TRACTS.

IX.

TRACTS.

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FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. IX.

CONTAINING,

PRIESTLEY'S INSTITUTES OF NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION. Vol. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED, MDCCXCIV.

INSTITUTES

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

RELIGION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An ESSAY on the beſt Method of communicating religious Knowledge to the Members of Chriſtian Societies.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LLD. F.R.S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

VOL. I.

Wiſdom is the principal Thing. SOLOMON.

LONDON:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCIV.

made uſe of, a variety of other queſtions ſhould be aſked, calculated to bring the ſubject to the level of their capacities. A catechiſm of this kind I publiſhed ſome years ago; and I am ſatisfied, from my own experience, that a child, even of four or five years of age, may be made to underſtand the moſt important truths of chriſtianity, and that it is of great conſequence that the minds of children be impreſſed with this kind of knowledge as early as poſſible. No perſon who has actually made a trial of this method of inſtructing children, and who can do it with any degree of judgment, will ſay that it is a painful taſk to children. On the contrary, I have generally found them to be pleaſed, and in many caſes exceedingly delighted with it.

In the other junior claſs I would teach the knowledge of the *ſcriptures* only. This appears to me to be a ſubject ſo diſtinct, copious, and important, that a ſeperate claſs ſhould be appropriated to it; and I think that the beſt manner in which this great end can be gained, is to have a ſet of *queſtions only*, printed, with references to thoſe places in the bible, which muſt be read, in order to find the proper anſwers. Such a *ſcripture catechiſm* as this I have alſo publiſhed. This claſs may properly conſiſt of young perſons of both ſexes, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, ſo as to be an intermediate claſs, between the two others. It may be adviſable, however, and may even be

neceſſary at the firſt, to add to this claſs ſuch members of the higher claſs as are not ſufficiently acquainted with the ſcriptures; and, in the preſent ſtate of our ſocieties, I am afraid that many ſuch will be found above eighteen years of age; but of theſe it may be hoped, that there will be many who will not think themſelves too old to learn, and who may even take pleaſure in ſuch an exerciſe as this, which is equally calculated to improve the moſt knowing, as well as to inſtruct the moſt ignorant.

Theſe three claſſes appear to me to be ſufficient for the purpoſe of communicating religious inſtruction; at leaſt, I cannot, at preſent, think of any thing better adapted to the purpoſe. I ſincerely wiſh, that other miniſters, who cannot but be ſenſible of the evil that I complain of, would propoſe what appears to them to be a proper remedy for it, and let us freely adopt whatever we approve in each other's ſchemes.

To make room for lectures of ſuch manifeſt utility as theſe, which I have now recommended, it were to be wiſhed that *weekly*, and other *periodical preaching lectures*, eſpecially that which is in many places preparatory to the Lord's, were laid aſide. The laſt-mentioned ſervice, whatever good it may do in other reſpects, does, unqueſtionably, promote ſuperſtition; continually ſuggeſting and confirming the opinion, that the attendance upon this chriſtian ordi-

ordinance requires more particular preparation than any other, which is an idea that could never occur to any perſon in peruſing the New Teſtament only, and can be nothing but the remains of the popiſh doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

Other weekly or monthly ſermons are ſeldom attended, except by a few perſons, and thoſe chiefly the aged, and ſuch others as have the leaſt occaſion for them; and they are often a burden to the miniſter, who is ſenſible that he is giving his labour, which might be better beſtowed, to very little purpoſe. It has ſeemed fit to infinite wiſdom, that one day in ſeven is proper and ſufficient for reſt from labour, and the purpoſes of public worſhip. When we are got beyond this *ſcripture directory*, all the reſt is ſuch *will worſhip*, as no bounds can be ſet to. It has certainly been the foundation of much ſuperſtition, and has, in many caſes, occaſioned a fatal and very criminal neglect of the proper buſineſs of this life. In what I have now ſaid, I would by no means be underſtood to condemn all occaſional acts of public worſhip, as on days ſet apart for public faſting and thankſgiving, or on particular annual ſolemnities, ſome of which anſwer very good purpoſes.

As all chriſtians are brethren, and we are expreſsly commanded to *exhort one another*, I hope it will not be deemed arrogant in me to have given my advice with reſpect to a matter of ſo much importance,

as

as the beſt method of communicating religious knowledge, in which all chriſtian miniſters are equally concerned. The ſchemes which I have propoſed are ſuch as I can recommend from the trial that I have made of them, and they appear to me to be very practicable by any perſon who is ſufficiently qualified to diſcharge any other part of the miniſterial duty; and in the *country*, I believe that ſuch ſervices will generally be acceptable, as well as uſeful. As to the *city*, I am not ſo well able to judge; but if I be not miſinformed, the connection between *miniſter* and *people* is, in general, ſo ſlight, that ſchemes which ſuppoſe much perſonal reſpect for the paſtor on one ſide, and an affectionate concern for the people on the other, can hardly be expected to ſucceed. The prevailing practice of a London Miniſter preaching to one congregation in the morning, and to another in the afternoon, when each of them is able to provide for one (as in fact they half provide for two) tends ſtill farther to ſink the *miniſter* into a mere *lecturer*, and to exclude the idea of every thing beſides a ſtipulated ſum of money on the one ſide, and mere *ſtipulated duty* on the other. In ſuch congregations one would think that the epiſtles of Paul to Timothy and Titus were never read; and certainly the buſineſs of *ordination* in ſuch places muſt be a mere form, or farce, without any meaning whatever.

Hoping

Hoping that my preſumption in offering the preceding advice has not given offence, I ſhall take the farther liberty to conclude with a word of exhortation, in which I ſhall think myſelf equally concerned.

Since, my brethren in the chriſtian miniſtry, in the preſent ſtate of church diſcipline, ſo unequal a ſhare of the burden is fallen upon us, let us not, through deſpair of doing every thing that ought to be done, think ourſelves excuſable in attempting nothing. If we cannot poſſibly warn all the unruly, comfort all the feeble-minded, inſtruct all the ignorant, confirm all the doubting, and ſeek and ſave all that are in danger of being loſt, let us do all that we can in each of theſe branches of miniſterial duty. Since, with reſpect to the buſineſs of *admonition*, we are ſo circumſtanced, that we can but ſeldom attempt any thing with a proſpect of ſucceſs, let us do the more by way of *inſtruction*, which is a field that is ſtill open to us. If we cannot reclaim from vice, let us endeavour to inſtill thoſe principles, which may prevent the commiſſion of it, and to communicate that rational and uſeful knowledge, which is the only ſolid foundation of virtuous practice and good conduct in life.

If every man be a *ſteward*, according to the ability and opportunity which God has given him of being uſeful to his fellow-creatures, much more

ought we to conſider ourſelves in that light; and it is required of every ſteward that he be faithful to his truſt. The maſter under whom we act, and to whom we are immediately accountable is the great *ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls, Chriſt Jeſus.* Our inſtructions are to *feed his lambs* and *his ſheep.* Let us ſee to it, then, that none of thoſe who are committed to our care *periſh for lack of knowledge.* If they will *die in their iniquity*, let us ſo act under the melancholy proſpect, that *their blood may not be required at our hands*; that we may, at leaſt, *ſave our own ſouls*, if not *thoſe that hear us.* When our Lord ſhall return, and take account of his ſervants, let it appear that we have diligently improved the talents with which we were intruſted, that of two we have made other two, and of five other five, &c. and then, and then only, ſhall we *not be aſhamed before him at his coming.*

Advertiſement to the ſecond edition.

Since the publication of the firſt edition of this work, I am able to recommend the plan here laid down by farther experience, having conſiderably extended the courſes of my lectures to young perſons in my preſent ſituation at Birmingham; having made a ſeparate claſs of the *young women*, and the ſociety

ſociety having been ſo liberal, as to provide a very valuable library, which will be continually increaſing, chiefly for the uſe of thoſe who attend the claſſes; conſiſting of books recommended by the miniſters for that purpoſe. Alſo, beſides the lectures recommended in this introductory eſſay, I find it uſeful to teach *ſcripture geography* to the younger claſſes, and with the elder I ſhall probably go through a ſhort courſe of *Jewiſh antiquities*, *eccleſiaſtical hiſtory*, and ſuch other miſcellaneous branches of knowledge, as may be more particularly uſeful, to enable them to read the ſcriptures with advantage.

THE

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INSTI-

TO THE YOUNGER PART OF THE CONGREGATION OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, AT MILL-HILL, IN LEEDS.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

IT was on your account that I compoſed theſe *Inſtitutes of natural and revealed religion*, and to you I take the liberty to dedicate them.

It is the earneſt wiſh of my heart, that your minds may be well eſtabliſhed in the ſound principles of *religious knowledge*, becauſe I am fully perſuaded, that nothing elſe can be a ſufficient foundation of a virtuous and truly reſpectable conduct in life, or of good hope in death. A mind deſtitute of knowledge (and, comparatively ſpeaking, no kind of knowledge, beſides that of *religion*, deſerves the name) is like a field on which no culture has been beſtowed, which, the richer it is, the ranker weeds it will produce. If nothing good be ſown in it, it will be occupied by plants that are uſeleſs or noxious.

