enjoying the discoveries we have
 “ made.” And till better authority be produced, I am no less at a loss to find what animates his devotion at the close of all, unless I should suppose that his noble enthusiasm * is kindled by reflecting
 on

* The author of the aforementioned *Natural history*, modestly declining to soar aloft on the wings of enthusiasm, contents himself with seeking out a shady retreat in the lower regions. The concluding period of his *Natural history* runs thus.

“ The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery.
 “ Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment, appear the only result
 “ of our inquiry concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of
 “ human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion,
 “ that even this deliberate doubt could scarce be upheld, did we
 “ not enlarge our view, and, opposing one species of superstition
 “ to another, set them a quarrelling, while we ourselves, during
 “ their fury and contention, happily make our escape into the
 “ calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy.” We can easily
 understand how these regions are obscure ; but it is not so obvious
 how they are calm : Especially if it be true, as we are told in a
 subsequent dissertation on the passions, that “ uncertainty has the
 “ same effect as opposition. The agitation of the thought, the
 “ quick turns which it makes from one view to another, the
 “ variety

on the wisdom, the ingenious contrivance, and the complicated machinery appearing in the *Essays* themselves. Till better authority be produced, I say ; for I acknowledge I have no where seen a more ingenious philosophical dream : And for my own part, were I deprived of the New Testament, I would rather choose to dream pleasantly, and be deceived agreeably, with our author, than torment myself by an obstinate adherence to disquieting truth ; yea, I would fear nothing more than lest I should be unseasonably awakened. Our author might likewise have provided a remedy against this fear. He had hinted a very just maxim, That the appearance of the Deity toward us in this state, is the only solid principle from whence we can infer his conduct toward

us

“ variety of passions which succeed each other, according to the
 “ different views ; all these produce an agitation in the mind,
 “ and this agitation transfuses itself into the predominant pas-
 “ sion.”

But perhaps the matter may be solved thus, by comparing the two quotations together. The philosopher keeps all quiet at home, by sending his thoughts abroad. He amuses himself, by throwing squibs among the various classes of religionists ; and while he sets them a quarrelling, his mind is kept in play by the quick turns which it makes from one view to another. Now, it will readily be granted, that one can more easily preserve himself in an easy neutrality and agreeable suspense, in beholding the squabbles of others, than when his own thoughts are inwardly at war. But there is a serious hour awaiting philosophers as well as other men, when the quarrels of others can give us no more entertainment. Yet what cannot philosophy do ? It taught the Emperor MARCUS ANTONINUS, that a wise man ought to die composedly, sedately, perfectly indifferent what came of him after death, and whether he should have any future existence or not ; and to glory in this composed indifference, as more fit to persuade others, than the obstinate confidence which Christians shewed in suffering death for their religion.

us in the next. Now, if we are conducted by a wise delusion here, why might we not be conducted by a still more wise one hereafter, when we attain the full maturity of our nature? For our author supposes, that when man grows old, decays, dies, and rots, he is advancing toward the maturity of his nature.

But our author prudently inclines to restrain the use of the above-mentioned maxim, so as no more may be inferred from it but what we fondly wish; because otherwise there would be a manifest hazard of its introducing into the next world, all the disagreeable ideas which, on some occasions, even in spite of philosophy, serve to disturb our pleasant dreams in the present state. After all, it must be acknowledged, that there is some difficulty in judging how far it is prudent to admit this maxim; or if it be admitted, how far it ought to be used. And this difficulty may be left as a problem proper for exercising the reasoning faculty of succeeding philosophers, even as it has done that of all who have gone before.

On the whole, I know no philosopher who has devised a more ingenious scheme for cutting the sinews of remorse, than our author has done. He has got several opponents. Some of them avail themselves of the common plausible cry of jealousy for the interests of morality; a cry warmly espoused by many who are no way remarkable for excelling others in their practice. It is perhaps easy to find men of tolerably decent characters on both sides of almost any dispute
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whatever : But the great concern of all men is, how to find a proper expedient for abating or removing the pain of remorse. Many find fault with our author's expedient, as confessedly deceitful, while they themselves either furnish us with none at all, or exhibit to us one that is no less deceitful. It were to be wished, that his opponents would attend more seriously to the cardinal point, where the great stress lies.

Though I am far from joining issue with those who would censure our author as a heretic, it appearing to me no less ridiculous to charge a philosopher with heresy, than to accuse a eunuch of incest ; yet I think he deserves a gentle reprimand from the readers of ancient books, for two manifest breaches of decorum, in endeavouring to support his own sentiments, by referring us to two passages of scripture, without regarding the scope of those passages, which, if duly attended to, serves to oppose and overthrow his whole scheme. He adopts the words of PAUL concerning the law of nature, *written in the heart*, without regard to PAUL's sense, either as to the extent of that law, or as it operates in like manner in the consciences of the Gentiles *, as the law of MOSES did in those of the Jews, and is no less

infallibly

* PAUL's sense, Romans ii. runs plainly thus: *For when the Gentiles which have not the law [of MOSES], φυσικη τα τε νομω ποιη, by nature act the part of the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, while their conscience bears joint witness, and their mutual reasonings alternately accuse and apologize.* Thus the apostle appeals for proof of what he says to what may be observed every day in the altercations of the meanest of the vulgar.

infallibly attended with its correspondent effects and consequences. He also adopts for the last words of his book, that sentence wherein MOSES describes the Deity's approbation of all his works at the close of the six days, as equally applicable to the state of the world now as then. Now, it is impossible to learn from MOSES what our author seems to have discovered, that man in his original state was savage, and conscious of nothing but disorder and sensual impulse within; and accordingly having no idea of any thing better without him. MOSES indeed informs us, that, in the course of ten generations, when the arts of life were greatly advanced, the world was filled with much disorder, and was accordingly destroyed by the special appointment of the Deity. But at the same time he sufficiently intimates, that there was a great difference betwixt this and the original state of man. When man was in his original state, *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.* Again, when man, in the midst of all his ingenious improvements in the arts of life, became greatly corrupted, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great; — and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created.* If our author was disposed to give us his sense of either of these two passages, he ought to have done it in consistency with the other. I know not how it may be with others, but it is no less grating to my ear, to hear philosophers

quote

quote scripture, than to hear popular preachers describing philosophically who are the fittest objects of the divine mercy, or to hear a certain class of zealots quoting authorities from the New Testament, and the example of the first patient believers of the gospel, in support of the solemn League and Covenant. Our author durst not, for his own credit, have quoted any Greek or Roman writer as he has done the Bible.

I have already shewn, in the general, how fitly philosophy, and the popular doctrine, may be compared together. It were easy to extend the comparison in a variety of views. The distinction made by the former betwixt savages and civilized nations, or rather that betwixt philosophers and the vulgar, answers to the distinction made by the latter betwixt those said to be converted, and the mere hearers of the gospel, or that more extensive one betwixt the devout and the profane. Philosophers see no dignity in simple human nature: Mere man appears to them a very despicable creature in every respect, but this one, that he is endued with a certain docility, or turn for imitation, which by the assistance of certain preceptors and mechanics, conspiring together to form his mind, his gesture, and dress, may render him at last a very handsome, sagacious, and high-mettled animal. Popular preachers, while they seem to agree with the scripture-account of human nature, find at last, by diligent search, in a remote corner of man's heart, certain live embers, which, when powerfully blown upon by a fervent preacher,

preacher, may produce a very bright and vigorous flame.

Philosophy leads its adepts to the knowledge of a very complaisant Deity. The popular doctrine teaches its votaries, that on their performing a certain act, never yet clearly described, the Deity distinguishes them from other men as his favourites, and is not so much displeas'd with their sins (if now they deserve to be call'd so), as with those of other men.

Philosophy has several ingenious contrivances for blunting the edge of remorse. But in this respect the popular doctrine may take for its motto, *My name is Legion, for we are many.*

Yet the popular doctrine has a certain defaced majesty, which philosophy cannot boast of. Of this we may have some idea, could we only imagine the ancient temple of SOLOMON to be converted into a modern exchange, and the original sanctity of the place transferred to give additional importance to the transactions of commerce, and dignity to the principal merchants; whereas philosophic religion owes all its dignity to the towering imaginations of its adepts.

The chief thing for which I value the author of the *Essays on morality and natural religion*, is, that he condescends more than his fellows to know many things on the same simple footing with the meanest of the vulgar. This book, as exhibiting to us a system of philosophic religion, may very well be compar'd with a well known treatise of the popular doctrine, call'd *Human nature in its fourfold state*. The author of the former,

former, after clearly and simply evincing many points of natural knowledge, artfully goes about to undermine them all, and render them of no consequence as to the great concern of man, his situation with respect to his Creator. The author of the latter plainly enough sets before us many articles of the apostolic doctrine; yet finds means to accommodate them all to the pride of the devotee, and the honour of the preacher.

IN behalf of this digression, which, however long, has not been remote from our main point in view, it may be pleaded that PAUL's doctrine is always best understood when contrasted with the wisdom of the Greek on the one hand, and the zeal of the Jew on the other. I shall now proceed to finish what I had to say on *Reason*, by subjoining some reflections, which I had put together before the consideration of the *Essays* occurred.

I have said, that man is distinguished from other animals by his conscience, and not by his reasoning faculty. As to the exercise of this last, it is commonly said by philosophers, that there is nearly, if not fully, as great a difference betwixt one man and another, as betwixt some men and some brutes; yea, they place the dullest men much on a footing with the most sagacious animals in this respect. However, it is evident, that the differences among men, as to capacity for reasoning, are very great. Now, the apostles, in addressing men, had no respect to what distinguishes

distinguishes one man from another, but to that which is common to them all; they commended themselves to *EVERY man's conscience*; and their success, from the beginning, has chiefly been among those least skilled in reasoning. On the other hand, the seats of learning, where the reasoning faculty is cultivated with greatest industry, have been first and last the chief sources of opposition to the gospel. The meanest day-labourers have full as great sensibility of conscience, as those who are wholly employed in learning; yea, we may perceive this sensibility more evident in the poorest villages, than in cities furnished with all branches of education. Philosophers themselves often find it necessary to have recourse to the sentiments of the plain man, as the last resort. All schemes devised by human wisdom, find their way from the learned by slow degrees down to the vulgar. The gospel was first taught by the meanest of the vulgar. The fishers of Galilee were stationed, as the preachers of it, at the chief seat of learning among the Jews: And PAUL, who was skilled in Jewish learning, was sent to the Gentiles, who held that learning in great contempt. So little regard did the Deity pay to those things on account of which men glory over one another.

As the verbal command given to the parents of mankind, shewed the continued authority of the Deity over all his works; and that when he completed the form of nature, he did not leave it to support itself, or yet man to conduct himself

merely by what he knew naturally, or might further learn from what he saw : So the death then threatened, which in consequence of the first transgression continues to pass upon all men, is an awful standing proof of the authority of the divine word over nature. Death is the dissolution of nature ; and to every individual the same in effect as the dissolution of all nature. At the approach of this awful period, if opportunity is had for sober reflection, the sentiments of men are greatly changed from what they were in the busy part of life. Many reasonings which then gave delight, and received force from the countenance of society, now lose their force, when man is to take his last leave of society, and all his enjoyments in it. Many soothing reasonings are founded on misapprehensions of the divine long-suffering, manifest in supporting and cherishing this mortal life, during the short time wherein the sentence of returning to dust is suspended, and many on the boasted differences betwixt one man and another. But now the divine long-suffering comes to a period, and all the boasted differences disappear. Now, when the best of men consider themselves as ready to be laid open before the eye of their almighty Judge, their deficiencies with regard to his law begin to appear so great and weighty, that all their excellencies above their fellow-men turn out to be light as the dust of the balance.

Notwithstanding the care taken by many to conceal their inward disquiet, and die *decently*, and notwithstanding the care taken by surviving friends

friends to throw a veil over deathbed-scenes; yet enough transpires to give us an idea of the real condition of man in that awful hour; to inform us, that matters are in reality no better within than they appear without; and to shew us, that nothing but the divine reason of hope can then give composure to his heart: But what thus transpires occasionally, affecting only small circles in society, is soon smothered. All individuals at separate times and places die; but society lives; the course of nature continues with it, and the sentiments of the healthy and prosperous prevail. If we could collect the last suffrages of dying individuals, we should find a great majority against those of living society. Yet we have some public view of the real condition of man, when society itself is threatened with death, as in the case of earthquakes, and other sudden calamities. Besides, there are few who have lived any considerable time in the world, who have not on some occasion or other been exposed to such imminent danger of losing their lives, as is sufficient to give them some idea of what happens at death. Death strips all men of their distinctions, and sets them on a level. Now, the Deity, in sending his gospel to men, views their days as an hand-breath; he considers all men as on the brink of the grave. Accordingly the apostles commended themselves *to every man's conscience* IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. They awakened men to view themselves in that point of light wherein their conscience commonly sets them at the hour of death.

We have naturally an awful concern mixed with some anxiety about the condition of a criminal whom we see led forth to execution. And one reason is, the voice of society warrants us to hold him for an unrighteous person. The gospel leads every one whom it awakens, to view himself in a light no less awful. It draws him aside from the eye of society, and places him under the eye of God; so that he dare not lay his hand to his heart, and say of any dying criminal, *I am not as this man.*

Certain instruments of destruction have, not improperly, been called the *last reason* of kings: But that death which is common to all men is such an argument of divine judgment, as has hitherto mocked all the presumptuous reasonings of men. Wherever the force of this argument is well observed, no solid ground of comfort will be found, but that afforded by the gospel. For what notions founded on the course of nature can support a man when nature itself is dissolving? No scheme but the gospel can shew us any fixed point on the other side of the grave. Yet nothing else can be expected, but that men will always continue to reason against fact while society lives, and the course of nature proceeds along with it. For though all individuals are successively confuted most effectually; yet their conviction, being private, and often reserved, can have no extensive or lasting effect on the public.

Now, though the scripture asserts and enforces all that the conscience of man can call reason, though it demonstrates all our original natural notions ;

notions ; yet almost every little enemy of the gospel no sooner lifts his pen against it, than he introduces himself, by declaiming, with great parade, on the sacred rights of reason, and the great danger of invalidating our natural notions. The truth is, such writers are afraid, lest the light of the gospel should too clearly evince and manifest right reason, in opposition to the fondly-received counterfeits of it. They are afraid, lest the light of nature should be increased and strengthened with such additional splendor, as to discover too plainly the corruption of nature. Therefore, as impostors abound most in professions of fidelity and veracity, so these men are the foremost to assert the rights of reason and nature. None so proud of the terms of medicine as quacks, none more forward in expressing concern for the health of mankind than they.

No man will be reconciled to the gospel, till once his attention be awakened to hearken to reason ; till the voice of reason prevail in his thoughts ; till his natural notions be so ratified in his mind, as to make him see the vanity of all his artificial or invented ones. Therefore care is taken by many, to dress up these last with all the arts of eloquence, in order to divert the attention of men aside from the gospel. And it is easy for them to give out for certain maxims the most foolish and groundless presumptions, with great assurance, and confident hopes of success. For having the corruption of nature on their side, they know, that any false glare, any *ignis fatuus*,

is sufficient to decoy men along with the current of that corruption.

A very ordinary attention to this sort of writers will shew us, that they declaim about nature and reason with no less ambiguity, no less absurdity, than the popular preachers do about faith and mystery; yet the fashionable mob is ready to nod, wink, and smile applause at every ingenious period of the former, even as the populace gape and stare in reverent admiration of the latter. But let the popular preachers enjoy themselves, in crying, in their own way, *Faith and Mystery, Hence ye profane*; and let the gentlemen of fashion divert themselves with their rhapsodies about the sacred rights of reason, glorying over the superstitious vulgar; let them continue to cry upon the matter, “Great is the image which fell down
“ from Lucifer, and which all the *rational* world
“ worshippeth:” Christians may content themselves with adopting the old saying, “Great is
“ the truth, and it shall prevail;” or rather in hearing their own leaders the apostles declaring, *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass: The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

O n S P I R I T.