Thus, the mind of man can never be wholly barren. Through our whole lives we are ſubject

to ſucceſſive impreſſions; for, either new ideas are continually flowing in, or traces of the old ones are marked deeper. If, therefore, you be not acquiring good principles, be aſſured that you are acquiring bad ones; if you be not forming virtuous habits, you are, how inſenſibly ſoever to yourſelves, forming vicious ones; and, inſtead of becoming thoſe amiable objects in yourſelves, and thoſe valuable members of ſociety, which nature, and the God of nature intended that you ſhould be, you will be at beſt, uſeleſs *cumberers of the ground*, a dead weight upon the community, receiving ſupport and advantage, but contributing nothing in return; or you will be the peſts of ſociety, growing continually more corrupt yourſelves, and contributing to the corruption of others.

Finding yourſelves, therefore, in ſuch a world as this, in which nothing is at a ſtand, it behoves you ſeriouſly to reflect upon your ſituation and proſpects. Form, then, the generous reſolution (and every thing depends upon your reſolution) of being at preſent what you will certainly wiſh you had been ſome years hence, what your beſt friends now wiſh you to be, and what your maker has intended, fitted, and enabled you to be.

Above all things, be careful to improve and make uſe of the *reaſon* which God has given you, to be the guide of your lives, to check the extra-

vagance

vagance of your paſſions, and to aſſiſt you in acquiring that *knowledge*, without which your rational powers will be of no advantage to you. If you would diſtinguiſh yourſelves as *men*, and attain the true dignity, and proper happineſs of your natures, it muſt be by the exerciſe of thoſe faculties which are peculiar to you as men. If you have no higher objects than the gratification of your animal appetites and paſſions, you rank yourſelves with the *brute beaſts*; but as you will ſtill retain that *reflection*, which they have not, you will never have that unallayed enjoyment of a ſenſual life which they have. In fact, you are incapable of the happineſs of brute animals. Aſpire, therefore, to thoſe ſuperior purſuits and gratifications for which you were formed, and which are the prerogative and glory of your natures.

Let me urge you, my younger hearers, to a more than ordinary attention to regularity and propriety of behaviour, becoming men and chriſtians, that your conduct may be no diſgrace to the *rational and liberal ſentiments*, which I truſt you have imbibed. Let it be ſeen, that when God is conſidered as the proper object of reverence, love, and confidence, as the benevolent Father of all his offſpring of mankind, and their righteous and impartial moral governor, the principle of obedience is the moſt ingenuous and effectual. Cheriſh the

moſt unfeigned gratitude to the *Father of lights*, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkneſs, in which our excellent religion was, for ſo many ages, involved; but let this conſideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes ſo glorious a light. If your conduct be ſuch as, inſtead of recommending your own generous principles, furniſhes an excuſe to others, for acquieſcing in their prejudices and errors, all the diſhonour which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jeſus Chriſt, by keeping it longer in a corrupted ſtate at home, and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation.

Value the *ſcriptures*, as a treaſury of divine knowledge, conſiſting of books which are eminently calculated to inſpire you with juſt ſentiments, and prompt you to right conduct; and conſider them alſo as the only proper *authority in matters of faith*.

In a thing ſo intereſting to you as the buſineſs of *religion*, affecting the regulation of your conduct here, ſo as to prepare you for immortal happineſs hereafter, reſpect no *human authority* whatever. Submit to thoſe who are inveſted with the ſupreme power in your country, as your lawful *civil magiſtrates*; but if they would preſcribe to you in *matters of faith*, ſay that you have but one *Father even God*,

God, and *one Maſter*, *even Chriſt*, and *ſtand faſt in the liberty with which he has made you free.* Reſpect a *parliamentary king*, and chearfully pay all *parliamentary taxes*; but have nothing to do with a *parliamentary religion*, or a *parliamentary God**.

Religious rights, and *religious liberty*, are things of ineſtimable value. For theſe have many of our anceſtors ſuffered and died; and ſhall we, in the ſunſhine of proſperity, deſert that glorious cauſe, from which no ſtorms of adverſity or perſecution could make them ſwerve. Let us conſider it as a duty of the firſt rank with reſpect to moral obligation, to tranſmit to our poſterity, and provide, as far as we can, for tranſmitting, unimpaired, to the lateſt generations, that generous zeal for religion and liberty, which makes the memory of our forefathers ſo truly illuſtrious.

So long as it ſhall pleaſe that God, in whoſe hands our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways, to continue me in that relation, in which I think myſelf happy in ſtanding to you at preſent, I truſt that I ſhall not fail to endeavour to impreſs your minds with a juſt ſenſe of what you owe to God, to your country, and to mankind. Let it be our mutual care to derive the moſt durable advantage from our preſent temporary connection, by

* This was the language held, as I have been informed, by Lord Wharton, in the debate about the act of William and Mary, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity.

growing continually more *eſtabliſhed, ſtrengthened, and ſettled*, in the habit and practice of all the virtues which become us as men and as chriſtians; that we may ſecure a happy meeting, and mutual congratulation in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

I am,

My young friends,

with affection and eſteem,

your brother and ſervant,

in the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Leeds, March, 1772.

*** I hope that the younger part of my congregation at Birmingham will conſider what I originally addreſſed to my pupils at Leeds as addreſſed to themſelves; and I flatter myſelf that the extenſion of my plan of lecturing in my preſent ſituation, will be attended with proportionable pleaſure to myſelf, and advantage to them.

BIRMINGHAM, JAN. 1, 1782.

THE

PREFACE.

NO branch of knowledge can be taught to advantage except in a regular, or ſyſtematical method. It is alſo very convenient, both for the teacher and the learner, to have the *elements* of any ſcience drawn up in a ſuccinct manner; by the help of which the one may be directed in what order to explain the ſeveral branches of it, and the other may ſee at one view all its conſtituent parts, in their natural connection, and thereby gain the moſt comprehenſive and diſtinct idea of the whole, which is alſo a great advantage for retaining it in memory.

It was with a view to the inſtruction of youth that the following *Inſtitutes* were compoſed, and nothing more was meant, originally, than to furniſh myſelf with an eaſy method of diſcourſing upon the ſubjects of natural and revealed religion to the young men of my own congregation, whom I formed into a claſs for that purpoſe. But when

I was induced to publiſh them, for the benefit of others, I made them a little fuller, that thoſe young perſons who can have little or no aſſiſtance in their inquiries, might be able to read them with tolerable advantage. I ſhall think myſelf happy if this *manual* be the means of eſtabliſhing any of the youth of the preſent age in the ſound knowledge of thoſe moſt important ſubjects to which it is appropriated. I am ſatisfied that no man can write, or live, to better purpoſe.

As my ſole view in this ſhort ſyſtem was to teach the elements of religious knowledge to perſons intended for *common and civil life*, and not for any of the learned profeſſions, I have avoided, as much as I poſſibly could, thoſe metaphyſical and abſtruſe ſpeculations, which have been raiſed from every branch of my ſubject, and have chiefly confined myſelf to ſuch conſiderations as are moſt adapted to produce conviction in the minds of thoſe who are not much uſed to cloſe reflection; and I have endeavoured through the whole to expreſs myſelf with the greateſt clearneſs and preciſion. For this purpoſe, I have been obliged to depart conſiderably from the plan of any treatiſe that I have yet ſeen upon theſe ſubjects.

I am far, however, from being able to promiſe that I ſhall leave theſe ſubjects free from all obſcurity. The mind of man will never be able to contemplate the being, perfections, and providence of God

God without meeting with inexplicable difficulties. We may find ſufficient reaſon for acquieſcing in the darkneſs which involves theſe great ſubjects, but we muſt never expect to ſee them ſet in a perfectly clear light. But notwithſtanding this, we may know enough of the divine being, and of his moral government, to make us much better and happier beings than we could be without ſuch knowledge; and even the conſideration of the inſuperable difficulties referred to above is not without its uſe, as it tends to impreſs the mind with ſentiments of reverence, humility, and ſubmiſſion.

I have alſo had another view in not chuſing to conceal ſome of the great difficulties which attend the demonſtration, if not of the *being*, yet of the moſt eſſential *attributes*, and moral *government* of God. It was, that the conſideration of them might make us more ſenſible of the value of *revelation*, by which many of them are, in a great meaſure, cleared up, and by which great light has been thrown upon every important branch of natural religion.

Many unbelievers avail themſelves very much of the *diverſity of opinions* which prevails among the profeſſors of revealed religion, and boaſt of the great *clearneſs*, as well as *ſufficiency of the light of nature*. But the caſe is much otherwiſe; and there have been, in fact, among men of the greateſt learning and acuteneſs of thought, believers and

unbelievers in revelation, as great a diverſity of opinion with reſpect to the principles of natural, as of revealed religion. And notwithſtanding the various ſentiments of chriſtians, they are all perfectly agreed, and unanimous, with reſpect to all the moſt important doctrines of natural religion, concerning which unbelievers in revelation have never been able to arrive at any certainty, or uniformity of opinion; ſo that men who think at all are very far from getting rid of any real difficulty by abandoning revelation. Nay, the difficulties which we ſhall find upon this ſubject among chriſtians, though I ſhall not fail to ſtate them with the greateſt fairneſs, ſuppreſſing nothing that can contribute to their ſtrength, are by no means ſo embarraſſing to the mind of man, as thoſe which occur in the contemplation of nature.