AS I have hitherto spoken but sparingly on the invisible energy by which men are conducted
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in their ignorance and hatred, or knowledge and love of the Christian truth, I am willing to spend some time in consulting the scripture on this head; for I would not choose to rank with those who unsettle two points where they fix one.

It may suffice, by way of introduction, to say, that it is the part of bad influence, to obscure, to confound, to break the order, connection, and subordination of man's natural notions, to decoy him into disloyalty, and then leave him exposed a defenceless prey to the necessary consequence thereof; or, in two words, to deceive and to destroy. It is the part of good influence, which ever proceeds from the fountain of all goodness, to replace and ascertain man's natural notions, and to furnish him with new ones, when destitute of any that can give him comfort; or, in sum, to enlighten and to save, to restore man to truth and happiness. For however strongly some reasoners have maintained, that all that is true is also good, it will require but a short survey of one's own heart to convince him, that he never loves truth, nor inclines to admit it, when it presents its dark side towards his own self.

There is a certain great genius or spirit often made mention of in scripture, whose history is coeval with that of man, and whom I would choose rather to describe by the leading line of his character, than by any of those names which have become familiar terms of reproach; I mean, that spirit, who being originally of the first order of created beings, fell from his high station, with

many under his conduct, by forgetting his natural state of dependence.

It does not appear, that he fell by any such proud disposition as has been generally held odious among mankind, or by acting unsuitably to what wise men in all ages have accounted good sense and greatness of mind. The clearest account we have of his fall, is given us by one who well knew his history, in these notable words, *John* viii. 44. (Εν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὐκ ἔστηκεν) *He stood not in the truth.* I think I need not take time to shew, that the truth so largely contested in this chapter, was, that the man Jesus was the beloved Son of God, in the sense which the Jews accounted blasphemy. But we may take some notice of the occasion on which the mention of this spirit is introduced.

In opposition to the truth, and the real freedom in the family of God preached along with it, the Jews insisted on a peculiar relation to God as his children, by their father ABRAHAM. But they did not consider, that even this boasted privilege was founded in their fleshly relation to Christ, that seed promised to ABRAHAM, who is the Son of God. Jesus gives them to understand, that while they hated this truth, whatever relation to God they gloried in, they could be no otherwise in his family, than as ISHMAEL the servant, the son of the bond-woman, was in ABRAHAM'S house, who was cast out for persecuting ISAAC the son and heir; and that the true freedom in the house of God as his children, in distinction
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from bondmen. comes only by himself the true Son of God. He shews them at large, how vain a thing it was to glory in having ABRAHAM for their father, while they did not the works of ABRAHAM, who rejoiced to see his day afar off; but the works of another father, who stood not in the truth, but opposed it by all his craft and power.

It is evident, then, from this passage, that the great characteristic of this angelic Chief, is opposition to the sacred truth from first to last, ever since his early apostasy from it. And he is the father and prompter of all the opposers of this truth, to the end of the world. For the truth opposed by him is the same that ABRAHAM believed, and rejoiced in; the same that the Jews disbelieved, and hated; and so shewed themselves to be, not the genuine sons of ABRAHAM, but a spurious race, more properly to be ranked under another father.

Seeing then this Chief is distinguished from the angels who stood, by his not abiding or standing in the truth, we are plainly given to understand, that this truth was made known to him, and some way acknowledged by him, before he fell; so that he fell by apostasy from it. Yet we cannot say, that the perseverance of those who stood, was owing to any difference or excellency in their nature, but to their being chosen of sovereign grace to be servants in the kingdom of the Son of God, and therefore they are called *the elect angels*.

We do not find any occasion more proper for
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its being made known to the angels, that the Son of God was to be united to his creatures in man, and become Lord of the creation in the human nature, than the formation of man, which is introduced with a very peculiar solemnity. And what may give some countenance to this, is, that the same tenor of expression used by the Deity at the making of man, is repeated by his inspired prophet in the VIIIth psalm, in describing the universal dominion of the Son of God, under the title of the Son of man : For this psalm is in the New Testament expressly applied to Jesus Christ.

All the angels are represented as unanimously praising God, when he began to form the earth. Job xxxviii. 4, 7. *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth; when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?* As they were witnesses to the whole progress of the divine work in framing the world, their attention must have been in an especial manner drawn to the grand conclusion thereof in the making of man, which was ushered in with these words, *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* Here was a proper occasion for their being given to know, that the divine glory was fully to be manifested in the human nature, by the Son of God becoming a man. We cannot date the intimation of this truth to them much later, for apostasy from it took place among them before the fall of man.

In illustration of what has been said, it may be

be observed, that the apostles PETER and JUDE compare the corruption of Christianity by its teachers, to the fall of the angels. JUDE, moreover, calls to mind the apostasy of the Israelites who fell in the wilderness, as a similar case to both these. And, describing the sin of the angels who fell, he says, they kept not their *BEGINNING* *, but left their own *HABITATION* †. And thus they are distinguished from the angels who continue standing in the truth, worshipping the Son of man as their Lord, and ministering to his redeemed church; wherein they are attentive to learn the manifold wisdom of God, and so keep their beginning, and their proper habitation. On this account these last are called the *holy angels*: For, according to the New Testament, there is no holiness but what consists
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* The beginning (*αρχη*) is a title frequently given to the Son of God in the New Testament, and may refer to *Prov.* viii. 22. where Wisdom says, *The Lord possessed me, the beginning, his way, before his works from thence.* We find him also called God's way by MOSES, *Exod.* xxxiii. 13. to which Jesus refers, *John* xiv. 4, 6. saying, *I am the way.* When we think of God as purposing to manifest all his glory to his creatures, in his Son, and so creating and fashioning all things in that view, we may well consider the Son as *the beginning*, and as *his way* to all his works.

† What was their native habitation which they left, by departing from the truth, we may learn from such passages as these: *Deut.* xxxiii. 27. *The eternal God is thy refuge.* Heb. habitation. *Psal.* xc. 1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place.* *Psal.* xci. 1. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, &c.* And the apostle JOHN, speaking of the love of that truth which is the foundation of mutual affection among Christians, even that same truth from which these angels departed, says, *1 John* iv. 16. *He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.*

in the love of this truth. So PAUL says, Eph. iv. 24. *The new man is created after God, in righteousness and holiness, of the truth.* On the same account, *Matt. xiii. 41.* the Son of man calls them *his angels*; and *2 Thess. i. 7.* they are called *the angels of his power.*

Now, if we inquire what principle influenced the apostasy of that eminent angel whose pernicious way was followed by many; the apostle PAUL plainly intimates to us, that it was owing to his being lifted up with pride, *1 Tim. iii. 6.* For he would not have a novice chosen to be a bishop, lest he should, like him, be lifted up with pride, through a conceit of superior knowledge and abilities, and so fall into the same condemnation with him. And in his Epistle to TITUS he makes this the first article in the blameless character, which he prescribes for a bishop, (*μη αυθαδην*) “not self-sufficient;” as well knowing the sad consequences that would ensue in the Christian profession through neglect of this warning.

When we observe on what foundations the pride of mortals is elevated, we may well allow, that this great angel could produce as forcible arguments in support of his, as any reasoner since: For the dignity of the angelic nature was not liable to those objections which now form at least a heavy contrast to that of man. When once, through high thoughts of his own dignity, his attention was drawn aside from the early intimation of those things which the angels who stood desire to look into, and which were to be
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unfolded in the fulness of time, or when proud disaffection to it began thus to work in his mind, he would be at no loss to find objections against it. For he soon after gave proofs of his dexterity this way, in his undermining and falsifying the revelation which God gave to man.

The shout of triumph over the king of Babylon, who was at the head of the idolatrous defection from the true God, which is the type of the Antichristian apostasy, recorded in ISAIAH, chapter xiv. has not without reason been thought to point at the first apostate, who has therefore been called *Lucifer*, ver. 12—14. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!—For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.—I will be like the Most High**.

This angel, finding himself a glorious Chief, of the highest order of creatures, and far excelling man, could not bear the thought, that the Son of God, condescending to unite himself with the creatures, should not take on him the nature of angels, but become a man, finding his de-

* The following passages likewise describe his chief agents or representatives. Dan. vii. 25. *He shall speak words against the Most High.* SYMMACHUS has it thus, *He shall speak words as the Most High.* 2 Thess. ii. 4. *Who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* Rev. xiii. 6. *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God.* All these forms of expression are of the same import: For, in creatures, to speak and affect to be as God, is in reality to speak and act against the true God.

delights with the sons of men; and in the human nature rule over angels, as servants to him and his brethren of mankind. He looked on this as a breach of the order of nature, and contrary to the fitness of things. He could not think, that the likeness of God could be so advantageously shewn in the earthly or human, as in the heavenly and angelic nature, which he considered as approaching by far the nearest to the divine. So he concluded, as his reasoning prompted him, *I will be like the Most High.* Hence, in the New Testament he gets the name of a *liar*, and is given out as the author of every false representation of the Deity. So, in the above-mentioned passage, John viii. 44. Jesus speaks of him thus: *He abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh (ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων) of his own, his own selfish reasonings: For he is a liar, and the father of it.* Jesus shews himself to be the reverse of this, when he says to the Jews, ver. 42. *If God were your Father, ye would love me: For I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.* And when they charge him as influenced by an apostate angel, he first refutes the charge; then adds, on the contrary, ver. 49, 50. *But I honour my Father.—And I seek not mine own glory.* We may take this occasion to observe, by the way, that the fullest view of God was given in the lowest state of dependence, Jesus humbled to the death of the cross.

As to what has been hinted above, we cannot imagine, that the first reasoner against revelation
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came short of what has been lately suggested by some Christian teachers of note, who, not being satisfied that it became God to be united to human nature, properly so called, so as to become a man, “in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted,” have imagined, for him whom they call Jesus, a soul created before the world, or rather derived from the Deity in some peculiar manner, so as to be distinguished for its natural excellency from every other creature.

On the other hand, the angels who stood, remembering the infinite eminency of the Deity above all creatures, made no account of the difference betwixt the angelic and the human nature, so as to draw thence the least objection against his wisdom and goodness, in choosing the latter to be the center of union with his creatures. They did not think it became them to reason from any order they observed in nature, against the declared will of the author thereof. So they were far from finding fault with *the good pleasure which he purposed in himself, that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.* The more fully evinced, the more clearly ascertained they saw their dependence, they found their happiness the more enlarged; as they saw the glory of the divine character more fully opened to their view. And the lower their service was, the closer connection they had with the Son of the Highest, and the nearer access to his presence. For as the Deity cannot, like creatures,

creatures, rise by improvement, his unparalleled eminence can only be seen, by observing how low he condescends.

Now, if we turn our eyes to the fruits of the first apostasy, we find the pride by which it began working by deceit and malice, and plainly shewing itself in falshood and murder. For the leader in this apostasy, envying man on account of that truth which he considered as partial in his favour, and debasing to himself, went about to deceive him, and sought his death, if by any means he might overthrow the truth, the prime object of his disgust. He knew the law of dependence given to man ; he knew the penalty annexed in case of transgression ; so he sought to throw man utterly out of favour with God, and thus disappoint the divine purpose concerning him. And the way he took to accomplish his design, was by blowing up the pride of man, and teaching him to reason against divine revelation, and renounce his dependence, as he himself had done.

He takes his advantage of the woman, informs the body of the serpent, eats of the interdicted fruit in her presence ;—the mute grovelling animal immediately commences a speaker with human voice, yea, a reasoner even about the highest matters, the concerns of man with God. This much the sacred history plainly imports, while it shews us the woman was influenced no less by what she saw, or the fresh discoveries made to her eyes, than by what she heard. Having thus, with signs of great satisfaction,
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eaten of the fruit, and, in all appearance, made a clear discovery of its natural virtues, to communicate both pleasure and knowledge, by a notable experiment performed in her presence, he decoyed her attention, and drew her in to become a reasoner on natural causes and effects, as to the article of her dependence on God. At making the experiment, he broke forth into a question, of no less triumph and defiance than a modern reasoner would shew on inventing a new argument against revelation, *Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* Is it possible, that he who animates all nature, and whose bounty is unlimited to every other creature, hath forbid you, the natural sovereigns of the earth, the use of any tree of the garden, not to say the most beneficial one among them, to which, moreover, the meanest reptile you see may have free access, and by virtue thereof raise himself far above his natural condition, even to the highest degree of perfection? — The woman is caught. She commences a reasoner; and by her first reply, her pride appears to be piqued, *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, our liberty is far from being stinted as to the use of any one of them; * but of the fruit of the tree which is in*
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* The LXX. version, Alex. MS gives the answer of Eve thus, *We may eat of every tree of the garden; but, &c* making her repeat in her answer all the words on which the question turned. To this I had no regard, when I wrote what is above; for I had not then observed it. The paraphrase I have given is, I apprehend, sufficiently countenanced by our common English version from the

the midst of the garden, the author of nature, knowing what pernicious qualities may be naturally contained in it better than we, and having a peculiar care for our health and safety, hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Thus have we seen some Christian writers reasoning, who, not being satisfied to what purpose man should be taught absolute dependence on the declared will of God, have thought it incumbent upon them, to find out such reasons for the divine will, as might render the compliance of man with the duty required highly rational and beneficial to him, even supposing there were no God to command him, or no explicit declaration made of his will. Such are all those called *Christian Deists*. But “man was not made to live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God.” He was made to be a disciple to his Creator.

To return: It is evident the woman’s attention was now drawn off from the sense of her duty and submission, to consider the reasons of her Creator’s conduct towards her; and as her sense of freedom and dignity was now inflamed, she must have been averse to the notion of arbitrary authority,

Hebrew. So soon as the woman’s mind became averse to the notion of arbitrary law or restraint, she would easily find a pretext for entertaining the largest sense of liberty, from the universal expression EVERY TREE, used first in the general unlimited grant of food, before any mention is made of the planting of the garden, *Gen. i. 29.* and repeated in the special grant of the garden, which was given along with the prohibition, *Gen. ii. 16.*

authority, circumscribing her actions; which aversion is the proper spring of Atheism. This appears, by her suppressing the name he had given to the tree in question, *The tree of knowledge of good and evil*. She chooses rather to design it by its situation in the garden, than by the name which served to distinguish it as a test of obedience to her and her husband; the name which, in connection with the threatening, plainly imported, that they should live or die, be happy or miserable, according as they were found to be good or evil on the trial. Agreeably to this, we find she loses the impression of the divine threatening; and, instead of considering life and death as hinged on the divine word, intimates an apprehension, that death might be caused by virtue of some natural quality of the fruit. So, instead of repeating the words of God, *Thou shalt surely die*, she uses another form of expression, *lest ye die*. This apprehension further appears, from her adding to the divine prohibition, *Ye shall not eat of it*, these words, *Neither shall ye touch it**.

Y 2

Even

* This ill-placed, and ill-founded dread of the power of nature, is the principle and spring of all superstition; and, by taking a full view, both of the case of our first parents, and that of the Jews, we may see, that Superstition is very nearly allied to Atheism, or that the transition is readily made from the one to the other. For he who, by reasonings, is led to entertain undue apprehensions or fears of evil from the power of nature, may easily be induced, by much the like reasonings, to entertain undue expectations of happiness from that same power, till, at last, he be tempted to renounce his dependence on that God, who is the supreme object of fear and of love, and to whom all the powers of nature stand in perfect subordination, or with whom no power can justly stand in the least competition.

Even as the Jews, neglecting the true import of the divine law, and not having a due sense of the authority of the Lawgiver, began to dread more harm from what touched, affected, or entered into them from without, than from the threatened consequence of the iniquitous thoughts of their hearts; or, which is the same thing, the power of the divine word, vindicating its violated authority: And accordingly, turning aside from the great scope of the divine precepts, employed their chief care and attention in framing and observing additional laws of their own, to guard them against bodily defilement, and its imagined effects.

The tempter pursues his advantage, and concludes, it was far from being certain that death would be the consequence of their eating; that there was no necessary connection betwixt this action and death; *Ye shall not surely die.* And as he had already set the woman's mind to work, to give reasons why her Creator spoke as he did, he proceeds to support the conclusion he had now drawn by other words of her Creator *, namely, the title of the tree, which she had suppressed, to which he gives a gloss very suitable to his main design. “ You are greatly mistaken, if you imagine God distinguished this tree, as knowing
“ any

* Thus he continues to undermine revelation, by opposing one part of it to another, that he may make the whole doubtful, so as to become the subject of free debate, and to have no fixed sense beyond what may be suggested from the course of nature, that so men may determine themselves as if there were no revelation.

“ any pernicious qualities to be in it : *For God*
 “ *doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye*
 “ *shall be as God, knowing good and evil. Ye*
 “ shall be endowed with the most enlarged
 “ sentiments, and become highly enlightened
 “ reasoners ; having such a thorough insight into
 “ the nature of things, as shall enable you, on
 “ all occasions, clearly to perceive what is fit,
 “ and what is unfit, and to measure exactly the
 “ just proportions of good and evil, in every
 “ thing or action. So that, having no more
 “ occasion to be over-awed or controlled in your
 “ actions, by unaccountable fears suggested by
 “ your consciences, or yet arising from any voice
 “ or positive precept whatsoever, ye shall clearly
 “ understand how God ought to deal with you,
 “ what in reason it becomes him to expect from
 “ you, and how he ought to treat you, as to hap-
 “ piness or misery. Yea, ye shall become fully
 “ qualified to conduct yourselves in all respects
 “ as to virtue and happiness, even supposing there
 “ were no God to command you, or take cogni-
 “ fance of your actions.

“ You have therefore no occasion to be afraid
 “ of any words you have heard mentioning *death*
 “ as the consequence of your eating this fruit :
 “ For if any change of your condition was in-
 “ sinuated by them, you have no reason to con-
 “ clude, that it must be a transition to misery ;
 “ on the contrary, from the experiment now
 “ made before you, ye have the most rational
 “ ground to presume, that in the day ye eat

“ thereof, your natural condition shall be changed
 “ greatly to the better *.”

Now, if we observe how MOSES collects the motives which influenced the woman's compliance, we shall find an illustration of the means used to deceive her. *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.* MOSES, relating the planting of the garden, says, chapter ii. 9. *And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.* The woman then saw, by what the serpent shewed her, in laying open the fruit of this tree, and eating it before her, that it was within, as well as without, no way inferior to that of the rest of the trees of the garden, being no less pleasant to the sight, and good for food, than any of them. Thus was removed all ground for any suspicion suggested by her reasoning, that the use of it might be
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* It might have been added to the paraphrase given above, “ And even supposing that by *death* should be meant the dissolution of your bodies, it does by no means follow, that you will thereby become miserable; but the contrary: For so soon as your intellectual faculties are disengaged from the tenements of clay with which they are at present incumbered, they will be then much more at liberty to penetrate beyond the present veil of appearances, into the most secret recesses of nature, and discern its most internal qualities. And thus ye shall at last attain the full maturity of your nature; for nature delights in progress.” If all these presumptions were not then hinted or insinuated by the first reasoner against revelation, we may freely say, that they have been sufficiently insisted upon *since*, by his disciples and children.

forbidden her on account of some bad quality contained in it. She saw, moreover, by the deceitful experiment made in her presence, that it excelled the rest of the trees in this respect, that it was desirable to make one wise; and concluding it highly probable, that on this account it got the name of *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, suitably to the new gloss given it by the serpent, which appeared no less plausible and ingenious than it was agreeable to her pride; she accordingly yielded to the temptation, ate of the fruit with pleasure, and recommended it to her husband; who also complied, being prevailed upon by the additional motive of his affection to her.

Here we may take a short view of the corruption of human nature, at the fountain whence it flowed. It is no new observation, nor disagreeable to daily experience, that, according to the character which men conceive of God, so they study to form their own. Here we may consider man's original impression, or knowledge of the Deity, as corrupted in a threefold view: For,

1. When man gave ear to the tempter, representing God as speaking deceitfully to him, then deceit took place in his heart. The tempter, by artful words and actions, pointed forth the divine words as deceitful, ambiguous, and capable of another sense, than, at first hearing, they plainly imported to the conscience of man. By perverting the word of God, he changed it into a lie. And the mind of man being hereby tainted, lost the principle of truth, by calling in question the

divine veracity. Thus man became deceitful, in conceiving of God as dealing deceitfully with him. And the deceit of his heart has ever since continued to be more especially subtil, as to the matter of his dependence on God. 2. The tempter having represented God, as withholding from man something he knew would be more beneficial to him than any thing he had bestowed upon him, the mind of man became evil and malignant, by giving place to reflections against the divine goodness. And ever since, the disaffection of his heart has been more especially pointed against every manifestation of the divine goodness, that served to evince and ascertain his real condition with respect to his Creator. 3. It must be adverted to, that the tempter presents to man nature aside from God. He leads his thoughts aside from the impression of power conveyed by the divine word, to attend to the power of nature in the forbidden tree ; and, by stimulating his natural sense of freedom, as being a creature made for dominion, he persuades him, that, by a proper exercise thereof, he might avail himself of the powers of nature, to advance to the highest degree of perfection ; and so have no reason to stand in awe of any superior, as having no more occasion to depend on him for wisdom, or consequently for happiness. Thus atheistical pride took place in the heart of man, and he came short of the glory of God, by seeking his own, independently of him. Here is the origin of all idolatry, and here is the true source of the

Atheism

Atheism of the philosophers, who acknowledge no God but nature.

Thus the first apostate drew his own image on man, who now became like him in deceit, enmity, and pride, as much as he could be without the knowledge of that truth from which his tempter had apostatized. And thus man became very fit to resist and oppose that truth when it should be revealed to him.

Thus he who stood not in the truth, sought to overthrow it, by devising the ruin of man. But however averse he was to the thought, that the image of God should be shewn in man; yet as he knew not the fulness of the divine character that was to be manifested, so neither did he know the means by which the manifestation or image of it was to be drawn forth, and arise to view. In the height of his crafty disaffection, he served only as a tool to promote the grand design he sought to thwart. His opposition to the truth made way for the revelation of it among depraved mankind to his own condemnation, even as all his attempts against it since that time have still served to make it shine the clearer.

It was the intention of the Deity to express his image fully in man. While man remained upright, the majesty of God, as the creator and upholder of the universe, was fitly expressed in his submission to the law of dependence delivered to him by the divine voice. But that the fulness of God might be made manifest, it was necessary that man should depend on him for more than was yet to be seen in the universe. Till sin and
 misery

misery took place among mankind; as there was no room for God's opposition to sin to appear among them, so neither could his boundless mercy and all-sufficiency to save be manifested. And as there was no room for shewing spotless virtue, or unreserved submission to the divine will, tried in the greatest extremity of distress; so neither could the greatness of the divine delight in such virtue be displayed; nor yet his wisdom and power in bringing the greatest good out of the greatest evil. And it must be added, that unless human nature had been dignified, in being assumed by a divine person, there had not been room enough for displaying among mankind these divine perfections in their proper or infinite extent. But, not to open too many views at once, it may suffice to say,

As God was now to appear, not only as the avenger of sin, but also as the deliverer from sin and misery, it was his design, that all the objects of his favour among mankind should depend on him for a righteousness of his providing, even as the first man was taught to depend on him for his earthly life, and all its enjoyments. In the free gift of righteousness, all the divine perfections are readily brought to view. And the apostle PETER, summing up at once the glory of the restored creation, says, *wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

In the first intimation of the saving truth to fallen man, is hinted a distinction of mankind into two classes, under the designations of the *seed of the woman*, and *the seed of the serpent*; and this

this hint is sufficiently illustrated to us in other places of scripture. Thence it appears, that in the former class are comprehended all with whom the Son of God took part in flesh and blood, and who, partaking of his Spirit, are joined to him as members of one body to the head ; so, according to the apostolic stile, make in him *one new man*. And of every member of this body it may be said, *He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit*. This account of the *seed of the woman* is supported by the like account given by the apostle PAUL of the *seed of Abraham*, Gal. iv. The Spirit by which this one body is animated, is distinguished from every other, under the titles of the *Holy Spirit*, the *Spirit of God*, and the *Spirit of Truth* : And according to the scripture, this Spirit is God. In the latter class are comprehended all who have the same temper of mind which began in the first opposer of the truth, who borrows his name from the serpent, which he made use of in deceiving man: The scripture declares all such to be under his influence, and to be conducted by him, in their opposition to the truth ; so he is called *the spirit that now worketh in the children* ($\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\varsigma$) *of unbelief or disobedience*. And the union of all who are influenced by him, is to be seen in nothing else but their enmity to the saving truth.

This spirit obtains in scripture various designations, describing the nature and extent of his influence. He is called *the prince* and *the god of this world*, also *the spirit of the world*, and *the spirit of error* ; he and his associates are called
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the rulers of the darkness of this world ; and his dominion is called *the power of darkness*, in opposition to the light of the divine glory which shines in the truth. So all who are rescued from his power by the evidence of the truth, are said to be “ turned from darkness to light.” He is, moreover, designed by two Hebrew names, signifying *the adversary*, and *the destroyer* ; and by two Greek ones, signifying *the accuser* or *calumniator*, and *the evil or wicked one* ; all pointing forth the opposition conducted by him in the world to the divine goodness manifested in the truth, and to all those in whom the truth takes place. So we find the apostle JOHN ranks all mankind under two heads. For, speaking of himself, and all who held the same truth with him, he says, *We know that we are of God, and the whole world* (ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται) *lieth in the wicked one.*

If, casting our eye on the whole history of this spirit, and considering the nature of his agency, and the various names given him, we should incline to distinguish him by one capital designation, methinks, with great propriety, we might call him *the spirit of self-dependence* ; which is only shortening the stile used in describing his emblem in the watery abyss : *He beholdeth all high things ; he is a king over all the children of pride* * ; and corresponds with the forecited description given of him by PAUL, namely, *the spirit*

* Compare Job xli. 34. with Isaiah xxvii. 1.

spirit that now worketh in the children of infidelity or disloyalty.

Here I willingly adopt the words quoted, at the foot of the 156th page of vol. 1. of *Meditations, &c.* from a treatise, called, *Christianity the great ornament of human life.* “ Now, this “ *self-dependence* may be ranked among the *most* “ *dangerous* of the infernal politics, because the “ fatal poison lies *deep*, and too often undi- “ cerned.”

Self-dependence being the leading principle with the prime enemy of the truth, and the true spring of all his opposition to it, the way he multiplies his offspring is, by propagating his own leading sentiment ; and wherever that sentiment appears, there his power is manifest ; even as wherever the sacred truth is believed, there acts the spirit of the truth, whose agency is inseparable from it : And wherever the faith of it shews itself working by love, there the power of that Holy Spirit is manifest. And, in general, it may be said of every doctrine about the concerns of man with God, that a certain spirit or temper of mind goes along with it ; so the scripture, awakening the attention of Christians to the examination of doctrines, uses this form of expression, *Beloved, believe not every spirit ; but try the spirits, whether they are of God.*

Here it must be remembered, that since human nature was corrupted at the fountain, by the parents of mankind throwing off their dependence, their posterity derive from them only nature corrupted, or affected with the bias originally received

received from the *adversary*, who has therefore still more ready access to them than he had to the first pair. He has no occasion to renew the task of disaffecting loyal subjects from their sovereign, but only to cherish and strengthen the roots of that disaffection which he planted in human nature at the first; unless we turn our eyes to those in whose minds the Spirit of the truth hath grafted a new principle of loyalty. There indeed he labours with all his might, but in vain, to overthrow it; though he is successful against many who, by their profession, seem to have it.

All mankind, then, are naturally influenced and conducted by the spirit of self-dependence, not excepting those who are chosen to be heirs of salvation. For when these last are brought to the knowledge of the truth, they are said to be *turned from the power of the adversary unto God*. Hence is that opposition stated betwixt God and the world, and so often insisted on in the New Testament. Hence we learn the difference betwixt the *taste* of men and that of God. When PETER shewed a temper of mind averse to the humiliation of Jesus unto death, whence the brightest discovery of the divine glory was to arise, Jesus rebuked him, as influenced by the adversary: *For, said he, thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*. If PETER received such a rebuke after he had been blessed by his Lord, and his faith approved as proceeding from divine teaching, we may surely with all freedom ascribe to its proper source every

every sentiment opposing the Spirit of the truth, though uttered by men of the greatest reputation for piety. The first Christians were so well instructed as to the opposition betwixt God and the world, that it was considered as a first principle among them : And it was thought enough to cool their minds to all that is coveted and admired in the latter, to remind them of that opposition, by telling them, *It is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Nor are we to imagine, that by *the world*, in this opposition, is chiefly to be understood the more infamous part of it, whose practices were always condemned by what is called *the public*, in every nation? No; the fact stands quite otherwise : For Jesus Christ and his apostles always met with the warmest opposition from even the most reputable and venerable part of the public; and if they were sometimes insulted by *lewd fellows of the baser sort*, we find it was at the instigation of the devout; for men of very different characters are easily united in their opposition to the truth ; and as it fared with Jesus Christ and his apostles, so will it always fare with their doctrine to the end of the world, when it is maintained in its ancient simplicity. On this occasion we may say, that any writer in behalf of the ancient gospel would act a very absurd part, in appealing to the public for their approbation. If he would appeal to any of his fellow-creatures, it must be to the consciences of *those who know and love the truth*, and that too with a reserve of recourse to the decision of the apostles,

by

by whose writings it must be tried how *far* any man knows and loves the truth.

THE opposition we have been speaking of, has appeared more or less in every age of the world, from the first to the present, agreeably to the early intimation given of it in the address of the Deity to the serpent in the presence of the woman ; *I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed.* In the same view we must understand these words of Jesus, *I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.—I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother: And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* The bright discovery of the divine goodness made by Jesus Christ, awakened the spirit of opposition, to shew itself more clearly, and burn with a more violent flame than ever it had done before. In the foregoing ages, as we find all along traces of the truth, so do we also of the opposition; and no less is intimated in these words of Jesus, *And what will I if it be already kindled?*

The scripture assures us, it was by the influence of the prime opposer of the truth, that the first son of ADAM slew his younger brother, a believer and lover of it. From the history of SETH, contrasted with that of CAIN and his family; from the life and prophecy of ENOCH,
and

and the state of mankind in the days of NOAH, a preacher of righteousness, we learn how the opposition shewed itself until the flood. From what happened in the family of NOAH after the flood; from the building of the tower in the plain of *Shinar*, and the progress of idolatry when ABRAHAM was called; from the history of that and the following patriarchs, and even from what happened in their own families; and, lastly, from the oppression suffered by their descendents in Egypt, we see how the opposition appeared until the erection of the kingdom of Israel. Henceforward till the coming of Christ we have a twofold view of the opposition, as it shewed itself not only in the hatred of the neighbouring nations to that kingdom, but also among the peculiar people themselves.

The scripture takes express notice of the agency of the adversary against the chosen people, of whom Christ was to come, both before and after the Babylonish captivity. Moreover, if we think of the various sorts of idolatry, through attachment to which the neighbouring nations hated the worshippers of the one true God, and by which many of the Israelites themselves were corrupted; we find the scriptures affirming, that all the worship paid to idols or strange gods, under whatever names, is at bottom paid to the chief apostate and his associates. We find also, that amidst the peculiar people was maintained all along a disaffection to the prophetic word, which testified among them beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And

this disaffection held pace with their neglect of the divine law. With this STEPHEN boldly charges them in their presence, when he concludes his summary view of their history in these words: *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears; ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just One, of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*

WE are now led to consider how the opposition was conducted when the Son of God himself appeared in the world, who could with great propriety say, I AM THE TRUTH. Now the controversy was pushed to the uttermost, and brought to a final decision. Now the characters on both sides are clearly marked, and it is fully made manifest what *is* and what *is not* of God. But as we took some view of this subject in the foregoing Letter, our reflections now may be the more general.