If any perſon, diſcouraged by theſe difficulties, ſhould think to relieve himſelf by rejecting *all religion*, natural and revealed, he will find, if he reflect at all, that he has miſerably deceived himſelf, and that he is involved in greater perplexity than ever; the ſcheme he has adopted not only filling his mind with great darkneſs and diſtreſs, but being contrary to ſome of the plaineſt appearances in nature, and therefore manifeſtly irrational and abſurd. In this caſe, therefore, true philoſophy will lead a man to acquieſce in that ſcheme of principles which is attended with the feweſt difficulties,

ficulties, without expecting to meet with any that is quite free from them; and a good man will be drawn by a ſtrong propenſity to embrace that ſyſtem, the contemplation and influence of which will tend to make him, and his brethren of mankind, moſt virtuous and happy. This important circumſtance will always operate as an evidence for the truth of natural and revealed religion, on minds which are not perverted by ſophiſtry, or vice.

In the latter part of theſe Inſtitutes, which relates to the duty and final expectations of mankind, it will be ſeen that I have made great uſe of *Dr. Hartley's obſervations on man.* To this writer I think myſelf happy in having any fair opportunity of making my acknowledgements; and I ſhall think that a very valuable end will be gained, if, by this or any other means, a greater degree of attention could be drawn upon that moſt excellent performance, ſo as to make it more generally read, and ſtudied, by thoſe who are qualified to do it. I do not know any thing that is better adapted to make an impreſſion upon truly philoſophical minds than the ſketch that he has given of the evidences of chriſtianity, in his ſecond volume; and for this reaſon I ſhould be exceedingly glad to ſee that part of his work publiſhed ſeparately.

AN ESSAY ON THE BEST METHOD OF COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.

THE ſuperficial knowledge, or rather the extreme ignorance of the generality of youth in the preſent age, with reſpect to religion, is the ſubject of great and juſt complaint; and for want of being well eſtabliſhed in the principles of *rational religion*, many of them are daily falling a prey to *enthuſiaſm* on one hand, and *infidelity* on the other. In this life we muſt not expect any good without ſome attendant evil. The circumſtance of which we now complain has been, in part, the natural effect of the moderation of the preſent times, in which no perſon is even queſtioned about his religion. For, as the ſubject is never canvaſſed, nor ſo much as ſtarted in polite company, no perſon thinks it worth his while to prepare himſelf for making any reply; and, conſequently, the youth of this age never profeſſedly ſtudy the ſubject, or ever give more than an occaſional and curſory attention to it.

Another

Another ſource of this complaint is, the little care that is now taken by parents in the religious inſtruction of their children. They condemn the ſeverity with which they recollect that they themſelves were treated; and, not conſidering the advantage which they derive from it, exclaim againſt ſuch exceſſive rigour and auſterity, and throw off not only the *tutor*, but almoſt the *maſter* too, with reſpect to their children; not recollecting that, after this, there is little left of the *parent* that is truly valuable. To this conduct they are, no doubt, at the ſame time, ſecretly influenced by a regard to their own eaſe; for upon the preſent faſhionable plan, a perſon gives himſelf very little trouble indeed about forming the minds of his offſpring; and, ſome may think, that they have ſufficiently done their duty in this reſpect, when they have provided them with *maſters* to ſuperintend their education in general.

Many perſons will not readily adopt my ſentiments relating to this ſubject. For my own part, however, I have not the leaſt doubt, but that, though the maxims of our forefathers may have been too ſtrict, we of the preſent age are already far gone in another extreme, oppoſite to theirs and much more dangerous. Their method, by reſtraining the inclinations of youth, might (though perhaps, upon the whole, it might not) diminiſh the happineſs of that early period of life; and, in

ſome

ſome inſtances, I doubt not, the exceſſive reſtraints they were under might ſerve to inflame their paſſions, and prepare them for the more unbounded and criminal indulgence of them, when they became their own maſters; but, in general, habits of ſobriety and moderation were, by this means, effectually formed, and a diſpoſition to licentiouſneſs entirely precluded.

On the contrary, our greater indulgence to youth gives them more *liberty*, but, perhaps, not more real *enjoyment* even of early life; but, whatever good effect this conduct may have upon ſome ingenuous tempers, I am ſatisfied that, in general, it is fatal to virtue and happineſs through life. Our youth having had little or no reſtraint put upon their inclinations, and religious principles not having been ſufficiently inculcated, they give the reins to pleaſure, at that critical time of life, in which the paſſions are peculiarly ſtrong, and reaſon weak; and the authority of a parent not interpoſing, where it is moſt wanted, a diſpoſition to licentiouſneſs is completely formed, and ſuch bad habits are contracted, as too often end in profligacy and ruin. At beſt, their minds not having been ſeaſoned with the principles of religion, they become mere *men of the world*, without vice, perhaps, but alſo without virtue.

Alſo, in conſequence of the ſame ſuperficial education, to ſay the leaſt of it, our youth having never thought

thought upon the ſubject of religion, inſtead of entertaining thoſe enlarged ſentiments of *religious liberty*, which will never be wholly extinct in the breaſts of their parents, the ſlighteſt inducement is often ſufficient to make them abondon the *diſſenting intereſt*, the value of which they were never taught to underſtand; and to make them conform to the eſtabliſhed religion of this, and, for the ſame reaſon to that of any other country in the world, attended with ſufficient temporal encouragement.

With the diſuſe of *family prayer*, the regular *reading of the ſcriptures* has alſo been laid aſide; ſo that in moſt of our opulent families, the youth have hardly an opportunity of making themſelves acquainted with the contents of thoſe books which are the ſource of all religious knowledge. When the bible, if there be one in the family, is wholly neglected by the parent, what inducement can the ſon have to look into it?

A falſe taſte, and a pretended reverence for the ſcriptures, has, likewiſe, baniſhed them from many of our ſchools; ſo that, except their being read in detached and unconnected portions, in places of public worſhip, many perſons, it is to be feared, would live and die in utter ignorance of the contents of their bibles.

With this neglect of family diſcipline, the neglect of diſcipline in our churches, which has been owing to ſimilar cauſes, has likewiſe concurred.

In

In many of our ſocieties the buſineſs of *catechiſing* has, likewiſe, been laid aſide, nor has any thing been ſubſtituted in its place, as better adapted to communicate religious knowledge; ſo that, as the miniſter is ſeldom ſeen but in the pulpit (I mean in a miniſterial character) all the opportunity that the people have of being inſtructed in the theory of religion, is their hearing miſcellaneous diſcourſes, which are now almoſt every where confined to ſubjects which have an immediate relation to practice, while the *theory of religion*, and the *evidences of it*, are almoſt wholly neglected.

Becauſe *common ſenſe* is a ſufficient guard againſt many errors in religion, it ſeems to have been taken for granted, that common ſenſe is a ſufficient *inſtructor* alſo; whereas, in fact, without poſitive inſtruction, men would naturally have been mere *ſavages* with reſpect to religion; as, without ſimilar inſtruction, they would be ſavages with reſpect to the arts of life and the ſciences. Common ſenſe can only be compared to a *judge*; but what can a judge do without evidence, and proper materials from which to form a judgment.

Such is the *evil*, of which not myſelf only, but every perſon who ſeriouſly conſiders the preſent ſtate of things among the Diſſenters, and its manifeſt tendency in futurity, complain. Let us now conſider what is the moſt proper and effectual *remedy*

for

for this evil, and how far the application of it may be easy and practicable.

As the source of the evil, as far it arises from ourselves, was observed to be two fold, namely, the neglect of *parental* and *ministerial* instruction, it is easy to infer, that the most complete and effectual remedy must be two-fold also, consisting in the revival of that discipline, both in churches and private families, by which we ourselves received that instruction, the advantages of which we are apt to overlook, till we see the dreadful effects of the want of it in others. If the discipline of our forefathers, in either of these respects, has been too severe for the gentleness of modern manners, let that severity be relaxed, but let nothing that is really useful be laid aside.

It is certainly desirable, that more attention be given both to the morals, and the religious instruction of youth, by those who undertake the conduct of our societies, as well as by their parents. But if it be impossible, as I am apprehensive it generally will be, to revive the antient forms of our church discipline, (in consequence of which a number of the most intelligent, serious, and prudent members of our churches might be appointed to superintend the instruction of youth) let the minister exert himself the more in this field, which alone can promise a reward for his labours. When a person's mode of thinking, and his habits of life are fixed, as they generally

generally are before he arrives at thirty or forty years of age, and especially when they have been confirmed by having met with no opposition or controul, from that time to a more advanced period of life, there can be but little prospect of making any good and lasting impressions. In this case, a change of thinking, or acting, will be brought about, if at all with very great difficulty, and old notions, and habits will be apt to return upon the slightest occasions, and get firmer hold of the mind than ever.