After the voice from heaven, directed to Jesus at his baptism, had solemnly declared *who* he was, he is conducted by the Spirit of the truth into the wilderness, there to be exposed in the most destitute circumstances to the assaults of the adversary in person, for the trial of his faith, that so, learning by experience the full character and abilities of his rival, he might be prepared to withstand the various opposition he was after-ward

ward to meet with from all sorts of men under his influence.

The adversary having craftily taken occasion, from the necessitous condition of Jesus, to tempt him to call in question the truth he had heard from heaven, by putting it to the proof for his present relief, next presents himself to him in the height of his grandeur, as the god of this world, shewing him all the kingdoms and the glory thereof, as who would say, *I will be like the Most High* ; and offering all to him, on condition of receiving *homage* from him for the same. With these two attempts he joins a third, in shewing his power to destroy, by forcibly carrying away Jesus to a place of such danger, as seemed to leave room for no alternative, but that of being slain by falling headlong, or which was far worse, of letting go the truth.

Thus he attacked Jesus with all the address that his craft, his haughtiness and malice, seconded by his great power, could furnish him with. But he was utterly foiled in his enterprise, finding no part in him where he could make the least impression. And the whole temptation issued in a notable confirmation of the truth he sought to undermine : For Jesus obtained a new proof of his being the SON OF GOD, and having pleased Him on this trial of his faith, in the miraculous preservation of his life by the ministry of angels sent from his Father. And thus he received a pledge beforehand of his resurrection from that death wherein all his sufferings were to issue. Hence then we have a short plan of the

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following

following history of Jesus, represented to us in a private scene at his entrance on his public ministry.

Here also we have a summary view of all the motives by which the adversary works upon the minds of men, to hinder them from admitting, or to cause them to forsake the truth, which may be distinguished under three heads. He tempts them, (1.) by considerations touching the necessary supplies of life; (2.) by the fittest allurements for inflaming their pride, and gratifying all their passions; and, (3.) by the fear of temporal calamities, and death, the issue of them all. The great corruption of Christianity, which by his agency took place after the days of the apostles, and still continues, is a standing proof how successful he has been in urging these motives.

Hence we see how Jesus honoured his Father, by a steady attachment to his word, and submission to his will, and that in circumstances very different from those wherein the first man was placed. Jesus, in the most straitened condition, held fast the grand point which the first man let go in the height of prosperity; *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* All appearances concurred with the divine word, to assure the first pair, that they were the favourites of God: Yet they let go the word which imported that they held all their happiness of him, by giving ear to a false interpreter of it. Jesus held fast the divine word, declaring him to be the beloved Son of
 God,

God, when all appearances were strong against it. They, surrounded with abundance, and secure from fear, proved disloyal for one morsel of meat. He, destitute of the necessaries of life, continued faithful and submissive; nor could his constancy be shaken by the most imminent danger. They, enjoying large dominion, at the rate of acknowledging no superior but their Creator, were tempted, with imaginary prospects of being greater, to grudge at the test of their submission to him, as an unreasonable restraint of their liberty. But He could by no means be prevailed upon to entertain a thought of exchanging the extremely low and straitened condition wherein his Father had placed him, for all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, at the rate of receiving them from the hand of another, or paying the least homage to him who made the offer.

On this occasion, we may well say, how greatly was the religion of Jesus corrupted, when its teachers, with the multitudes following them, accepted of this very offer, with the condition annexed; when the Christian nations bowed before the throne of spiritual pride, erected above the kingdoms of this world, and aggrandised with all the glory of them, worshipping the dragon, which gave his power thereto. For thereto, we are told, he *gave his power, and his seat, and great authority*; so made good to those who accepted the condition the offer which he had in vain proposed to Jesus. This worship is so universal, that in the passage I have been re-

ferring to, it is said to be paid by all *whose names are not written in the slain Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world**. Against this worship, in the following chapter, is denounced an awful threatening, which ought to be attentively considered by all who promote reverence for secular establishments of religion, *Rev. xiv. 9—12*. The expression is indeed somewhat figurative, yet it is easy to see that the meaning is very dreadful. And to remove all complaint of obscurity, or excuse for ignorance, the twelfth verse describes, in the simplest and plainest words, the character of those who stand clear of the evil condemned in that passage.

THE temptation which Jesus resisted, having led back our thoughts to that by which the first man was ensnared, we may here pause a little, and observe how the discovery of the Deity is carried forward from the beginning, that so we may have the more distinct view how the opposition is all along conducted. For the latter always follows the former, like a shadow, and serves eventually to make it shine the brighter.

The most awful apprehension we have of the divine Majesty, is by his voice in speaking. This is much insisted on throughout the scriptures, and particularly in the book of PSALMS, in ISAIAH,
and

* Thus the apostle's words, in *Rev. xiii. 8*. ought to be read and understood. For it would require great straining in criticism, to shew us how the Lamb could be said to be *slain from the foundation of the world*; and, besides, such criticism would ill suit with the simplicity of the apostolic style.

and the four Evangelists. And LONGINUS, though no believer of the scriptures, yet quotes MOSES for an instance of the sublime, where he introduces the Deity thus, *And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.*

That divine person who is called the Son of God, acts as the speaker of the words of God, expressing the mind of the Father unto his creatures ; so his name, by way of distinction, is said to be THE WORD OF GOD. The apostle JOHN, in the beginning of his gospel, speaks of his agency in the making of the world, under the title of the WORD, *who in the beginning was with God, and was God* ; plainly pointing to his part in the threefold agency of the Deity, in that work, as described by MOSES. *And God said—And God made—And God saw that it was good.* Where the Father is represented as approving, or beholding with delight what was done, according to what was spoken. Agreeably to this, we find the same person who is called the Word, under the title of Wisdom, saying, *I was daily his delight*, Prov. viii. 30. plainly referring to the several days wherein the world was made. The words immediately following, are,—*Rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.* While he was speaking the world into order, he had always in view the great purpose of shewing his delight in the closest connection with the sons of men, by the revelation of the divine mercy. Thus we have a noble account given for the solemnity with which the agency

of the Deity is represented in the work of each day.

When the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, JOHN the Baptist spoke of him thus, John iii. 34. *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.* In the voice which came from the excellent glory, we not only have a representation of the communication of the Father's mind to Jesus, but we also see him confirmed, and authorised, as the speaker of the Father's mind; for the voice closes with these words, *Hear ye him.* In Jesus, we not only behold the divine will honoured, by the most perfect submission to it under the greatest trials, but we also find the authority thereof exercised in the most majestic manner; for while he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, he, at the same time, spoke with that authority and power which is peculiar to the divine Majesty. *He spake, and it was; commanded, and it stood;* healing those who were otherwise incurable; turning the storm into a calm; raising the dead; and changing the hearts of men by a word of his mouth. And hereby he gave a sure pledge of the veracity and power of that saying, whose effect is yet to come, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;* and of that other, *Behold, I make all things new.*

The first view we have of the majesty of the divine word, is in commanding the light to shine out of darkness; in giving birth to, and establishing

blishing the course of nature. Man was last formed, and he was made for hearing the voice of God. He was so made, that his life was incomplete till he heard that voice : Incomplete we may say, for want of a better similitude, like a dial before the sun has shined upon it. He was fitted, as the wax to the seal, for receiving the impression of the divine word. He was erected, as a living conscious monument, to bear for an inscription, *By whom, and how, the world was made,* or that the world was framed by the word of God. His conscience was framed to be a standing receptacle for the power and majesty of that voice, by which all things were made, and by which they are upheld.

The adversary, who himself fell by disaffection to the truth made known to him by the divine voice, as judging it unsuitable to the order of nature, tempted man, upon the word spoken to him by God, and not on what he naturally knew without revelation. Man had a natural knowledge of God by the things that are made, and a sense of right and wrong in his conscience, without revelation. But his life was not framed to depend wholly thereupon ; nor was it principally hinged upon his conduct, regulated by his own reasoning, while his reasoning faculty was yet uncorrupted. It depended on a word spoken to him by his Creator. It was the business of the adversary, then, to work upon his sense and natural knowledge ; and to turn his reasoning against the revelation on which he knew his life de-

depended, even as he afterward fought, though in vain, to do with Jesus.

THE adversary carries on the whole opposition to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, in order to do it the more effectually, in an indirect manner. For he opposes both these, under the pretence of maintaining and promoting them. Even as the worship he seeks for himself among men, is also indirect: For it would be foolish to suppose, that he should seek to be worshipped under any of those dishonourable titles given him from the other side of the opposition, or under the character drawn for him by the Spirit of the truth. Yet he is really worshipped, wherever his sentiments, corrupting revelation, are received and admired.

As he is well acquainted with human nature, he makes his address chiefly to that disposition, or fitness, wherewith man was originally framed for hearing God. And he acts as the pretended image of God, or the pretended speaker, and interpreter of his mind. As he is not acquainted with the will of God, so he knows not how to oppose it, till it be revealed; and as he always finds the greatest advantage against men, in practising upon some divine revelation already made to them; so he proceeds, following the track and progress of revelation, imitating and counterfeit-ing, or disguising, perverting, and adapting it to his own purpose.

Depraved as human nature now is, its original
fitness

fitness or disposition for receiving revelation, is yet to be seen in the great corruption of that disposition. The universal propensity of mankind, in all ages and in all nations, eagerly to imbibe, and tenaciously to retain, some pretended revelation, has been taken notice of by writers on all sides, and variously reasoned upon: The fact, however, is acknowledged by all. Yea those who openly renounce all kinds of revelation, (solacing themselves, mean-while, with fond presumptions, as ill supported as any kind of it), do yet freely own, that it is with the greatest difficulty that even the wisest of men can disentangle themselves from religious prejudices. And we daily see, that the most profligate felons, when they come to shew any remorse at the near approach of death, generally express, at least, as great concern for their having neglected or profaned the religious rites of their country, as for any other crime.

The adversary, then, finds his greatest advantage and success among mankind, by acting as the director of their consciences, or their leader in religion. He has the firmest hold of them, when he has them subject to him in their devotion. And thus he has so great influence over men, that no less than the power which attended the command to the light to shine out of darkness, and the command to LAZARUS to come forth from his grave, even the same power which attended the apostolic testimony from the beginning, and is inseparable from it to the end of the world, can awaken, or rather *create* attention
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in them to take in the knowledge of the true God.

Not to stay in considering particularly how revelation was corrupted and counterfeited in its progress from the fall of man, in the patriarchal families, and in the kingdom of Israel, till the public ministry of Jesus Christ, by the exhibition of false deities, sacrifices, oracles, priests, prophets, sanctuaries, and symbols; we may now take some general notice of the opposition made to Jesus, which issued in his death.

THE kingdom of the Hebrews being, properly speaking, a theocracy, it was the same thing there to be a devout man and to be a loyal subject. Their laws, their government, and forms of worship, were prescribed by the Deity, who took cognisance of the behaviour of the rulers, and of the whole nation, and so superintended the execution of his own laws. Their history abounds with various manifest interpositions of the Deity. And though these were not so remarkable and frequent after the captivity as before, yet the theocracy still subsisted till the destruction of Jerusalem; which, taking place by virtue of the divine word on account of their impiety or disloyalty, shewed at once, in a most signal manner, that God had been their King, and that they were now abandoned by him.

This people, among whom the power of the divine word was so remarkably manifest, served as a standing memorial in the earth of that power by which all things are made and upheld; and to shew,

shew, that as God takes cognisance of the actions of men, so he will at last give judgment according to truth. But they also served for another purpose, no less momentous. They were trustees for the oracles of God, containing the promise and various pledges of salvation to mankind by the MESSIAH, with such previous descriptions of his person, character and work, as that, when he should appear, the fulfilment of the grand promise might shine forth with the clearest and most unexceptionable evidence. Among this people, if any where, sincere national piety might have been expected. All advantages were on the side thereof. Public and private happiness, in the enjoyment of all earthly blessings, was expressly connected with it. But so depraved did human nature appear, even when placed in the most advantageous circumstances, that the most eminent friends of God were the most remarkable sufferers, and the chief objects of the public hatred among them long before the Saviour appeared in the world. If the fire of opposition was thus *already kindled*, how must it flame forth when now the fulness of time was come, that the divine righteousness should be revealed among men by the appearance of Jesus Christ the Son of God?

He appeared at the time when it was presumed, that the national righteousness was carried to as high a pitch as could well be hoped for, till the grand complete reformation expected from the Messiah should take place. They were now thoroughly weaned from the gross idolatry of the
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the neighbouring nations ; they were zealous for the worship of one God ; they were ardent in their wishes and hopes for the sudden appearance of the Messiah, and as it were prepared to meet him. The expectation was general. They were full of the fond thoughts (like those which possess the minds of modern Christians concerning some future calling of the Jews and Gentiles) that the time was at hand, when piety and integrity, worldly peace and prosperity, issuing forth from their capital city, should overspread the earth. We may have some idea, then, of what the Jews were at that time, if we can represent to ourselves a Christian nation firmly persuaded of the near approach and in eager expectation of what we hear fondly called in sermons, and other writings, *The thrice-happy period, or, The best of æras.*

Yet in these very circumstances was the whole revelation made to the Jews, with their whole national constitution formed upon it, so corrupted, as to be pointed by them in the strongest opposition to him who was the great end and scope of it, JESUS the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Nor was this occasioned by any new disorder or insurrection, making a sudden breach of the constitution : No ; the venerable, the prime deputies in the theocracy, watchful over the public tranquillity, took the most cautious method of apprehending Jesus without tumult, solemnly condemned him, and stirred up the people to ask his death of the Roman governor. The whole
matter

matter was conducted according to the coolest sentiments of the nation, sentiments wherein they afterwards uniformly and steadily persisted, and such as still prevail in every nation called Christians.

The pride of their national righteousness made them despise the divine; yea, the very zeal they had for their law, made them oppose the end of it. Their table or altar, which was instituted for their feasting with God on his sacrifices, became a snare before them; and their happy national constitution, which should have been for their welfare, a trap to intangle them. In comparison with any other people, they had the advantage much every way; yet every advantageous circumstance in their favour they themselves industriously made use of to their own utter ruin. —But, not to multiply reflections where they occur so readily, what should hinder us Gentiles, who have now got the advantage on our side, to lay our hand to our hearts, and frankly return the acknowledgment once made in the name of the Jews by one of the foremost of them? *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise.*

AT the time we have been speaking of, as the opposition shewed itself in a new and clearer manner than formerly, so a new stile or form of expression was introduced, to distinguish the opposite sides. Till now, it had been most openly foreshewed or prefigured in the stated separation betwixt the favourite nation and all others. That
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nation was distinguished by the names of *Israel*, *Judab*, *the holy people*, *the seed of Abraham*, *the people of God*, &c. from all others, called in general *the nations*, or *the Heathen*, and *the families*, or *tribes who called not on the name of the true God*. But now, as no distinction was to be established betwixt any one earthly nation or body-politic and others ; and as the separation betwixt the two seeds, intimated by the Deity at the fall of man, was to be clearly manifested by the appearance of Him who was primarily pointed at by the designation of *the seed of the woman* ; as this separation, I say, was to take place in the midst of the favourite nation, it is evident that new names of distinction became necessary.