If men have lived all their lives unacquainted with better principles, the proposal of them may strike and influence, but if they relate to subjects which they have often heard canvassed, and on which little can be said that is absolutely *new* to them; it may be taken for granted, that the recital of arguments which they presume have been fully confuted, will only confirm them in their former prejudices. It is best, therefore, to bear with the *aged*, and, in many cases, with those who are advanced to middle life, and not without some very urgent reason, arising from very particular circumstances, attempt the arduous, and almost hopeless task, of rectifying their errors; though something more should be done towards reforming their conduct. But, in youth, the mind is flexible, opinions are unfixed, and habits not confirmed. At this time of life, therefore, arguments and expostulations

may

may have real weight; good principles and maxims may be recommended with effect; and a little ſeaſonable aſſiſtance may be ſufficient to mould them to our wiſh.

The great object of a miniſter's chief attention being thus fixed, viz. upon the younger, and more teachable part of his congregation, it remains to be conſidered, in what manner their inſtruction may be beſt provided for. Now, it appears to me, that the only effectual proviſion for this purpoſe, is a courſe of regular and ſyſtematical inſtruction. Every branch of knowledge is built on certain *facts* and *principles*; and in order that theſe be fully and clearly underſtood, they muſt be delivered in a proper order, ſo that one thing may moſt naturally introduce another. In other words, no branch of knowledge, religion not excepted, can be taught to advantage but in the way of *ſyſtem*. Frightful as the word may ſound, it ſignifies nothing, but an orderly and regular ſet of principles, beginning with the eaſieſt, and ending with the moſt difficult, which, in this manner, are the moſt eaſily demonſtrated. No perſon would ever think of teaching *Law* or *Medicine*, or any other branch of ſcience, in the manner in which religion is now generally taught; and as no perſon ever acquired a competent knowledge of Law, Medicine, or any other ſcience by hearing miſcellaneous diſcourſes upon the ſubject; ſo neither can we reaſonably expect that

that a juſt and comprehenſive knowledge of religion ſhould ever be communicated in the ſame looſe and incoherent manner. Beſides, it is now too much the faſhion to neglect public worſhip, and any ſcheme of buſineſs or pleaſure is thought to be a ſufficient excuſe for a perſon's abſenting himſelf from it, even on the Lord's day; ſo that this only means of inſtruction, inſufficient as it is for the purpoſe, is becoming every day more uncertain; and it may be expected that leſs advantage will be made of it continually.

On theſe accounts, religious knowledge will never be communicated with certainty and good effect, from the pulpit only. Thoſe of the congregation who think themſelves already ſufficiently knowing, will be diſguſted with the repetition of elementary principles; to thoſe who are extremely ignorant, it is not poſſible, in a formal diſcourſe, to ſpeak plainly and familiarly enough; and thoſe whoſe minds are not ſufficiently enlightened, and eſpecially thoſe whoſe prejudices are of long ſtanding, will be apt to take offence at the diſcovery of truths which it will be impoſſible for them to comprehend or receive.

There can be no hope, therefore, of doing any thing to good purpoſe, in this way, unleſs the miniſter can have an opportunity of diſcourſing to the young perſons by themſelves. He may then converſe

verſe with them familiarly on the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion; he may ſay the ſame things over and over again, and change his form of expreſſion, in order to make himſelf perfectly underſtood; he may alſo illuſtrate what he advances by familiar inſtances, and examples, and ſet every thing of importance in a great variety of lights. Moreover, if they will ſubmit to it (which it will be greatly to their advantage to do) he may *examine* them on the ſubjects on which he has diſcourſed, ſo as to ſatisfy himſelf whether they have perfectly underſtood him, whether they retain in memory the facts and reaſonings which he has advanced, and be ſufficiently grounded in one thing before he proceeds to another. This method will alſo give him an opportunity of removing any difficulties, or anſwering any objections which may have occurred to them, or which may have been thrown in their way by other perſons. In ſhort, I would adviſe a miniſter to form the young men of his congregation from the age of eighteen or twenty to about thirty into an *academical claſs*, and take the very ſame methods to teach them the elements of religion, that he would do to teach them the rudiments of any branch of natural knowledge.

To make this buſineſs the eaſier to the tutor, and the more advantageous to his pupils, it will be rather adviſeable, that he give his lectures from

a ſhort

a ſhort text or ſyſtem, written, or rather printed, that they may have an opportunity of peruſing it, and of ſtudying it when they are by themſelves, and thereby the better prepare themſelves for examination.

I do not give this advice at random, or from theory only; for I have carried the ſcheme which I am now recommending into execution; and I can aſſure my friends in the miniſtry that, as far as my own experience is a guide, they may promiſe themſelves much pleaſure, and their pupils much advantage from the exerciſe.

If it can be made agreeable to the people, I would alſo adviſe, that the miniſter deliver the heads of his ſyſtem in a ſet of regular diſcourſes to the congregation at large, once in four or five years, that thoſe perſons whom it may not be adviſeable to admit to his familiar lectures, may have an opportunity of hearing ſome uſeful topics diſcuſſed at leaſt in a conciſe manner, which they might, otherwiſe, have never heard of at all. But if the congregation ſhould not be ſufficiently uniform in their ſentiments, it will hardly be prudent, for reaſons, ſufficiently hinted above, to adopt this meaſure. It will alſo depend upon particular circumſtances, whether the *young women* ſhould be admitted to the familiar lectures along with the young men, or not.

That

That my readers may perfectly underſtand my ſcheme, and derive what advantage they pleaſe from it, I now publiſh the principal heads of my own lectures, in theſe *Inſtitutes of natural and revealed religion.* Miniſters whoſe ſentiments are pretty nearly my own may, perhaps, ſave themſelves trouble by making uſe of them, departing from my particular ſentiments or method, whenever they think proper. The whole work is divided into three parts, the firſt comprizing the principles of natural religion; the ſecond the evidences of revelation; and the third the doctrines of revelation. I have alſo nearly completed *another work*, which may alſo be of uſe in the inſtruction of young perſons It will be intitled, *An Hiſtorical Account of the corruptions of chriſtianity.* This will contain the reaſons for our proteſtant faith, and alſo thoſe of our diſſent from the eſtabliſhed church of England, with which every diſſenter ought to be made thoroughly acquainted.

Beſides this principal claſs, I would adviſe a miniſter, who is deſirous to communicate religious knowledge with effect, and who would adapt his inſtructions to the different ages of his hearers, to form *two other claſſes*, one conſiſting of children under fourteen years of age. To theſe he ſhould teach a *ſhort catechiſm*, containing the firſt elements of religious knowledge, delivered in the plaineſt and moſt familar language poſſible; and when it is made

INSTITUTES

OF

RELIGION.

PART I.

OF THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

IN theſe Inſtitutes I ſhall endeavour to explain *the principles of natural and revealed religion*; or to aſſign the reaſons why we acknowledge ourſelves to be ſubject to the moral government of God, and why we profeſs ourſelves to be chriſtians, and conſiſtent proteſtants.

Knowledge of this kind is, in its own nature, the moſt important of any that we can give our attention to; becauſe it is the moſt nearly connected with our preſent and future happineſs.

If there be a God, and if we be accountable to him for our conduct, it muſt be highly intereſting to us to know all that we can concerning his character and government, concerning what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him. If it be true that a perſon, pretending to be ſent from God, hath aſſured us of a future life,

it certainly behoves us to examine his pretenſions to divine authority; and if we ſee reaſon to admit them, to inform ourſelves concerning the whole of his inſtructions, and particlarly what kind of behaviour here will ſecure our happineſs hereafter. Laſtly, if the religion we profeſs be divine, and have been corrupted by the ignorance or artifice of men, it is a matter of conſequence that it be reſtored to its primitive purity; becauſe its efficacy upon the heart and life muſt depend upon it. And if men have uſurped any power with reſpect to religion which the author of it has not given them, it is of conſequence that their unjuſt claims be expoſed and reſiſted.

In order to give the moſt diſtinct view of the principles of religion, I ſhall firſt explain what it is that we learn from *nature*, and then what farther lights we receive from *revelation*. But it muſt be obſerved, that, in giving a delineation of natural religion, I ſhall deliver what I ſuppoſe *might* have been known concerning God, our duty, and our future expectations by the light of nature, and not what *was actually* known of them by any of the human race; for theſe are very different things. Many things are, in their own nature, attainable, which, in fact, are never attained; ſo that though we find but little of the knowledge of God, and of his providence, in many nations, which never enjoyed the light of revelation, it does not follow that

that nature did not contain and teach thoſe leſſons, and that men had not the means of learning them, provided they had made the moſt of the light they had, and of the powers that were given them.