Jews, from *Judab*, was now the most common national name ; yet it should seem, that Jesus, in his doctrine, declines even to make use of this name, choosing rather to say, instead thereof, *The world*. I do not find that he ever used it in speaking to his disciples, or even to any of his own nation, except once in his answer to the high priest, after having first made mention of *the world* : John xviii. 20.—*I spake openly to THE WORLD ; I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the JEWS always resort, and in secret have I said nothing*. Nor do I find it mentioned by him to others on more than two occasions. 1st, When, in answer to the woman of Samaria, he says, John iv. 22. *Salvation is of the JEWS* ; and, 2^{dly}, To the Roman governor, John xviii. 36. *If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered*

delivered to the Jews.—He openly opposed their claim to the title of ABRAHAM'S *seed*; while he acknowledges ZACCHEUS the publican for a son of ABRAHAM. He sometimes mentions the name of *Israel*, yet we may find at the same time some hint of the restriction of his meaning. As, to take one instance for all, when Jesus said of NATHANIEL coming to him, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* The difference betwixt Israel after the flesh and Israel after the Spirit, began now to be explained. Agreeably to this, PAUL, opposing the boasting of the Jews, says, Rom. ii. 17. *Behold, thou art called a Jew;* and ver. 28, 29. *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, &c.*—Now also the difference of clean and unclean, which had so long subsisted betwixt the Jews and other nations, began to turn on its true hinge, when Jesus said to those who believed on him, *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

All other distinctions began now to give place to the capital one established betwixt *the world*, and Jesus with his *disciples*, to whom he said, *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me (πρωτον υμων) the first of you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* When Jesus was proved to be the *Christ* by his resurrection, and openly confessed as such by his disciples; and when they came to be joined by the uncircumcised at Antioch in the same confession, so could no more be distinguished as any

particular class of Jews, they were called *Christians*. This name, though it seems to have been given to them first by the world, was yet well received among themselves, being of the same import with the phrase (ὁ Χριστός) often used by PAUL to signify those *who are Christ's*, taken originally from the words of Jesus, *Mark ix. 41.*

As Jesus Christ stands at the head of all who are his, receiving worship from them as their God and King ; so he points forth the adversary as conducting all who are against him, and acting as the prince of this world ; even as PAUL calls him, in the same view, *The god of this world*. Thus we see how greatly the earthly theocracy was corrupted, when the favourite nation formed under it came to such a height of impiety and disloyalty, as to put to death the Son of God, the King of Israel, subjecting themselves to his adversary as *their prince and their god*.

UNDER the influence of the prince and god of this world, we find the Roman virtue, the devout zeal of the Pharisees, and the more enlarged sentiments of the Sadducees, all pointed against him, who is the adequate object of the fulness of the divine good pleasure and delight. Hence we may see, when PAUL came to know the dignity of the person who suffered on the cross, and observed there what aspect the world bore to the source of all his happiness, with how great propriety and majesty he said, *Far be it that I should*

should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. At the cross of Christ PAUL took his last leave of the world, and all that is admired in it. Hence he saw what he was to expect from it in his course of preaching salvation through that cross. But if the world, like a dying man, looked cold and averse to him, he was bold to profess himself fully even with it. He did not regret the want of its countenance; he enjoyed a ground of glorying, which made him look above it: And whatever other source of boasting men had to talk of, he was in readiness to despise it with full as great confidence as they were capable to do his.

The whole corruption of revelation, with every notion of the divine character opposite to the gospel, is in the New Testament called *the darkness of this world*. The adversary and his angels are called *the rulers of that darkness*. Agreeably to this, PAUL, speaking of those who with himself knew the grace of God in truth, says, Col. i. 12, 13. *Giving thanks unto his Father, — who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love* *.

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* *Son of his love*. Here, by the way, we may observe one reason why Jesus Christ is called the Son and image of God, and accordingly worshipped as God: For if the divine love was to be fully manifested to men by a gift equal to, or fully expressive of it, surely no less than a person of infinite dignity, a divine person, was fit to be the proper and adequate product thereof. Accordingly we find, that the scripture gives us no other measure of the divine love but this gift; and this gift is the full measure thereof. *God so loved the world, that he gave his Son.*

We have seen, then, whence the apostles learned to insist so much as they do in their writings, in declaring what is *of the world*, and what is *of God*; or, in other words, what is of the flesh, and what of the spirit: And in stating the opposition betwixt these in the strongest manner; and to be so diligent in animating Christians to fight the good fight of faith, and contend earnestly for it; and why they issued so many awful threatenings against all who went about by any kind of trimming, or reconciling methods, to quench the fire of that contention which Jesus Christ came to revive in the earth. Those who wanted to make a fair shew in the flesh, and sought to make Christianity more palatable to men, or less obnoxious to their hatred, that the offence of the cross might cease, gave the apostles the greatest disquiet. Though nothing is reckoned more idle and foolish by many called Christians, than a controversy about the faith; yet the great effect of the Spirit of truth on any man in whom he dwells, is to make him zealous in contending for it, and withal ready to bear patiently all the effects of the world's hatred and contempt of it. Thus he labours for the glory of God: Thus he shews the greatest good-will to men. PAUL spent his life in this contention, and he thought it well bestowed therein: *Yea*, (says he in his Epistle to the Philippians) *and if I be offered* (or poured out as a drink-offering) *upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.* And he urges these same Christians to zeal in this contention, after
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his example, as the great purpose for which they were gathered together into church-order; yea, as the principal characteristic of a conversation becoming the gospel. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: Which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.* But to proceed:

The new state of things, the kingdom or church erected by Jesus Christ, is the true heavenly and eternal theocracy, prefigured by the old earthly one, which passed away. This new kingdom received its form and establishment when the King thereof was anointed and seated on his throne; when the soul and body of the Son of God, wherein he became exceeding sorrowful unto death, were brought into the full possession and enjoyment of that glory and blessedness which he had with the Father before any thing was created. In consequence of this great event, all who from the beginning had died in the faith of the promise, with all who now on earth believed its accomplishment, were formed into one body under their common head by the Spirit, which was not given till Jesus was glorified. Now the spirits of just men were made

perfect, God having provided *some better thing for us*, (says PAUL to the Hebrews) that they without us should not be made perfect. They were happy before in the joyful expectation of the accomplishment of the promise; but as they could not see it accomplished, so they received not the grand thing promised till now. They had been from the beginning chosen to this kingdom, now they were incorporated into it. The holy angels are brought into a new order in this kingdom, and they enjoy greater happiness, by seeing more of the divine glory, while they act as servants to the Son of man in ministering to the heirs of salvation, than while they exercised the high powers given them in the earthly theocracy: *For unto the angels (says PAUL) hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

The seat of this kingdom is in heaven, and all the grand things spoken of Jerusalem, the seat of power and center of worship in the earthly theocracy, hold true in their fullest sense when applied to this; and they are constantly applied accordingly in the writings of the prophets explained by the apostles. Moreover, all the power of this kingdom is exercised by the King himself, without any deputies or representatives. This kingdom, then, cannot be moved; no enemy, no deceiver can approach to the seat of power, where all the interests of the kingdom are eternally secured.

But this kingdom, for the sake of its imperfect subjects, and for the sake of those who are chosen
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to be yet made subjects of it, makes likewise an appearance on the earth in the open profession of the faith in the world.

To support this open profession, that the truth might be retained in its simplicity among those who believed, that it might be confirmed by its genuine effects, and that the light thereof might shine before all men, societies were gathered in divers places, by the influence of the gospel on the minds of men, and formed by the inspired apostles into church-order, so as that each of them should be a representation, by itself, of Christ's kingdom in the city or region where it was gathered. Each of these societies, then, which were formed by the direction of the apostles, might justly be considered as a heavenly theocracy on earth. For as all the concerns of its union were heavenly, so in these it was subject to no jurisdiction under heaven. And indeed nothing less than the power of Christ's resurrection, and motives arising from the state of things beyond the grave, could preserve the members of such a society in fervent love to the truth, and patient suffering for it, and retain them in the order appointed them, the younger subject to the elder, and all of them one to another, in the fear of God.

Accordingly we find the names and descriptions of the one entire heavenly kingdom, commonly applied by the apostles to each of these societies, as, *The church of God, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ, &c.* In the beginning of the *Acts* of the Apostles we see with what divine

power and majesty the first of these was erected in Jerusalem. The glory which attended the erection of the earthly theocracy of old, was far excelled by what took place in this society. The minds of the people in the former were filled with the greatest dread and terror, the latter were filled with the greatest joy and confidence, even while under the most awful view of the divine purity and holiness.

But as many were capable of professing the faith, so fit to be received as members, who were but partially enlightened, so did not thoroughly understand the truth, so as to obey it from the heart; and as a natural bias against it still remained, even in the minds of those who did understand it; these societies were liable to be greatly corrupted, both as to their faith and order, and at length to be so far alienated from Christ, while professing his name, as to become the synagogues of his adversary. PAUL, writing to one of them, says, *I am jealous over you with the jealousy of God: For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from simplicity toward Christ.*

As to this appearance of the heavenly kingdom on the earth, both in respect of the persecution from without, and corruption from within, to which it is exposed, Christ is said as yet to rule in the midst of his enemies; and he continues to do so, till all his people, in conformity to him, who was made perfect through sufferings, be
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made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and their bodies raised from the dead to the full possession of it.

Against the heavenly kingdom, the adversary is represented as exerting his abilities to the utmost, to destroy all of it within his reach: For the ancient sentence passed upon him, in terms borrowed from the natural grovelling condition of the serpent, *Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*, confines his agency to the earth. He opposes this kingdom, by labouring to overthrow the truth, on which it is erected. Jesus, in answer to the question, *Art thou a king then?* Gave this account of his kingdom, *Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, beareth my voice.* The adversary makes it his business to change the divine truth into a lie. So we are told, the grand apostasy was to come by *his energy, with all power, and signs, and wonders of a lie.* And the reigning leaders in this apostasy, who are represented with crowns like gold on their heads, are said to have a king over them, whose name, the reverse of *Jesus*, is the *destroyer*. All who received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, but wished for a perverted gospel, to suit their pride and worldly lusts, now obtained it, and believed a lie to their destruction. Jesus Christ intimates no less, than that the power of deceit would be so great, that only the elect, and they scarcely, should escape it. The

power

power of deceit, which began to work even under the eyes of the apostles, has extended itself greatly since their days. So that false characters of God, false Christs, false spirits, have been revered for the true; yea, and all the sacred words of *grace, righteousness, atonement, holiness, &c.* have been applied to the basest counterfeits of what was anciently meant by them, and these counterfeits treated with all the respect due to the genuine originals.

Thus, by stratagem, as well as by open contempt, malice and violence, the adversary, with his seed, continues *to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*; till the resurrection of the dead, when he shall be divested of all power, and become a mere sufferer of punishment, on a level with the meanest of those who are deceived by him. So that those who fear not God, have no occasion, according to the popular notion, to dread any harm from him in the other world.

I have as yet spoken but sparingly, and in the general, of the Spirit of the truth, having described it hitherto, chiefly by shewing what is opposed to it. But a more particular consideration thereof will naturally occur afterward, in speaking of faith, and its effects.

IN the mean time, it may not be amiss here to take some view of the spirit which breathes in the religion of the present age, more especially, on the leading point of acceptance with God.

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And this I think we may have, by glancing at the writings of some few of those whose names are highly respected by the different classes among us.

I shall begin with those two great men who are amply recommended to our esteem, as humble disciples of Jesus Christ, in the manner following. “ The celebrated ERASMUS, and our judicious LOCKE, having trode the circle of sciences, and ranged through the whole extent of *human literature*, at length betook themselves solely to the *Bible*; leaving the sages of antiquity, they sat incessantly at the feet of Jesus *,” &c.

Thus speaks ERASMUS, in a small treatise against LUTHER †. — “ For though PAUL says, *Where sin hath abounded, grace also hath superabounded*; it does not therefore follow, that before one is by grace made acceptable, he may not, through divine assistance, prepare himself, by works morally good, for the divine favour, &c. I agree with their opinion, who ascribe a little to freewill, but very much to grace ‡.”

Mr LOCKE, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, shews at large from the scriptures, with great

* *Meditations*, vol. i. p. 151.

† Intituled, *De libero arbitrio collatio*.

‡ *Quonquam enim Paulus dicit, Ubi abundabit peccatum, superabundavit et gratia; non tum sequitur ex hoc, quod, ante gratiam gratum facientem, non possit homo, adjutus auxilio Dei, per opera moraliter bona, sese præparare favori divino, &c.*

— *Mibi placet illorum sententia, qui nonnihil tribuunt libero arbitrio, sed gratiæ plurimum.*

great perspicuity, that men obtained eternal life, believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. But not knowing the truth which the apostles understood by these words, so not finding any ground of acceptance with God in them, he very plainly rests our justification before God, on the homage we pay to him, in giving credit to any promise or truth he is pleased to reveal, as that ABRAHAM should have a son; or rather, in putting together these two words, and affirming, in any sense we please, that *Jesus is the Christ*, together with our best endeavours to obey the precepts delivered by him; from whom, beside a clearer declaration of our duty, and greater encouragements to virtue arising from the prospect of a future life, he proposes no other advantage to us, but that, *p. 289.* “If we do what we can, he will give us his Spirit to help us to do what, and how we should.” This, I think, is the scope and substance of the whole treatise. However, we may hear a few more of his own words, *p. 193.* “God dealt so favourably with the posterity of ADAM, that if they would believe JESUS to be the MESSIAH, the promised King and Saviour, and perform what other conditions were required of them by the covenant of grace, God would justify them, because of this belief. He would account this faith to them for righteousness, and look on it as making up the defects of their obedience; which being thus supplied by what was taken instead of it, they were looked on as just or righteous, and so inherited eternal life.” *p. 213.*

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“ The faith required was to believe JESUS to be
 “ the MESSIAH, the Anointed, who had been
 “ promised by God to the world. Amongst the
 “ Jews, (to whom the promises and prophecies
 “ were more immediately delivered) anointing
 “ was used to three sorts of persons, at their in-
 “ auguration, whereby they were set apart to
 “ three great offices, namely, of priests, prophets,
 “ and kings. Though these three offices be in
 “ holy writ attributed to our Saviour ; yet I do
 “ not remember that he any where assumes to
 “ himself the title of a priest, or mentions any
 “ thing relating to his priesthood. Nor does he
 “ speak of his being a prophet, but very sparingly,
 “ and once or twice as it were by the by. But
 “ the gospel, or the good news of the kingdom of
 “ the MESSIAH, is what he preaches every where,
 “ and makes it his great business to publish to
 “ the world.”

Pag. 244. — “ All, then, that was required
 “ before his appearing in the world, was to be-
 “ lieve what God had revealed, and to rely with
 “ a full assurance on God for the performance of
 “ his promise ; and to believe, that in due time he
 “ would send them the MESSIAH, this anointed
 “ King, this promised Saviour and deliverer, ac-
 “ cording to his word. This faith in the promises
 “ of God, this relying and acquiescing in his word
 “ and faithfulness, the Almighty takes well at our
 “ hands, as a great mark of homage paid by us
 “ poor frail creatures to his *goodness* and *truth*, as
 “ well as to his *power* and *wisdom* ; and accepts
 “ it as an acknowledgment of his peculiar provi-
 “ dence

“ dence and benignity to us. This oblation of
 “ an heart, fixed with dependence and affection
 “ on him, is the most acceptable tribute we can
 “ pay him, the foundation of true devotion, and
 “ life of all religion. What a value he puts on
 “ this depending on his word, and resting satisfied
 “ in his promises, we have an example in ABRA-
 “ HAM, whose faith *was counted to him for righ-*
 “ *teousness*, as we have before remarked out of
 “ *Romans iv.* And his relying firmly on the
 “ promise of God, without any doubt of its per-
 “ formance, gave him the name of *the father of*
 “ *the faithful*, and gained him so much favour
 “ with the Almighty, that he was called *the*
 “ *friend of God*; the highest and most glorious
 “ title that can be bestowed on a creature. The
 “ thing promised was no more but a son by his
 “ wife SARAH, and a numerous posterity by him,
 “ which should possess the land of CANAAN.
 “ These were but temporal blessings, and (except
 “ the birth of a son) very remote; such as he
 “ should never live to see, nor in his own person
 “ have the benefit of. But because he questioned
 “ not the performance of it, but rested fully satis-
 “ fied in the goodness, truth, and faithfulness of
 “ God who had promised; it was counted to him
 “ for righteousness,” &c.

Pag. 251. & seqq.— “ What shall become of
 “ all the rest of mankind, who, having never
 “ heard of the promise or news of a Saviour,
 “ not a word of a MESSIAH to be sent, or that
 “ was to come, have had no thought or belief
 “ concerning him? To this I answer, — The
 “ same

“ same spark of the divine nature and knowledge
 “ in man, which, making him a man, shewed
 “ him the law he was under as a man, shewed
 “ him also the way of atoning the merciful, kind,
 “ compassionate author and father of him and
 “ his being, when he had transgressed that law.
 “ He that made use of this candle of the Lord,
 “ so far as to find what was his duty, could not
 “ miss to find also the way to reconciliation and
 “ forgiveness, when he had failed of his duty :
 “ Though, if he used not his reason this way, if
 “ he put out, or neglected this light, he might
 “ perhaps see neither.

“ The law is the eternal, immutable standard
 “ of right. And a part of that law is, that a
 “ man should forgive, not only his children,
 “ but his enemies, upon their repentance, asking
 “ pardon, and amendment. And therefore he
 “ could not doubt, that the author of this law,
 “ and God of patience and consolation, who is
 “ rich in mercy, would forgive his frail offspring,
 “ if they acknowledged their faults, disapproved
 “ the iniquity of their transgressions, begged his
 “ pardon, and resolved in earnest for the future
 “ to conform their actions to this rule, which
 “ they owned to be just and right. This way
 “ of reconciliation, this hope of atonement, the
 “ light of nature revealed to them ; and the re-
 “ velation of the gospel, having said nothing to
 “ the contrary, leaves them to stand and fall to
 “ their own father and master, whose goodness
 “ and mercy is over all his works.

Pag. 290—295. “ There remains yet some-
 “ thing to be said to those who will be ready to
 “ object, If the belief of Jesus of *Nazareth* to
 “ be the MESSIAH, together with those conco-
 “ mitant articles of his resurrection, rule, and
 “ coming again to judge the world, be all the
 “ faith required as necessary to justification, to
 “ what purpose were the Epistles written? I say,
 “ if the belief of those many doctrines contained
 “ in them, be not also necessary to salvation?
 “ And if what is there delivered, a Christian may
 “ believe, or disbelieve, and yet nevertheless be a
 “ member of Christ’s church, and one of the
 “ faithful ?

“ To this I answer, That the Epistles were
 “ written upon several occasions. They were
 “ writ to those who were in the faith, and true
 “ Christians already : And so could not be de-
 “ signed to teach them the fundamental articles
 “ and points necessary to salvation. They were
 “ writ upon particular occasions, and without
 “ these occasions had not been writ ; and so cannot
 “ be thought necessary to salvation.” *Small edi-
 tion, London 1695.*

Such use did these two men make of the Bible, and such disciples of Jesus did they prove.

Let us next attend to Archbishop TILLOTSON, whose doctrine, since he wrote, has been heard from a thousand pulpits.

Folio volume of his works, London 1735, Serm.
 12. Of the inward peace and pleasure which
 attends

attends religion. Psal. cxix. 165. *Great peace have they which love thy law.*

— “ But now religion frees a man from all this
 “ torment [of guilt], either by preventing the
 “ cause of it, or directing to the cure ; either by
 “ preserving us from guilt, or clearing us of it,
 “ in case we have contracted it. It preserves us
 “ from guilt, by keeping us innocent ; and in case
 “ we have offended, it clears us of it, by leading
 “ us to repentance, and the amendment of our
 “ lives ; which is the only way to recover the
 “ favour of God, and the peace of our own
 “ consciences, and to secure us against all apprehension
 “ of danger from the divine justice ;
 “ though not absolutely from all fear of punishment
 “ in this world, yet from that which is the
 “ greatest danger of all, the condemnation and
 “ torment of the world to come. And by this
 “ means, a man’s mind is settled in perfect peace,
 “ religion freeing him from those tormenting fears
 “ which he can, upon no other terms, rid himself
 “ of : Whereas the sinner is always sowing the
 “ seeds of trouble in his own mind, and laying
 “ the foundation of continual discontent to himself.

— “ Now, whoever sincerely endeavours to
 “ please God, may rest perfectly assured, that God
 “ hath no displeasure against him ; for *the righteous*
 “ *Lord loveth righteousness,*” &c.

Sermon 13. The nature and benefit of consideration. Psal. cxix. 59. *I thought on my ways,*
 &c.

— “ The dismal thoughts of being miserable
 VOL. I. B b “ for

“ for ever, should effectually discourage any man
 “ from a wicked life. And this danger continually
 “ threatens the sinner, and may, if God be not
 “ merciful to him, happen to surprize him the
 “ next moment. And can we make too much
 “ haste to fly from so great and apparent a danger?
 “ When will we think of saving ourselves, if not
 “ when (for ought we know) we are upon the
 “ very brink of ruin, and just ready to drop into
 “ destruction?

“ 5. Upon this naturally follows, *a full con-*
 “ *viction of the necessity of quitting this wicked*
 “ *course.*

“ 6. Lastly, *an apprehension of the possibility of*
 “ *making this change.* God, who designed us for
 “ happiness at first, and after we had made a
 “ forfeiture of it by sin, was pleased to restore us
 “ again to the capacity of it, by the redemption
 “ of our blessed Lord and Saviour, has made
 “ nothing necessary to our happiness that is im-
 “ possible for us to do, either of ourselves, or by
 “ the assistance of that grace which he is ready
 “ to afford us, if we heartily beg it of him.
 “ For that is possible to us, which we may do
 “ by the assistance of another, if we may have
 “ that assistance for the asking: And God hath
 “ promised to give *his Holy Spirit to them that ask*
 “ *him.* So that, notwithstanding the great corrup-
 “ tion and weakness of our natures, since the grace
 “ of God which brings salvation hath appeared,
 “ it is not absolutely out of our power to leave
 “ our sins and turn to God: For that may truly
 “ be said to be in our power, which God hath pro-
 “ mised

“ mised to enable us to do, if we be not wanting
 “ to ourselves.

“ So there is nothing on God’s part to hinder
 “ this change. He hath solemnly declared, that
 “ he sincerely desires it; and that he is ready to
 “ assist our good resolutions to this purpose. And
 “ most certainly, when he tells, that *he hath no*
 “ *pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that*
 “ *he should turn from his wickedness, and live;*
 “ *that he would have all men to be saved, and to*
 “ *come to the knowledge of the truth;* that *he would*
 “ *not that any should perish, but that all should*
 “ *come to repentance;* he means plainly as he saith,
 “ and doth not speak to us with any private re-
 “ serve, or nice distinction between his secret
 “ and revealed will; that is, he doth not decree
 “ one thing, and declare the contrary, &c. I do
 “ not say that this change is perfectly made at
 “ once. In the usual and settled methods of
 “ God’s grace, evil habits are mastered and
 “ subdued by degrees, and with a great deal of
 “ conflict; and many times after they are routed,
 “ they rally, and make head again; and it is a
 “ great while before the contrary habits of grace
 “ and virtue are grown up to any considerable
 “ degree of strength and maturity, and before a
 “ man comes to that confirmed state of goodness,
 “ that he may be said to have conquered and
 “ mortified his lusts. But yet this ought not to
 “ discourage us: For so soon as we have seriously
 “ begun this change, we are in a good way, and
 “ all our endeavours will have the acceptance of
 “ good beginnings, and God will be ready to help

“ us ; and if we pursue our advantages, we shall
 “ every day gain ground, and the work will
 “ grow easier upon our hands ; and we, who
 “ moved at first with so much slowness and diffi-
 “ culty, shall after a while be enabled to run the
 “ way of God’s commandments with pleasure
 “ and delight.”

Sermon 31. The parable of the ten virgins. —

“ In such dreadful confusion shall all impenitent
 “ sinners be, when they shall be surprised by that
 “ *great and terrible day of the Lord* : And the
 “ case of a *dying sinner*, who would take no care
 “ in the time of his life and health to make pre-
 “ paration for another world, is not much more
 “ hopeful and comfortable.

“ For, alas ! How little is it that a sick and
 “ dying man can do in such a strait of time ? In
 “ the midst of so much pain and weakness of
 “ body, and of such confusion and amazement of
 “ mind ? With what heart can he set about so
 “ great a work, for which there is so little time ?
 “ With what face can he apply himself to God
 “ in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully
 “ neglected all the days of his life ? And how
 “ can he have the confidence to hope, that God
 “ will hear his cries, and regard his tears, that
 “ are forced from him in this day of his neces-
 “ sity ? When he is conscious to himself, that,
 “ in that *long day of God’s grace and patience*,
 “ he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invita-
 “ tions, and rejected the counsel of God against
 “ himself : In a word, how can he who *would not*
 “ *know in that his day the things which belonged*
 “ to

“ *to his peace*, expect any other, but that they
 “ should now be *for ever bid from his eyes*,
 “ which are ready to be closed in utter dark-
 “ nefs?

“ I will not pronounce any thing concerning
 “ the impossibility of a *deathbed-repentance*; but
 “ I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe
 “ very rare. We have but one example, that I
 “ know of, in the whole *Bible* of the repentance
 “ of a dying sinner; I mean that of the *penitent*
 “ *thief* upon the *cross*: And the circumstances of
 “ his case are so singular and extraordinary, that
 “ I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope
 “ and encouragement to men in ordinary cases.
 “ We are not like to suffer in the company of the
 “ *Son of God*, and of the Saviour of the world;
 “ and if we could do so, it is not certain that we
 “ should behave ourselves towards him so well
 “ as the *penitent thief* did, and make so very good
 “ an end of so very bad a life.

“ And the parable in the text is so far from
 “ giving any encouragement to a *deathbed repen-*
 “ *tance* and *preparation*, that it rather represents
 “ their case as desperate, who put off their *pre-*
 “ *paration* to that time.”

Thus preacheth the Archbishop, in a manner easy to be understood.

Let us now hear that learned philosopher and critic, whose sentiments are warmly recommended to the attention of the public by not a few writers, JOHN HUTCHINSON, Esq;

This gentleman, by his skill in the Hebrew language, takes upon him roundly to oppose the

apostolic doctrine concerning the divine sovereignty, the person of Christ, and acceptance with God

Vol. 3. Introduction to Moses's—sine Principio, p. 90. “ We are to consider the state God, in
 “ respect to these adversaries [*the angels who fell*],
 “ put man into at the first ; as if he had said,
 “ (if it was before their fall), before his angels ;
 “ (if it was after their fall), before the angels who
 “ stood, and those who fell ; as he did in the case
 “ of the trial of JOB, where both are mentioned :
 “ *I will create another system, and another race of*
 “ *creatures, to be called man, who shall have powers*
 “ *and opportunities vastly inferior to what you*
 “ *have, and only give him a small degree of in-*
 “ *struction and information, compared with what*
 “ *you have had ; so not a match for any of you who*
 “ *have fallen, or who shall fall : I shall give him*
 “ *a law ; and (if one may presume to say) without*
 “ *farther interposition on either side, he shall per-*
 “ *severe in love and obedience to me, to reproach*
 “ *any of you, and be a rule to judge and punish*
 “ *any of you by who have fallen, or shall fall ; and*
 “ *if any of you who have fallen, or who shall fall,*
 “ *and persist, and so tempt and seduce man, and he*
 “ *shall repent, that will be a just reason to exclude*
 “ *you from mercy, and admit him into new terms,*
 &c.

Vol. 7. Hebrew writings perfect, p. 353, 354.
 “ And as ADAM was upon terms of salvation,
 “ and God willeth not the death of a sinner, but
 “ rather that he should return, believe, do his
 “ part, and live ; therefore I must rectify the
 “ con-

“ construction of the adverbs עַתָּה and פֶּן, *Gen.*
 “ ii. 22. which they make *nunc ne forte*, a pro-
 “ hibition, a negative, which prohibited the
 “ means of eternal life; because rectifying it de-
 “ stroys the purport of all the Jewish forgeries,
 “ and puts an end to the disputes about prede-
 “ stination, which have disturbed the church,
 “ formed most of the sects; shews what was then
 “ the only means of recovering eternal life; and
 “ shews, that man had not forfeited or lost the
 “ power of coming into the terms proposed;
 “ which I cannot forbear mentioning, though it
 “ be not in my design to illustrate it now.” Then,
 after rendering עַתָּה, *yet, by and by, at length*; and
 פֶּן, the action of a person in doubt, *fortassis,*
perhaps, and producing authorities, he proceeds,
 “ so at length, possibly, he may exert his power,
 “ and lay hold also of the tree of lives, and eat,
 “ and live for ever.”

Vol. 8. Use of reason recovered by the data in
Christianity, p. 49. “ Where pride hath entered,
 “ it is hard to plead guilty. When that is allow-
 “ ed, it is hard to own, that a man hath no share
 “ in saying [for *saving*, I suppose] himself so
 “ and so only; hard to be believed, that believing
 “ only intitles a man to take the benefit: So by
 “ reason of these difficulties, and for attributing
 “ what is due to the *Alcim*, faith is made the part
 “ of man.”

Vol. 9. Use of reason, &c. part 2. p. 64, 65.
 “ The plea by which those fools (*the loose thinkers*)
 “ have imposed upon the vulgar, is contained in
 “ the unstated, undetermined words of liberty,
 B b 4 “ freedom,

“ freedom, &c. State the case, and those words
 “ are for us. Man has the power of things
 “ within his reach, to do what he will; if God
 “ have laid down terms of salvation, and *è contra*
 “ (*he has the power*) to save or destroy himself,”
 &c.

Vol. 8. Use of reason, part 1. p. 13. “ Such
 “ illiterate creatures have forged a notion of
 “ predestination, which is, if possible, more in-
 “ jurious to the *Aleim* and men. If we could
 “ see as Jehovah *Aleim* see, we should see how
 “ they foresee, how every free agent will behave
 “ himself; particularly which will reject, and
 “ which will accept their gracious terms of
 “ salvation; and we should not compare or
 “ measure their infinite wisdom and justice by the
 “ share of wisdom it was just for them to give,
 “ or give means to attain, to a free creature in
 “ perfection; much less to that which remains in
 “ our present corrupted state; and presume to
 “ charge them with predestinating free agents to
 “ be some eternally happy, and some eternally
 “ miserable, but each humbly acknowledge,”
 &c.

Ibid. p. 17, 18. “ A created intelligent agent
 “ cannot be free, without liberty to choose; so to
 “ take life or death, happiness or misery: So the
 “ great ones could not before, or at the creation
 “ of any free agent, decree it to be happy or
 “ miserable.”

Ibid. p. 35, 36. “ I have shewed, that Chris-
 “ tianity had its institution by a conditional co-
 “ venant and oath between the *Rubbim* before this
 “ world

“ world was created ; that one *Rub* engaged for
 “ men, if the first fell, to become surety for the
 “ person he should choose to inhabit, and for his
 “ brethren who came into the terms, to com-
 “ municate power to him for his performing
 “ obedience, atoning for them, &c. and for their
 “ performing such services as should intitle them
 “ to the benefits of that atonement, &c. ; and
 “ another *Rub* engaged to influence, persuade the
 “ soul, the mind of that person, by outward and
 “ inward means, to qualify himself for the un-
 “ dertaking voluntarily ; first to reject the baits of
 “ Satan, to perform perfect obedience, to give up
 “ himself for a sacrifice ; and others to relinquish
 “ Satan, to separate themselves from all things
 “ offensive, and to qualify themselves to accept
 “ the benefits.”

So much for this author's character of the
 Deity. Let us now hear his account of the person
 and work of Christ, whom he commonly designs
 a *compound* and a *double* person.

Vol. 6. Glory or gravity, p. 219, 220. “ As
 “ Christ was compounded of two persons, and as
 “ he and the inspired writers of the New Testa-
 “ ment sometimes spoke in or of one person,
 “ sometimes of the other, sometimes of the joint
 “ persons ; when those distinctions are made,
 “ however [taken running] they appear to thwart
 “ each other, and be inconsistent, they will then
 “ appear to be strictly and properly spoken.
 “ God, the second person, was named *Glory* ;
 “ had by covenant laid down that glory, till he
 “ had performed his part, which that was not
 “ con-

“ consistent with here, and was then to reassume
 “ it ; the man, who alone had always other
 “ titles given to him, was to be taken into the
 “ glory, so to have glory given to him ; both,
 “ then, to have it ascribed to them as one per-
 “ son.