I ſhall, therefore, include under the head of *natural religion*, all that can be demonſtrated, or proved to be true by natural reaſon, though it was never, in fact, diſcovered by it; and even though it be probable that mankind would never have known it without the aſſiſtance of revelation. Thus the doctrine of a future ſtate may be called a doctrine of natural religion, if when we have had the firſt knowledge of it from divine revelation, we can afterwards ſhow that the expectation of it was probable from the light of nature, and that preſent appearances are, upon the whole, favourable to the ſuppoſition of it.

SECTION I.

Of the exiſtence of God, and thoſe attributes which are deduced from his being conſidered as uncauſed himſelf, and the cauſe of every thing elſe.

WHEN we ſay there is a GOD, we mean that there is an intelligent deſigning cauſe of what we ſee in the world around us, and a being who was himſelf uncauſed. Unleſs we have re-

courſe to this ſuppoſition, we cannot account for preſent appearances; for there is an evident incapacity in every thing we ſee of being the cauſe of its own exiſtence, or of the exiſtence of other things. Though, in one ſenſe, ſome things are the cauſes of others, yet they are only ſo in part; and when we give ſufficient attention to their nature, we ſhall ſee, that it is very improperly that they are termed *cauſes* at all: for when we have allowed all that we can to their influence and operation, there is ſtill ſomething that muſt be referred to a prior and ſuperior cauſe. Thus we ſay that a proper ſoil, together with the influences of the ſun and the rain, are the cauſes of the growth of plants; but, in fact, all that we mean, and all that, in ſtrictneſs, we ought to ſay, is, that according to the preſent conſtitution of things, plants could not grow but in thoſe circumſtances; for, if there had not been a body previouſly organized like a plant, and if there had not exiſted what we call *a conſtitution of nature*, in conſequence of which plants are diſpoſed to thrive by the influence of the ſoil, the ſun, and the rain, thoſe circumſtances would have ſignified nothing; and the fitneſs of the organs of a plant to receive nouriſhment from the ſoil, the rain, and the ſun, is a proof of ſuch wiſdom and deſign, as thoſe bodies are evidently deſtitute of. If the fitting of a ſuit of cloaths to the body of a man be an argument

ment of *contrivance*, and consequently prove the existence of an intelligent agent, much more is the fitness of a thousand things to a thousand other things in the system of nature a proof of an intelligent designing cause; and this intelligent cause we call GOD.

If, for argument's sake, we should admit that the immediate author of this world was not himself the first cause, but that he derived his being and powers from some other being, superior to him; still in tracing the cause of this being, and the cause of his cause, &c. we shall at length be constrained to acknowledge a *first cause*, one who is himself uncaused, and who derives his being and cause from no superior whatever.

It must be acknowledged, however, that our faculties are unequal to the comprehension of this subject. Being used to pass from effects to causes, and being used to look for a cause adequate to the thing caused, and consequently to expect a greater cause for a greater effect, it is natural to suppose, that, if the things we see, which we say are the production of divine power, required a cause, the divine being himself must have required a greater cause. But this train of reasoning would lead us into a manifest absurdity, in inquiring for a higher and a higher cause *ad infinitum*. It may, perhaps, be true, though we cannot distinctly see it to be so, that as all *finite* things require a cause, *infinites*

admit of none. It is evident, that nothing can *begin* to be without a cauſe; but it by no means follows from thence, that that muſt have had a cauſe which had *no beginning*. But whatever there may be in this conjecture, we are conſtrained, in purſuing the train of cauſes and effects, to ſtop at laſt at ſomething uncauſed.

That any being ſhould be *ſelf created* is evidently abſurd, becauſe that would ſuppoſe that he had a being before he had, or that he exiſted, and did not exiſt at the ſame time. For want of clearer knowledge of this ſubject, we are obliged to content ourſelves with terms that convey only *negative* ideas, and to ſay that God is a being *uncreated* or *uncauſed*; and this is all that we mean when we ſometimes ſay that he is *ſelf exiſtent*.

It has been ſaid by ſome, that if we ſuppoſe an *infinite ſucceſſion* of finite beings, there will be no neceſſity to admit any thing to have been uncauſed. The race of men, for inſtance, may have been from eternity, no individual of the ſpecies being much ſuperior to the reſt. But this ſuppoſition only involves the queſtion in more obſcurity, and does not approach, in the leaſt, to the ſolution of any difficulty. For if we carry this imaginary ſucceſſion ever ſo far back in our ideas, we are in juſt the ſame ſituation as when we ſet out; for we are ſtill conſidering a ſpecies of beings who cannot ſo much as comprehend even their own make and

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conſtitution; and we are, therefore, ſtill in want of ſome being who was capable of thoroughly knowing, and of forming them, and alſo of adapting the various parts of their bodies, and the faculties of their minds, to the ſphere of life in which they act. In fact, an infinite *ſucceſſion* of finite beings as much requires a cauſe, as a *ſingle* finite being; and we have as little ſatisfaction in conſidering one of them as uncauſed, as we have in conſidering the other.

It was ſaid, by the Epicureans of old, that all things were formed by the *fortuitous concourſe of atoms*, that, originally, there were particles of all kinds floating at random in infinite ſpace; and that, ſince certain combinations of particles conſtitute all bodies, and ſince, in infinite time, theſe particles muſt have been combined in all poſſible ways, the preſent ſyſtem at length aroſe, without any deſigning cauſe. But, ſtill, it may be aſked, how could theſe atoms *move* without a *mover*; and what could have ariſen from their combinations, but mere heaps of matter, of different forms and ſizes. They could, of themſelves, have had no power of acting upon one another, as bodies now have, by ſuch properties as magnetiſm, electricity, gravitation, &c. unleſs theſe powers had been communicated to them by ſome ſuperior being.

It is no wonder, that we feel, and muſt acknowledge the imperfection of our faculties, when

we are employed upon ſuch a ſubject as this. We are involved in inextricable difficulties in conſidering the origin, as we may ſay, of the *works* of God. It is impoſſible that we ſhould conceive how creation ſhould have been coeval with its maker; and yet, if we admit that there ever was a time when nothing exiſted, beſides the divine being himſelf, we muſt ſuppoſe a whole eternity to have preceded any act of creation; an eternity in which the divine being was poſſeſſed of the power and diſpoſition to create, and to make happy, without once exerting them; or that a reaſon for creating muſt have occurred to him after the lapſe of a whole eternity, which had not occurred before; and theſe ſeem to be greater difficulties than the other. Upon the whole, it ſeems to be the moſt agreeable to reaſon, though it be altogether incomprehenſible by our reaſon, that there never was a time when this great uncauſed being did not exert his perfections, in giving life and happineſs to his offspring. We ſhall, alſo, find no greater difficulty in admitting, that the creation, as it had no beginning, ſo neither has it any *bounds*; but that infinite ſpace is repleniſhed with worlds, in which the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God always have been, and always will be diſplayed.

There ſeems to be no difficulty in theſe amazing ſuppoſitions, except what ariſes from the imperfection

fection of our faculties; and if we reject theſe, we muſt of neceſſity adopt other ſuppoſitions, ſtill more improbable, and involve ourſelves in much greater difficulties. It is, indeed, impoſſible for us to conceive, in an adequate manner, concerning any thing that is infinite, or even to expreſs ourſelves concerning them without falling into ſeeming abſurdities. If we ſay that it is impoſſible that the works of God ſhould have been from eternity, we may ſay the ſame concerning any particular thought in the divine mind, or even concerning any particular moment of time in the eternity that has preceded us; for theſe are all of the nature of particular *events*, which muſt have taken place at ſome definite time, or at ſome preciſe given diſtance from the preſent moment. But as we are ſure that the divine being himſelf, and *duration* itſelf, muſt have been without beginning, notwithſtanding this argument; the works of God may alſo have been without beginning, notwithſtanding the ſame argument. It may make this difficulty the eaſier to us, to conſider that *thinking* and *acting*, or *creating*, may be the ſame thing with God.

So little are our minds equal to theſe ſpeculations, that though we all agree, that an infinite duration muſt have preceded the preſent moment, and that another infinite duration muſt neceſſarily follow it; and though the former of theſe is con-

tinually receiving additions, which is, in our idea, the ſame thing as its growing continually larger; and the latter is conſtantly ſuffering as great diminutions, which in our idea, is the ſame thing as its growing continually leſs; yet we are forced to acknowledge that they both ever have been, and always muſt be exactly equal; neither of them being at any time conceivably greater, or leſs than the other. Nay we cannot conceive how both theſe eternities, added together, can be greater than either of them ſeparately taken.

Having demonſtrated the exiſtence of God, as the firſt cauſe, the creator, and diſpoſer of all things; we are naturally led to inquire, in the next place, what properties or attributes he is poſſeſſed of. Now theſe naturally divide themſelves into *two claſſes*; being either ſuch as flow from his being conſidered as the original cauſe of all things, or ſuch as the particular nature of the works of which he is the author lead us to aſcribe to him.

SECTION II.

Of thoſe attributes of the deity which are deduced from the conſideration of his being the original cauſe of all things.

WITHOUT any particular regard to the works of God, we cannot but conclude that the original cauſe of all things muſt have been

been *eternal*; for, ſince nothing can begin to exiſt without a cauſe, if there ever had been a time when nothing exiſted, nothing could have exiſted at preſent.

Secondly, this original cauſe muſt likewiſe be *immutable*, or not ſubject to change. We ſeem to require no other proof of this, than the impoſſibility of conceiving whence a change could ariſe in a being uncauſed. If there was no cauſe of his exiſtence itſelf, it ſeems to follow, that there could be no cauſe of a change in the manner of his exiſtence; ſo that whatever he was originally, he muſt for ever continue to be. Beſides, a capacity of producing a change in any being or thing, implies ſomething prior and ſuperior, ſomething that can control, and that is incapable of being reſiſted; which can only be true of the ſupreme cauſe itſelf.

The immutability of the divine being, or his being incapable of being acted upon, or controlled by any oth r, is what we mean when we ſay that he is an *independent* being, if by this term we mean any thing more than his being uncauſed.

SECTION III.

Of those attributes of the divine being which the consideration of his works leads us to ascribe to him.

THAT God is *eternal*, and *immutable*, follows necessarily, as we have seen, from his being *uncaused*; but if we consider the *effects* of which he is the cause, or, in other words, the *works* of which he is the author, we shall be led to ascribe to him other attributes, particularly those of *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*; and consequently all the attributes which are necessarily connected with, or flow from them.

If we call a being *powerful*, when he is able to produce great effects, or to accomplish great works, we cannot avoid ascribing this attribute to God, as the author of every thing that we behold; and when we consider the apparent greatness, variety, and extent of the works of God, in the whole frame of nature; as in the sun, moon, and stars; in the earth which we inhabit, and in the vegetables and animals which it contains, together with the powers of reason and understanding possessed by man, we cannot suppose any effect to which the divine power is not equal; and therefore we are authorised to say that it is *infinite*, or capable of producing any thing, that is not in its own

own nature impoſſible; ſo that whatever purpoſes the divine being forms, he is always able to execute.

The *deſigns* of ſuch a being as this, who cannot be controlled in the execution of any of his purpoſes, would be very obvious to us if we could comprehend his works, or ſee the iſſue of them; but this we cannot do with reſpect to the works of God, which are both incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings, and alſo are not yet compleated; for as far as they are ſubject to our inſpection, they are evidently in a progreſs to ſomething more perfect. Yet from the *ſubordinate parts* of this great machine of the univerſe, which we can in ſome meaſure underſtand, and which are compleated; and alſo from the manifeſt *tendency* of things, we may ſafely conclude, that the great deſign of the divine being, in all the works of his hands, was to produce happineſs.

That the world is in a ſtate of improvement is very evident in the human ſpecies, which is the moſt diſtinguiſhed part of it. Knowledge, and a variety of improvements depending upon knowledge (all of which are directly or indirectly ſubſervient to happineſs) have been increaſing from the time of our earlieſt acquaintance with hiſtory to the preſent; and in the laſt century this progreſs has been amazingly rapid. By means of increaſing commerce, the valuable productions of the earth

earth become more equally diſtributed, and by improvements in agriculture they are continually multiplied, to the great advantage of the whole family of mankind.

It is partly in conſequence of this improvement of the human ſpecies, as we may call it, that the earth itſelf is in a ſtate of improvement, the cultivated parts continually gaining ground on the uncultivated ones; by which means, beſides many other advantages, even the inclemencies of the weather are, in ſome meaſure, leſſened, and the world becomes a more healthy and pleaſurable abode for its moſt important inhabitants. If things proceed as they have done in theſe reſpects, the earth will become a paradiſe, compared to what it was formerly, or with what it is at preſent.

It is a conſiderable evidence of the goodneſs of God, that the inanimate parts of nature, as the ſurface of the earth, the air, water, ſalts, minerals, &c. are adapted to anſwer the purpoſes of vegetable and animal life, which abounds every where; and the former of theſe is evidently ſubſervient to the latter; all the vegetables that we are acquainted with either directly contributing to the ſupport of animal life, or being, in ſome other way, uſeful to it; and all animals are furniſhed with a variety of appetites and powers, which continually

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prompt them to *ſeek*, and enable them to *enjoy* ſome kind of happineſs.

It ſeems to be an evident argument that the author of all things intended the animal creation to be happy, that, when their powers are in their full ſtrength, and exerciſe, they are always happy; health and enjoyment having a natural and neceſſary connection through the whole ſyſtem of nature; whereas it can hardly be imagined, but that a malevolent being, or one who ſhould have made creatures with a deſign to make them miſerable, would have conſtituted them ſo, that when any creature was the moſt perfect, it would have been the moſt unhappy.

It agrees with the ſuppoſition of the benevolence of the divine being, that there is the moſt ample proviſion made for the happineſs of thoſe creatures which are naturally capable of the moſt enjoyment, particularly the human ſpecies. We have a far greater variety and extent of powers, both of action and enjoyment, than any other inhabitants of the earth; and the world abounds with more ſources of happineſs to us than to any other order of beings upon it. So perfectly adapted are the inanimate, the vegetable, and the animal world to the occaſions and purpoſes of man, that we may almoſt ſay, that every thing was made for our uſe; and though there are both plants and animals, which, in ſome applications, are noxious to us,

yet

yet, in time, we come to find out their uſes, and learn to avail ourſelves of their extraordinary powers.

There are many things in the ſyſtem of nature, as tempeſts, lightning, diſeaſes, and death, which greatly terrify and annoy us, and which are often the occaſion of much pain and diſtreſs; but theſe evils are only partial; and when the whole ſyſtem, of which they are a part, and a neceſſary conſequence, is conſidered, it will be found to be, as far as we can judge, the beſt, and the moſt friendly to us upon the whole; and that no other *general laws*, which ſhould obviate and exclude theſe evils, would have been productive of ſo much happineſs. And it ſhould be a rule with us, when we are conſidering any particular thing in the ſyſtem of nature, to take in every thing that is neceſſarily connected with it, and every thing that we ſhould loſe if we were deprived of it; ſo that if, upon the whole, we ſhould, in that caſe, gain more than we ſhould loſe, we muſt pronounce the thing complained of to be beneficial to us, and ſhould thankfully bear the evil, for the ſake of the greater good that accompanies it. Fire, for inſtance, is the occaſion of a great deal of miſchief and diſtreſs in the world, but this is not to be compared with the benefits that we derive from the uſe of that element.

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It may be ſaid, indeed, that the divine being might have ſeparated theſe things, and, if he had been perfectly benevolent, might have given us the good unmixed with evil. But there are many pains and evils which are uſeful to us, and upon the whole give us a greater enjoyment of life, as being pains and evils in themſelves. It is a common obſervation, that many perſons are much happier, in a variety of reſpects, in the prime of life, and eſpecially towards the cloſe of it, for the pains and the hardſhips they ſuffered at their entrance upon it. The difficulties we meet with contribute to ſtrengthen the mind, by furniſhing proper exerciſe both for our paſſions and our underſtandings, and they alſo heighten our reliſh of the good that we meet with. The more attention we give to evils of all kinds, the more good do we ſee to accompany them, or to follow them; ſo that, for any thing that we know, a better ſyſtem, that is, a ſyſtem abounding with more happineſs, could not have been made than this, even as it is at preſent; and much more if we ſuppoſe, what is very probable, a tendency to much greater happineſs in the completion of the whole ſcheme.

One of the greateſt and moſt ſtriking evils in the ſyſtem of nature, is that one animal ſhould be made to prey upon another, as lions, tygers, wolves, eagles, ſerpents, and other beaſts, birds, and inſects of prey; and, at firſt ſight, it might

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ſeem more agreeable to benevolence, to have formed no ſuch carnivorous creatures; as every animal would then have lived without fear or apprehenſion, and the world, as we are apt to imagine, would have been the ſcene of univerſal peace and joy. But this is the concluſion of a ſuperficial obſerver. For it may eaſily be demonſtrated, that there is more happineſs in the preſent ſyſtem than there would have been in that imaginary one; and, therefore, that this conſtitution of things, notwithſtanding its inconveniences, muſt have appeared preferable in the eye of a benevolent being.

If all the ſpecies of animals had been ſuffered to multiply without interfering with one another, they would all have ſoon been involved in famine and diſtreſs; and whenever they died, their carcaſſes would have infected the air, and have made it nauſeous and unhealthy; whereas, at preſent, all animals have, in general, a ſufficiency of food; they ſuffer very little from the fear of danger; while they are in their vigour, they are pretty well able to defend themſelves, or to provide for their ſafety by flight; when they grow feeble, and life would become a burthen, they ſerve to ſupport the life and vigour of animals of a different ſpecies; and the pangs of a ſudden and violent death are not ſo dreadful as thoſe that are occaſioned by lingering ſickneſs. If any animals die by a natural death,

death, there are other animals enow, quadrupeds, birds, and inſects, that are ready to ſeize upon the carcaſe; and to them it is, in the moſt putrid ſtate, grateful and wholeſome food.