Ibid. supra, p. 201. “ So, in distinction to the
 “ essence, which was the glory, had laid it down
 “ or veiled it, taken on flesh, through which
 “ only the splendor appeared for the time, but
 “ had power to reassume his glory ; and the man-
 “ hood, who was to appear like a servant, was to
 “ suffer, was to be raised, and taken more im-
 “ mediately into the essence, and with it to be
 “ glorified.”

Ibid. p. 256, 257. “ As the Word is God, that
 “ it may not seem strange, that he is said typically
 “ to be cut off, it was fact that the God was cut
 “ off from אֱלֹהִים the man at his death, and till his
 “ resurrection.”

*Vol. 6. Remarks upon the observations on a
 sermon, &c. p. 253, 254.* Mr HUTCHINSON re-
 presents the humanity as saying to the Divinity,
 or the human saying to the divine Person, what
 we render, *My God, my God, why hast thou for-
 saken me ?* “ He that left the manhood, אֱלֹהִים,
 “ was, surely, according to our ideas of things,
 “ and according to the words of the law, an
 “ execration ; notwithstanding that, when it was
 “ performed, it was by covenant to intitle that
 “ person to have the glory of redeeming, ruling,
 “ and saving those who accepted and came into
 “ the

“the benefit, nay, to be the glory of the
“*Alcim.*”

In whatever sense this author maintains his Θ_{105} was an *execration*; yet it is evident, that, according to his representation of the fact of Christ's death, and the account he gives of his dying words, it was not a divine, but only a human person, that suffered and died. Yea, if we attend to this author, we must all along think of him who was born of the Virgin only as a human person, inhabited by the Deity in some eminent manner beyond other faints. Thus all his swelling words about the atonement vanish into smoke, while he presents us only with the obedience of a human person. But as every *heretic is condemned of himself*, we have a pretty strong condemnation of this learned gentleman from his own mouth, *vol. 6. Glory or gravity, p. 235.* “Those
“who expect to be saved by a creature, or a
“dependent being, have shewed themselves illi-
“terate, so ignorant, so proud, so malicious,”
&c.

This author, who boasts much of his knowledge of the Old Testament, and is gloried in, as having taken off the veil from it, makes the following confession, *vol. 6. Glory or gravity, p. 242.* “I pretend not yet to be sufficiently pre-
“pared to explain the New Testament, nor do
“I design to attempt going further now, than
“just to hint the manner of wording that affair”
[the Trinity, and the person of Christ]. He had indeed done less harm to many, had he contented himself with the amusement of accommodating
Hebrew

Hebrew words to his scheme of philosophy, and not meddled with things for which he was sensible he was not prepared. The apostolic writings were by far too vulgarly simple and plain to be understood by a genius like his.

As this author's persecuting principles are well known, I need not quote the many passages wherein they are warmly maintained. I shall only observe, that he carries them to a remarkable height, when he affirms in his *Religion of Satan*, p. 105. That "a man who is not a real Christian, "is not qualified to be a member of society." All the arguments for persecution, used by this author, or by any other, may, I think, be thus shortly summed up. Because the Sovereign of the universe, who laid upon men his law, requiring godliness and humanity, thought fit for the breaches of that law to destroy the old world by a flood, Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, the Canaanites by the sword of Joshua, 185,000 in the Assyrian camp by the ministry of an angel, Jerufalem by the sword of the Romans, and Lisbon lately by an earthquake ; and will at last judge all the world in righteousness : Therefore we are warranted, each of us, to set up for a deity, and, in direct opposition to all godliness and humanity, thirst after one another's blood, according as we are led by our own caprice.

As this author breathes the very same temper with the apostate Jews, though he fell into a violent quarrel with them about his philosophy, and the sense of some words ; if we would become

come proper followers of his, we must study the Hebrew language according to his rules, in order that we may be enabled, with an air of profound learning, to renounce all the principles of godliness and humanity. It is happy for the learned followers of this author, that they happen to live among such illiterate neighbours as have been taught more humanity from the English Bible, than they from the Hebrew; otherwise they would soon lose their heads for the most impious heresy.

I shall now take some notice of two renowned gentlemen, who having been considered among the Dissenters as a kind of trustees for the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, have shewn themselves most unworthy of the confidence reposed in them, by their complaisantly yielding up the most obnoxious of those doctrines for the sake of their reputation in the polite world; and that in such a sly manner, as to lose as little as possible of their weight and influence among the more strictly religious and devout: I mean Dr ISAAC WATTS and Dr PHILIP DODDRIDGE.

The former, not content with yielding up the apostolic account of Christ as a divine person, has conspired with the latter to overthrow the gospel-doctrine of faith, and the imputed righteousness, in a treatise called *The rise and progress of religion in the soul*; which, being written by the one, and planned and revised by the other, may justly be considered as the joint production of both. But let us hear them separately. As to the account Dr WATTS gives of the person of Christ, I shall

I shall content myself with quoting a few words from his treatise called, *The Christian doctrine of the Trinity*, printed 1722. In p. 181. he says, “ By the appointment of the Father, the divine nature dwells in *Jesus the Son of man*, who of himself, and in himself, is but a man, and *could do nothing.*”

I need not here take notice of what this author has published since, in support of what is now quoted ; nor set forth at large his notion of the pre-existence and peculiar origin of the human soul of Jesus Christ, wherein he makes the great dignity of his person to consist. I shall rather proceed to take notice of his doctrine about acceptance with God.

In a book called *Evangelical discourses on several subjects*, octavo, London 1747, discourse 7. intitled, *God in Christ is the Saviour of all the ends of the earth ; or, Faith represented in its lowest degrees*, on Isaiah xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved*, he says, “ 2. Believing in Christ may be represented in this place, by *looking to him*, to express *the lowest and the weakest degree of faith*, for the encouragement of poor convinced trembling sinners. When persons are awakened to a lively apprehension of their guilt, and a quick sense of their danger, and see themselves every moment liable to perish under the wrath of an offended God, and at the same time find their own utter inability to save themselves ; it is proper that the *act of faith whereby we are saved*, should be expressed in the easiest manner, that we may allure them
“ to-

“ toward Christ, the only Saviour, and may en-
 “ courage them to hope. When they are as it
 “ were at *the ends of the earth*, at a wide distance
 “ from *God and Christ*, they may look towards
 “ him, and send a wish of desire and dependence
 “ that way; like *dying drowning sailors in a storm*,
 “ that look towards the shore, to see if there be
 “ any hope. And such a look as this is ordained
 “ of God, to derive all salvation from so almighty
 “ and complete a Saviour as Jesus Christ is: For it
 “ contains in it the whole nature of saving faith,
 “ as the flower and the fruit are contained in a
 “ little green bud, though the several parts, and
 “ the leaves of them, are not yet unfolded, nor
 “ appear to sight.

“ Such a look of a convinced sinner to *Christ*,
 “ implies in it a distressing sense of his sin and
 “ present danger; a belief that there is help for
 “ him in Christ, and an aversion of the eye from
 “ every thing else; a renouncing of all other de-
 “ pendencies, an earnest readiness and desire to
 “ partake of this salvation, such as Christ offers it;
 “ that is, to make him holy as well as happy; and
 “ it includes also thus much of *trust* or confidence,
 “ that if the soul has any hope at all of its own
 “ salvation, Christ is the only ground of this *hope*.
 “ There is and will be some sort of *expectation* of
 “ relief from the hand to which we look when
 “ we see ourselves perishing.

“ 3. *Looking to Christ* for salvation, is a word
 “ that shews how little hand we have in our de-
 “ liverance from sin and death,” &c. “ But some
 “ poor trembling sinner will be ready to say,
 “ Surely

“ Surely this is so little and so low an act of faith,
 “ that I am ready to question whether this can
 “ save me or no: How shall I know whether my
 “ *looking to Christ* is of that kind as shall be effec-
 “ tual to my salvation ?

“ Now, in answer to such an inquiry, let the
 “ fearful soul remember what I have said before,
 “ under the *second particular*, concerning the
 “ several acts of the soul that are secretly included
 “ in this *looking to Jesus*, and ask itself, whether
 “ it has put forth these acts or no? Besides this,
 “ I would mention also these two *properties of*
 “ *saving faith*, as it is described by *looking*.

“ 1st, It must be such a *look* as immediately
 “ *affects the heart with love and sorrow* ; *sorrow*
 “ *for our sins, and love to Christ our Saviour*. 2^{dly},
 “ It must be such a *look as changes the soul and*
 “ *temper into another image, even the image of*
 “ *Christ*. A saving look of faith to our Lord Jesus
 “ Christ, will happily influence all the powers
 “ of nature, and all the actions of life. This is
 “ seldom done indeed at once, but by slow de-
 “ grees,” &c.

Let us now hear Dr DODDRIDGE in his *Family-Expositor*, on Acts v. 31. *Him bath God exalted, &c.* The paraphrase runs thus: “ But this very
 “ person, notwithstanding all the outrage with
 “ which you treated *him*, *bath God exalted at his*
 “ *own right hand*, [to be] *a Prince and Saviour*
 “ to his people ; *to give repentance*, or to send
 “ terms of peace and reconciliation by him, even
 “ *unto Israel*, by whom he had been so ungrate-
 “ fully insulted and abused, *and to bestow on*
 “ those

“ those that shall repent the free and full *remission*
 “ of all their aggravated *sins*.”

Rom. ix. 30. *What shall we say then, &c.* —
 Paraphrase, “ *What shall we then say in the con-*
 “ clusion of the whole argument? Surely this,
 “ *that the Gentiles, who pursued not after righte-*
 “ *ousness, who had a little while ago no know-*
 “ ledge or expectation of it, and no desire after
 “ it, have now, to their own unspeakable surprise,
 “ and that of the whole world, *attained to right-*
 “ *eousness, that is, to the profession of a religion*
 “ whereby they may be justified and saved;
 “ *even the righteousness which is by faith in the*
 “ gospel; and consists in humbly committing the
 “ soul to Christ in the way that he hath appoint-
 “ ed.”

I shall now produce for a specimen of the Scots popular preachers, these three remarkable gentlemen, Messieurs GUTHRIE, BOSTON, and E. ERSKINE.

Mr GUTHRIE, in his *Trial of a saving interest in Christ*, part i. chap. 7. *Of faith*, after having told us in some respects what faith is not, proceeds thus: “ I say, true justifying faith is not any of
 “ the foresaid things; NEITHER IS IT SIMPLY
 “ THE BELIEVING OF ANY SENTENCE THAT IS
 “ WRITTEN, OR THAT CAN BE THOUGHT UPON.”
 This I recommend as a saying worthy to be kept in remembrance by all readers and hearers of the popular doctrine.

In part ii. chap. 8. *Of covenanting with God*, he says, “ Go speedily, and search for his offers of
 “ peace and salvation in the scripture, and work

“ up your heart and soul to close with them,
 “ and with Christ in them, and with God in
 “ Christ ; and do it so as you may have this to
 “ say, That you were serious, and in earnest, and
 “ cordial here, as ever you were in any thing to
 “ your apprehension ; and, for ought you know,
 “ Christ is the choice of your heart, at least you
 “ neither know nor allow any thing to the con-
 “ trary ; whereupon your heart doth appeal unto
 “ God, to search and try if there be ought amiss,
 “ to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

“ Now, this cleaving of the heart unto him,
 “ and casting itself upon him, to be saved in his
 “ way, is believing ; which doth indeed secure a
 “ man from the wrath that is to come, because
 “ now he hath *received Christ, and believeth on*
 “ *him, and so shall not enter into condemnation,*
 “ as saith the scripture.”

Mr BOSTON, in his *Human nature in its four-
 fold state*, near the close of *State 2.* answering
 some objections upon man’s natural inability to
 recover himself by *obeying the gospel*, writes thus.

“ *Object. 1.* If we be under an *utter inability*
 “ to do any good, how can God require us to do it ?
 “ *Ans.* God *making man upright*, Eccles. vii. 29.
 “ gave him a *power* to do every thing he should
 “ require of him. This power man lost by his
 “ own fault. Now, we having, by our own fault,
 “ *disabled* ourselves, shall God lose his right of
 “ requiring our task, because we have thrown
 “ away the strength he gave us wherewithal to
 “ perform it ? &c.

“ *Object. 2.* Why do you then preach Christ
 “ to

“ to us ; call us to come to him, to believe, re-
 “ pent, and use the means of salvation ? *Ans.*
 “ Because it is your *duty* so to do. It is your duty
 “ to accept of Christ as he is offered in the gospel ;
 “ to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all
 “ manner of conversation. These things are
 “ commanded you of God ; and his *command*,
 “ not your *ability*, is the measure of your duty.
 “ Finally, Though ye cannot recover yourselves,
 “ nor take hold of the saving help offered to you
 “ in the gospel ; yet, even by the *power of nature*,
 “ ye may use the outward and ordinary means,
 “ whereby Christ communicates the benefits of
 “ redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly
 “ unable to recover themselves out of the *state* of
 “ *sin and wrath*. Ye may, and can, if ye please,
 “ do many things that would set you in a fair
 “ way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. Ye
 “ may go so far on, as to be *not far from the*
 “ *kingdom of God*, as the *discreet scribe* had done,
 “ Mark xii. 34. though (it would seem) he was
 “ destitute of *supernatural* abilities. Though ye
 “ cannot *cure* yourselves, yet ye may *come* to the
 “ *pool*, where many such diseased persons as ye are
 “ have been cured : Though ye have none to put
 “ you *into* it, yet ye may *lie* at the *side* of it ;
 “ and *who knows but the Lord may return and*
 “ *leave a blessing behind him* ; as in the case of the
 “ impotent man, recorded John v. 5—8. ? I hope
 “ Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor
 “ stake you down in your fields, on the Lord’s
 “ day ; but ye are at liberty, and can wait at *the*
 “ *posts of Wisdom’s doors*, if ye will, &c. These

“ things are within the compass of *natural abili-*
 “ *ties*, and may be practised where there is no
 “ *grace*. It must aggravate your guilt, that you
 “ *will* not be at so much *pains* about the state and
 “ case of your precious souls: And if ye do not
 “ what ye *can* do, ye will be condemned, not
 “ only for your *want* of grace, but for your *de-*
 “ *spising* of it.

“ *Object.* 3. But all this is needless, seeing we
 “ are utterly unable to help ourselves out of *the*
 “ *state of sin and wrath*. *Ans.* Give not place to
 “ that delusion, which puts asunder what God
 “ hath joined, namely, the use of *means*, and a
 “ sense of our own *impotency*. If ever the Spirit
 “ of God graciously influence your souls, ye will
 “ become thoroughly sensible of your absolute
 “ *inability*, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of
 “ *means*. Ye will do for yourselves as if ye were
 “ to do *all*; and yet *overlook* all ye do, as if ye
 “ had done *nothing*. - Will ye do *nothing* for your-
 “ selves, because ye cannot do *all*? Lay down no
 “ such impious conclusion against your own souls.
 “ Do what you *can*; and it may be, while ye are
 “ doing what ye *can* for yourselves, God will do
 “ for you what ye *cannot*. *Understandest thou*
 “ *what thou readest?* said PHILIP to the *Eunuch*.
 “ *How can I*, saith he, *except some man should*
 “ *guide me?* Acts viii. 30, 31. He could not
 “ *understand* the scripture he read; yet he could
 “ *read* it: He did what he *could*, he *read*; and
 “ while he was reading, God sent him an inter-
 “ preter. The Israelites were in a great strait at
 “ the Red-sea: And how could they help them-
 “ selves,

“ selves, when upon the *one* hand were moun-
 “ tains, and on the *other* the enemies garrison ;
 “ when PHARAOH and his host were *behind*
 “ them, and the Red-sea *before* them ? What
 “ could they do ? *Speak unto the children of Israel,*
 “ *saith the Lord to MOSES, that they go forward,*
 “ *Exod. xiv. 15.* For what end should they go
 “ *forward* ? Can they make a passage to them-
 “ selves through the sea ? No. But let them go
 “ *forward*, saith the Lord. Though they cannot
 “ turn sea to dry land, yet they can go forward
 “ to the shore. And so they did. And when
 “ they did what they *could*, God did for them
 “ what they *could* not do.”