Man is a carnivorous animal, but it is happy for the animals which he lives upon that he is ſo. What a number of cows, and ſheep, and fowls, do we feed, attend upon, and make happy, which, otherwiſe, would either have had no exiſtence at all, or a very miſerable one; and what is a ſudden and unexpected death, compared with their previous enjoyment; with a life ſpent in far greater pleaſure and ſatisfaction than they could otherwiſe have known?

Farther, all the evils we complain of are the reſult of what we call *general laws*, in conſequence of which the ſame events invariably follow from the ſame previous circumſtances; and without thoſe general laws, all would be uncertainty and confuſion. Thus it follows from the general law of gravitation, that bodies heavier than the air will, when unſupported, fall to the ground. Now cannot we conceive that it is better, upon the whole, that this law of nature, which is productive of a thouſand benefits every moment, and whereby the whole earth, and probably the whole univerſe is held together, ſhould be preſerved invariably, than that it ſhould be ſuſpended whenever any temporary inconvenience would ariſe from

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it; as whenever a man ſhould ſtep from a precipice, to prevent his breaking his bones, or being daſhed to pieces? If there were no general laws of nature, cauſing the ſame effects to follow from the ſame previous circumſtances, there would be no exerciſe for the wiſdom and underſtanding of intelligent beings; and, conſequently, we ſhould not be in circumſtances in which we could arrive at the proper perfection and happineſs of our natures. If there were no general laws, we could not know what events to expect, or depend upon, in conſequence of any thing we did. We could have none of that pleaſure and ſatisfaction that we now have in contemplating the courſe of nature, which might be one thing to-day, and another to-morrow; and as no man could lay a ſcheme with a proſpect of accompliſhing it, we ſhould ſoon become liſtleſs and indifferent to every thing, and conſequently unhappy.

It may be ſaid, that we might have been differently conſtituted, ſo as to have been happy in a world not governed by general laws, and not liable to partial evils. But there is no end of thoſe ſuppoſitions, which, for any thing that we can tell, may be, in their own nature, impoſſible. All that we can do, in theſe difficult ſpeculations, is to conſider the connections and tendencies of things as they now are; and if we ſee reaſon to conclude that, *ceteris manentibus*, nothing could be changed for

for the better, we may alſo conclude that the *ſyſtem itſelf* could not be changed for a better; ſince the ſame wiſdom that has ſo perfectly adapted the various parts of the ſame ſcheme, ſo as to make it productive of the moſt happineſs, may well be ſuppoſed to have made choice of *the ſcheme itſelf*, as calculated to contain the moſt happineſs. Even divine power cannot produce impoſſibilities; and for any thing that we know, it may be as naturally impoſſible to execute any ſcheme free from the inconveniences, that we complain of in this, as that *two and two* ſhould make more than *four*.

Upon the whole, the face of things is ſuch as gives us abundant reaſon to conclude, that God made every thing with a view to the happineſs of his creatures and offſpring. And we are confirmed in this ſuppoſition, from conſidering the utter impoſſibility of conceiving of any end that could be anſwered to himſelf in the miſery of his creatures; whereas the divine being may be conceived to rejoice in, and perhaps receive pleaſure from the happineſs of all around him. This, however, is the moſt *honourable* idea that we can form of any being; and can it be ſuppoſed that our maker would have conſtituted us in ſuch a manner, as that our natural ideas of perfection and excellence ſhould not be applicable to the eſſential attributes of his own nature? Our natural approbation of love and benevolence is, therefore, a proof of the divine

divine benevolence, as it cannot be ſuppoſed that he ſhould have made us to hate, and not to love himſelf.

That every part of ſo complex a ſyſtem as this ſhould be ſo formed, as to conſpire to promote this one great end, namely, the happineſs of the creation, is a clear proof of the *wiſdom* of God. The proper evidence of *deſign*, or *contrivance* is ſuch a fitneſs of means to gain any end, that the correſpondence between them cannot be ſuppoſed to be the reſult of what we call *accident*, or *chance*. Now there are ſo many adaptations of one thing to another in the ſyſtem of nature, that the idea of chance is altogether excluded; inſomuch, that there is reaſon enough to conclude, that every thing has its proper uſe, by means of a deſigned reference to ſomething elſe; and that nothing has been made, or is diſpoſed of, but to anſwer a good and benevolent purpoſe. And the more cloſely we inſpect the works of God, the more exquiſite art and contrivance do we diſcover in them. This is acknowledged by all perſons who have made any part of nature their particular ſtudy, whether they have been of a religious turn of mind, or not.

We ſee the greateſt wiſdom in the diſtribution of light and heat to the different parts of the earth, by means of the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and its obliquity to the plane in which it moves;

moves; ſo that every climate is not only habitable by men whoſe conſtitutions are adapted to it, but every part of the world may be viſited by the inhabitants of any other place, and there is no country which the ſame perſon is not capable of accuſtoming himſelf to, and making tolerable, if not agreeable to him, in a reaſonable ſpace of time.

We ſee the greateſt wiſdom in the variation of the ſeaſons of the year in the ſame place, in the proviſion that is made for watering as well as warming the ſoil, ſo as to prepare it for the growth of the various kinds of vegetables that derive their nouriſhment from it. The wiſdom of God appears in adapting the conſtitutions of vegetables and animals to the climates they were intended to inhabit, in giving all animals the proper means of providing their food, and the neceſſary powers either of attacking others, or ſecuring themſelves by flight, or ſome other method of evading the purſuit of *their* enemies. The carnivorous and voracious animals have a degree of ſtrength and courage ſuited to their occaſions, whereby they are prompted to ſeize upon their prey, and are enabled to maſter and ſecure it; and the weak have that degree of timidity, which keeps them attentive to every appearance of danger, and warns them to have recourſe to ſome methods of ſecuring themſelves from it. We ſee the greateſt wiſdom

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in the proviſion that is made in nature againſt the loſs or extinction of any ſpecies of vegetables or animals, by their eaſy multiplication, according to the want there is of them. The moſt uſeful vegetables grow every where, without care or cultivation, as for example, the different kinds of graſs. Small and tame animals breed faſt, whereas the large and carnivorous ones propagate very ſlowly, which keeps the demand on the one hand, and the conſumption on the other, nearly equal.

The human body exhibits the cleareſt and the moſt numerous marks of wiſdom and contrivance, whereby each part receives its proper nouriſhment, and is fitted for its proper functions; all of which are admirably adapted to our real occaſions in life. How conveniently are the organs of all our ſenſes diſpoſed, how well ſecured, and how excellently adapted to their proper uſes; and how exceedingly ſerviceable are all of them to us. We ſee the wiſdom of God both in what we call the *inſtincts* of brutes, and the *reaſon* of man; each of theſe principles being exactly fitted to our ſeveral occaſions.

We alſo ſee the wiſdom of God in the natural *ſanctions of virtue* in this world; ſo that thoſe perſons who addict themſelves to vice and wickedneſs become miſerable and wretched in the natural courſe of things, without any particular interpo-

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ſition of providence; whereas virtue and integrity is generally rewarded with peace of mind, the approbation of our fellow creatures, and a reaſonable ſhare of ſecurity and ſucceſs.

Could we ſee all the cauſes of the riſe and fall of empires, and in what manner the happineſs of mankind is connected with the great events in the hiſtory of the world, it is not to be doubted, but that we ſhould ſee as much wiſdom in the conduct of divine providence with reſpect to them; ſo as not to doubt (though we ſhould not have been informed of it by revelation) *that the Lord God ruleth in the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomſoever he pleaſes*, and promoting his own wiſe and benevolent purpoſes by the diſpoſition of them.

Laſtly, it is an argument of the wiſdom of God, that he has given wiſdom to man and other creatures, for he could not give a power of which he was not himſelf poſſeſſed in a much more eminent degree.

Theſe attributes of *power*, *wiſdom*, and *goodneſs*, are all that we can *directly* demonſtrate from the conſideration of the works of God. Every other of his attributes is deduced from theſe; and ſince the divine being has been proved to be powerful, wiſe, and good, he muſt likewiſe be whatever a powerful, wiſe, and good being cannot but be. Theſe, therefore, together with the attributes of *ſelf-exiſtence*, *eternity*, and *unchangeableneſs*, may be called

the *primary* attributes of God; and all others may be called *secondary* ones, or such as depend upon, and flow from those that are primary.

SECTION IV.

Of those attributes of God which are deduced from the consideration of his power, wisdom, and goodness jointly.

AS the matter of which the world consists can only be moved and acted upon, and is altogether incapable of moving itself, or of acting; so all the *powers of nature*, or the tendencies of things to their different motions and operations, can only be the effect of the divine energy, perpetually acting upon them, and causing them to have certain tendencies and effects. A stone, for instance, can no more move, or tend downwards, that is, towards the earth, of itself, than it can move or tend upwards, that is, from the earth. That it does tend downwards, or towards the earth, must, therefore, be owing to the divine energy, an energy without which the power of gravitation would cease, and the whole frame of the earth be dissolved.