Near the end of *Head 1.* of *State 3.* we have
 a very good view how the popular doctrine makes
 the gospel subservient to human pride, as its tool,
 or as a means for producing those exercises of soul
 wherein justifying faith is made to consist. The
Advices to the unregenerate are thus concluded.
 “ Were these things deeply rooted in the heart,
 “ they might be the *seed* of that *fear* and *sorrow*,
 “ on account of thy soul’s state, which are ne-
 “ cessary to prepare and stir thee up to look after
 “ a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon him offered
 “ to thee in the gospel, as fully suited to thy case ;
 “ having, by his obedience to the death, perfectly
 “ satisfied the justice of God, and brought in
 “ *everlasting righteousness.* This may prove the
 “ *seed* of *humiliation*, *desire*, *hope*, and *faith* ; and
 “ put thee on to stretch out the withered hand
 “ unto him, at his own command.”

Instead of making any remarks on the treatise

from whence this quotation is made, I shall here subjoin the commendation given of it in the *Dialogues*, vol. ii. p. 30. The note at the foot of the page, after making a particular reference to this treatise, proceeds to commend it thus:—

“ Which, in my opinion, is one of our best
 “ books for common readers. The sentences are
 “ short, and the comparisons striking. The
 “ language is easy, and the doctrine evangelical.
 “ The method proper, the plan comprehensive,
 “ the manner searching, yet consolatory. — If
 “ another celebrated treatise is stiled, *The whole*
 “ *duty of man*, I would call this *The WHOLE of*
 “ *man*; as it comprises—what he *was* originally,
 “ —what he *is* by transgression, — what he *should*
 “ *be* through grace, — and then what he *will be*
 “ in glory.”

MR E. ERSKINE, *On the assurance of faith*, chap. 6. says, — “ And this very committing of the
 “ work of faith unto him, from a sense of your
 “ own inability, is that believing which we urge
 “ and call you to, &c.

“ Unbelief and carnal reason are ready to argue,
 “ because God by his Spirit must do all, therefore
 “ we will sit still and do nothing. But the Spirit
 “ of God, whose reasonings I am sure are infinitely
 “ better, argues after a quite different manner,
 “ *Phil. ii. 13. Work out the work of your salvation*
 “ *with fear and trembling. For it is God that*
 “ *worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own*
 “ *good pleasure.* O what glorious encouragement
 “ is here, for a poor impotent sinner to essay and
 “ mint at believing! Here is the *arm* of omnipo-
 “ tency,

“ tency, reaching forth itself for thy help and
 “ through-bearing in the work he calls thee to.
 “ Up therefore and be doing: For *thy God com-*
 “ *mands thy strength*, and therefore let him be the
 “ *glory of thy strength*.

“ But, say you, seeing we cannot *work* the
 “ work of faith, why does he yet *command* it?
 “ Is it not a hardship to require of us what we
 “ have no ability to do? *Ans.* Why do you send
 “ your little children to school, with the A, B, C,
 “ in their hands, before they can read one letter?
 “ You do not think it a hardship to put the book
 “ in their hand, and bid them read, though they
 “ know not a letter, because you offer to teach
 “ them yourself, or by another in your place.—
 “ It is God’s ordinary way to come and join with
 “ the poor soul, and enable it to believe, while,
 “ in obedience to his command, it is minding to
 “ believe in Christ. Like a kind master of a
 “ school, when the child, in obedience to him,
 “ takes the pen in his hand, and scribbles the best
 “ way he can, the master takes his hand in his,
 “ and leads and learns him to write. So when
 “ we take, as it were, the pen in our hand, and
 “ offer to write, at his command, he takes our
 “ hand in his, directing, strengthening, and ena-
 “ bling us to believe. So that, if there be but
 “ a willing mind to this work, it is accepted.
 “ Where he gives to *will*, he will also give to *do*
 “ of his good pleasure. These two are inseparably
 “ connected in the order of God’s covenant.

“ But you may still object, All the endeavours
 “ of a natural man are still but natural and sinful

“ actions; and will ever God concur, by his
 “ almighty power, with the acts or endeavours
 “ of nature? *Ans.* Although God be not obliged
 “ to concur with the endeavours of nature; yet
 “ such is his grace, love, and good-will toward
 “ man upon earth, such is the strength of his
 “ desire after our salvation, such pleasure has he
 “ in a sinner’s believing, such a regard has he to
 “ what he himself has commanded, that we find
 “ him many times actually concurring with the
 “ poor helpless sinner, in his impotent mints at
 “ obedience to what he calls for. It was no gra-
 “ cious principle that moved NAAMAN the Syrian
 “ to go wash in the waters of Jordan; yet, be-
 “ cause he did what was commanded, God was
 “ pleased to concur with the mean of his own
 “ appointment, and cured his leprous body; and,
 “ for ought I know, his soul also. Let us believe
 “ as we can, in obedience to God’s command,
 “ and in a dependence upon his almighty power;
 “ and while we are doing so, although the act be
 “ at the beginning but natural, yet, in the very
 “ acting, promised and purchased grace strikes in,
 “ and turns it into a supernatural act of believing.
 “ As when Christ was about to work that famous
 “ miracle at Cana in Galilee, he does not first
 “ turn the water into wine; but he first bids
 “ them pour out the water, and, in pouring of
 “ it out, the water was changed into wine. So
 “ the *loaves* were multiplied, while the disciples,
 “ in obedience to the command of Christ, were
 “ dividing them among the multitude. Just so
 “ here, while the poor soul, in a subordination
 “ to

“ to the divine power, and in obedience to the
 “ divine command, is attempting to believe, a
 “ God of grace changes the attempt into a true
 “ genuine faith ; so that the soul, through the
 “ mighty power of God, ere ever it is aware, is
 “ brought really to believe, and that in a way it
 “ knows not how ; for *the wind blows where it*
 “ *listeth.*—Thus, I say, in the very acting of faith,
 “ we are enabled to act it ; when we take the pen
 “ in our hand, God takes us by the hand, and
 “ writes for us, leading us in the *way we know*
 “ *not.*”

I shall likewise content myself here, with sub-
 joining the general encomium given to the writings
 of this author, in the *Dialogues*, vol. iii. p. 310.
 The note at the foot of the page, after a parti-
 cular reference to his doctrine on the *assurance of*
faith, proceeds thus. “ Was I to read in order
 “ to refine my taste, or improve my stile ; I
 “ would prefer Bp ATTERBURY’S Sermons, Dr
 “ BATES’S Works, or Mr SEED’S Discourses. But
 “ was I to read with a single view to the edifica-
 “ tion of my heart, in true faith, solid comfort,
 “ and evangelical holiness ; I would have recourse
 “ to Mr ERSKINE, and take his volumes for my
 “ tutor.”

To shew the extensive influence of the popular
 doctrine about acceptance with God, even on the
 minds of those who have had abilities and courage
 to combat many popular opinions, I shall take
 notice of one remarkable instance, the author
 of the *Fable of the bees*. This author’s main
 doc-

doctrine*, about the corruption of human nature, being the same with that taught by the scripture, has proved extremely provoking, both to fools and to philosophers, making the latter lose all their boasted coolness of temper. The substance of all that has hitherto been advanced against it, amounts, I think, to this, that the author himself had certainly a very corrupt heart. And I reckon no friend of his will ever deny the truth of this charge: For as he intended to describe human nature in general, and not any one particular class of men, as distinguished from others; it does not appear, that ever he denied himself to be a human creature. Though this author has clearly evinced the corruption of human nature, to the no small confusion of all the sons of pride, as appears from the weakness of their replies, joined with the violence of their reproaches; yet we cannot learn from him, what is that virtue or holiness of life which is well-pleasing to God; because he appears to have been as ignorant of the true principle thereof, as the bulk of popular preachers. We must then say of this author something like what has been already said of the learned prelate, who alarmed all England with his doctrine, on these words of Jesus Christ, *My kingdom is not of this world*. As the learned prelate clearly demonstrates what Christ's kingdom

is

* I say his *main doctrine*. For it cannot be denied that he has strained some particular points, as in the case of Luxury, for instance, further than the scripture warrants; and of this, some enemies of his main doctrine, which needs no straining to support it, have not failed to take undue advantage.

is not ; but could not shew what *it is*, as being ignorant of the foundation on which it is erected: So this author clearly demonstrates what holiness *is not* ; but could not shew what *it is*, as being ignorant of the true principle or spring from whence it flows. Now let us hear him.

Free thoughts on Religion, 2d edition, London, 1729, preface, p. 4. “ I demonstrate, that what
 “ is commonly understood by faith and believing,
 “ is the easiest part of Christianity, in which very
 “ few are defective ; but that the most difficult
 “ part of our religion consists in subduing our
 “ passions to the love of God, and in obedience to
 “ his commands.—*Pag. 20. of the book, Christians*
 “ then are not bad for want of FAITH *, or of
 “ WISHING TO BE GOOD *; but because they are
 “ not able to overcome their appetites, and curb
 “ their passions ; or rather, have not resolution
 “ enough to set about, and persevere in the at-
 “ tempt of it, whilst they are unassisted with the
 “ divine grace.”

Inquiry into the causes of the frequent executions at Tyburn, London, 1725, chap. 5. Of the regulations concerning felons in prison, and the good effects to be expected from them. After having proposed several regulations, the author proceeds thus, in *p. 43.* “ When the condemned should,
 “ in every respect, receive the treatment I have
 “ required, and by this means, undisturbed by
 “ earthly

* I have taken the liberty to distinguish these words with small capitals, as they serve to shew, how much even the most inquisitive men are conducted by tradition, or the religion of their country, as to any notions they have about acceptance with God,

“ earthly cares, have leisure, in sober sadness, to
 “ review their past life, and examine into the
 “ multitude, as well as enormity of their offences ;
 “ then, after thorough contrition, and an open
 “ confession, in behalf of justice, animated by
 “ faith, betake to constant prayer ; we ought to
 “ believe, that thus exerting themselves in the
 “ work of salvation, by the good guidance of able
 “ divines, and their own unwearied endeavours,
 “ many of them would find favour in the sight
 “ of the Almighty ; and that several, even as
 “ they went to death, would be regenerated, and
 “ comforted from above, with a strong assurance
 “ of forgiveness.”

This author does indeed speak of *the love of God*, and of *obedience to his commands* : But as these expressions are as general, and of as undetermined meaning, as *holiness* or *virtue*, their import must always be measured by what a man holds about acceptance with God. And as to this point, it evidently appears, from the last quotation, that this author goes fully into the spirit of the popular doctrine. Part of his stile about faith indeed differs from that of some popular preachers ; yet, on the whole, it is plain, that the exercise of his penitent and theirs must be at bottom much the same. After all the noise that has been made about this author, his account of human nature, though writ in such a manner as to be read by many who have no taste for theological tracts, is really no other than what is to be found in a thousand Sermons, of first repute for orthodoxy. The greatest fault I can find with
him

him is, that, on the point of acceptance with God, he turns out to be a votary of the popular doctrine, and would restore depraved human nature, by chiming in with the greatest corruption both of it, and of the gospel. From this instance we may see, that men may have very extensive views of the corruption of human nature, and of the necessity of a power more than human for its recovery ; and yet, in the matter of acceptance with God, be entirely conducted by the spirit of self-dependence.

I shall now, in the last place, take some notice of the most fashionable form of Christian doctrine, as presented to us in a periodical performance, well received by the public. We have it in a censure passed on Dr SYKES, for inadvertance, in the following words. *Monthly Review for September 1755, p. 237.* “ For to appease God, or
 “ to appease God for sins, or on account of sins, or
 “ make God propitious, is neither the language nor
 “ doctrine of divine revelation, whatever similar
 “ passages may be extracted from Heathen
 “ writers, whose general scheme of religion was
 “ absurd or idolatrous. May we be permitted
 “ to suggest a thought, not altogether improper
 “ on this occasion, and calculated to elucidate the
 “ reasonings in this Epistle [to the Hebrews] ?
 “ namely, that the sacrifices of the law may be
 “ considered, as the public methods of declaring
 “ and ascertaining the legal or political remission
 “ of these legal or political transgressions ONLY,
 “ for which they were specially ordained ; and
 “ that they who had violated the legal national
 “ con-

“ constitution, and were thereby liable to legal
 “ penalties or punishments, were, by the inter-
 “ vention of the priest or high priest, the autho-
 “ rised legal officers, proclaimed actually possessed
 “ of pardon, and exempted from legal punish-
 “ ments, on account of their political sins. But
 “ none of these external or political processes
 “ certified the remission of moral guilt, or pro-
 “ claimed any exemption from the punishments
 “ of the invisible world. Whereas Christ, by the
 “ doctrine or promises of his religion, attested by
 “ his death, and divinely confirmed by God’s
 “ raising him from the dead, hath exhibited,
 “ certified, and proclaimed God as ESSENTIALLY
 “ PROPITIUS to the penitent believer: and as
 “ an authentic testimony, that God appointed,
 “ approved, and accepted Christ’s obedience to
 “ death, he hath raised him from the dead; and,
 “ by the generous donation of his grace, impow-
 “ ered him to execute and accomplish the pro-
 “ mises peculiar to the gospel-covenant, namely,
 “ that God by him will raise up the truly penitent
 “ and faithful to the possession of a blessed and
 “ glorious immortality; for the sins of persons
 “ thus qualified, shall be entirely blotted out,
 “ *when the times of refreshing shall come from the*
 “ *presence of the Lord, Acts iii. 19, 20. chap. xxvi.*
 “ 18, 19. Persons of those moral dispositions ONLY
 “ do now receive the *promise*, and shall hereafter
 “ be invested with the ACTUAL POSSESSION of
 “ the heavenly inheritance, or eternal life.”

As this kind of reasoning will not probably have
 much weight with any who seriously read the
 New

New Testament, or even with any who seriously think of themselves, and of their Creator; all such having every where, in all ages, found need for some sort of atonement; therefore I see no occasion for shewing much zeal against it at present. For I am far from being disposed to enter into concert with those zealous gentlemen, who would seem to be the pillars of orthodoxy; and who, taking it deeply to heart that such doctrine as is now quoted should step into the fashion, and, with a self-satisfied smile, turn aside theirs, as worn out with age, to be exposed to merciless ridicule, notwithstanding all the fresh pains taken to enrich its dress, are therefore very liberal in their invectives against the authors of the *Review*; whom, with no small regret, they perceive to be the very mouth and index of the fashion. I freely allow these two sorts of men to scold or smile at each other, as best suits their several humours. What I would say at present is, that the bulk of mankind, who are less practised in reasoning, do now and then think more seriously, have greater sensibility of conscience, and sooner listen to its simple dictates; or, at least, are more readily affected, when reminded of them, than those ingenious gentlemen, who have studiously acquired a habit of thinking artificially, and of accommodating the words of their religion, as well as the dictates of conscience, to fashionable, enlarged, and genteel sentiments. Hence it is, that the body of the people every where have always been fond to have some notion of atonement included in their system of religion. Therefore

fore we may at least say, that, if ever the doctrine now quoted shall become popular, we shall see something very new and uncommon.

The doctrine contained in the quotation would persuade us, that Jesus Christ died and rose again, to confirm and ratify what is commonly accounted *natural religion*, and to assure us of its sufficiency to lead us to happiness. The popular doctrine does indeed come to the same issue at last : But then, by means of its mystic round-about course, it has this advantage among people who have not been able to reason away their conscience, so still retain some sense of guilt, that it sooths and encourages their minds with some notion of partial atonement, connected with their best endeavours ; and so animates those who are seriously exercised therein, to study greater regularity and strictness of life, than is commonly produced by any doctrine which excludes every notion of atonement for sin.

I SHALL now conclude this general view of our popular and fashionable writers, with observing, what will readily occur to any lover of the ancient gospel, that one and the same spirit runs through them all, though it takes various courses, and assumes various shapes, among different classes of men, in order to compass the same end ; and though it does not, like the Spirit of Truth, lead its several children to very cordial affection toward each other.

I am, &c.

The End of the FIRST VOLUME.