It follows from these principles, that no powers of nature can take place, and that no creature whatever

whatever can exist, without the divine agency; so that we can no more *continue*, than we could *begin* to exist without the divine will.

God, having made all things, and exerted his influence over all things, must know all things, and consequently be *omniscient*. Also, since he not only ordained, but constantly supports all the laws of nature, he must be able to foresee what will be the result of them, at any distance of time; just as a man who makes a clock can tell when it will strike. All future events, therefore, must be as perfectly known to the divine mind as those that are present; and as we cannot conceive that he should be liable to forgetfulness, we may conclude that all things, past, present, and to come, are equally known to him; so that his knowledge is *infinite*.

The divine being, knowing all things, and exerting his influence on all the works of his hands, whereby he supports the existence of every thing that he has made, and maintains the laws which he has established in nature, must be, in a proper sense of the term, *omnipresent*.

Since God made all things to answer an important end, namely, the happiness of his creatures; since his power is so great, that nothing can be too difficult for him; since his knowledge is so extensive, that nothing can pass unnoticed by him; and since the minutest things in the creation, and

the moſt inconſiderable events, may affect the end that he has in view, his *providence* muſt neceſſarily extend to all his works; and we may conclude that he conſtantly attends to every individual of his creatures, and out of every evil that befals any of them produces good to themſelves or others.

Since God is omnipreſent without being the object of any of our ſenſes, he comes under the deſcription of what we call a *ſpirit*, or ſomething that is *immaterial*. It muſt, however, be in his power to make his preſence manifeſt to the human ſenſes, if the purpoſes of his providence ſhould require it.

We cannot help conceiving that any being muſt be *happy* when he accompliſhes all his deſigns. The divine being, therefore, having power and wiſdom to execute all his deſigns, we infer that he muſt be happy, and perfectly ſo. Alſo, though we cannot ſay that the conſequence is demonſtrable, we cannot but think that he who makes us happy, and whoſe ſole end in creating us was to make us happy, muſt be happy himſelf, and in a greater degree than we are capable of being.

In all the preceding courſe of reaſoning, we have only argued from what we ſee, and have ſuppoſed nothing more than is neceſſary to account for what we ſee; and as *a* cauſe is neceſſary, but not *more cauſes* than one, we cannot conclude that there

there are more Gods than *one*, unleſs ſome other kind of proof can be brought for it.

Beſides, there is ſuch a perfect *harmony* and *uniformity* in the works of nature, and one part ſo exactly fits and correſponds to another, that there muſt have been a perfect *uniformity of deſign* in the whole, which hardly admits of more than one being as the former of it, and preſiding over it. It was only the mixture of evil in the world that was the reaſon why ſome of the heathens ſuppoſed that there are *two principles* in nature, the one the ſource of good, and the other of evil, the one benevolent, and the other malevolent.

Theſe two principles, they ſuppoſed to be at preſent continually ſtruggling againſt one another, though it was their opinion that the good would finally prevail. But we have ſeen that all the evil that there is in the world is a neceſſary part of the whole ſcheme, and inſeparable from it; ſo that the good and the evil muſt have had the ſame author. Beſides, they both conſpire to the ſame end, the happineſs of the creation.

Upon the whole, we may remain perfectly ſatisfied, that there is but *one God*, poſſeſſed of all the perfections that have been deſcribed; and were our minds equal to this ſubject, I doubt not but that we ſhould be able to ſee, that there *could have been* but one, and that two Gods would have been impoſſible; as much ſo, as that there ſhould be in

nature two univerſal infinite ſpaces, or two eternities, both before and after the preſent moment. But becauſe we are incapable of judging what *muſt have been* in this caſe, we are content to argue from what *is*; and upon this ground we have reaſon enough to conclude that *God is one.*

Since the divine power and wiſdom are ſo amazingly great, that we cannot conceive any effect to which they are not equal; nay, ſince we are *able to comprehend but* a very ſmall part of the actual effects of the power and wiſdom of God, and new views are continually opening to us, which are continually exciting greater admiration, there can be no danger of our exceeding the truth, if we endeavour to conceive of theſe perfections of God as *infinite.* Indeed we have ſufficient reaſon to believe that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, they are ſo; though we are not able directly to demonſtrate it: becauſe we, being finite, cannot comprehend any thing that is infinite; and not being able to comprehend an infinite effect, we cannot fully demonſtrate infinity in the cauſe. The *extent*, and other properties of the divine goodneſs, I ſhall conſider more at large.

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SECTION V.

Of the properties of the divine goodneſs.

IF goodneſs, or benevolence, be the great governing principle, or ſpring of action in the divine being, happineſs muſt prevail amongſt thoſe of his creatures that are capable of it. If it were poſſible that there ſhould be, upon the whole, more miſery than happineſs in the creation, it would be an argument that the ſupreme being was malevolent. For ſince all the tendencies and iſſues of things were, from the firſt, perfectly known to him, he would, ſuppoſing him to be benevolent, have produced no ſyſtem at all, rather than one in which miſery might prevail. No ſcheme, therefore, which ſuppoſes the greater number of the creatures of God to be miſerable upon the whole, can be conſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of the divine benevolence. The *means*, or the *manner* by which the creatures of God are involved in miſery makes no difference in this caſe; for if it ariſe even from themſelves, it ariſes from the nature that God has given them. If he had foreſeen that the conſtitution which he gave them would, in the circumſtances in which he placed them, iſſue in their final ruin, he would not have given them that conſtitution, or have diſpoſed of them

in that manner; unleſs he had intended that they ſhould be finally miſerable; that is, unleſs he himſelf had taken pleaſure in miſery, in conſequence of his being of a malevolent diſpoſition.

It muſt be impoſſible, for the ſame reaſon, that the divine being ſhould be capable of ſacrificing the intereſts of a *greater number*, to that of a *few* of his creatures; though it may, perhaps, be neceſſary, that the intereſts of a few give place to that of a greater number. For if he had a deſire to produce happineſs *at all*, it ſeems to be an evident conſequence, that he muſt prefer a greater degree of happineſs to a leſs; and a greater ſum of happineſs can exiſt in a greater number, than in a ſmaller.

For the ſame reaſon, alſo, the goodneſs of God muſt be *impartial*. Since the ſupreme being ſtands in an equal relation to all his creatures and offſpring, he muſt be incapable of that kind of partiality, by which we often give the preference to one perſon above another. There muſt be a good reaſon for every thing that looks like *preference* in the conduct and government of God; and no reaſon can be a good one, with reſpect to a benevolent being, but what is founded upon benevolence. If, therefore, ſome creatures enjoy more happineſs than others, it muſt be becauſe the happineſs of the creation in general requires that they

ſhould

ſhould have that preference, and becauſe a leſs *ſum of good* would have been produced upon any other diſpoſition of things.

Thus it is probable that a *variety* in the ranks of creatures, whereby ſome have a much greater capacity of happineſs than others, and are therefore more favoured by divine providence than others, makes a *better ſyſtem*, and one more favourable to general happineſs, than any other, in which there ſhould have been a perfect equality in all advantages and enjoyments. We are not, therefore, to ſay that God is partial to men, becauſe they have greater powers, and enjoy more happineſs than worms; but muſt ſuppoſe, that the ſyſtem in which there was proviſion for the greateſt ſum of happineſs required that there ſhould be ſome creatures in the rank of men, and others in the rank of worms; and that each has reaſon to rejoice in the divine goodneſs, though they partake of it in different degrees. Indeed, it were abſurd to ſuppoſe, that, properly ſpeaking, there was any thing like *preference* in the divine being chuſing to make *this* a man, and *the other* a worm; becauſe they had no being before they were created; and therefore it could not be any thing like affection to the one more than the other that determined his conduct. In reality it is improper to ſay that God choſe to make *this a man*, and *that a worm*; for the

proper expreſſion is, that he choſe to make *a man*, and *a worm*.

Among creatures of the ſame general claſs or rank, there may be differences in advantages and in happineſs; but they muſt be founded on the ſame conſiderations with the differences in the ranks themſelves; that is, it muſt be favourable to the happineſs of the whole that there ſhould be thoſe differences; and it cannot ariſe from any arbitrary or partial preference of one to another, independent of a regard to the happineſs of the whole; which is what we mean by an arbitrary and partial affection.

There is a variety of caſes in which we may plainly ſee, that the happineſs of one has a reference to, and is productive of the happineſs of others; as in the principle of benevolence, whereby we are naturally diſpoſed to rejoice in the happineſs of others. For we cannot procure ourſelves theſe ſympathetic pleaſures, at leaſt, in any conſiderable degree, without contributing to the happineſs of thoſe around us. This, being a ſource of pleaſure to ourſelves, is a conſtant motive to benevolent actions.

Laſtly, if God be benevolent at all, he muſt be *infinitely* ſo; at leaſt we can ſee no reaſon why he ſhould wiſh to make his creation happy *at all*, and not wiſh to make it as happy *as poſſible*. If this be the caſe, the reaſon why all his creatures are not,

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at all times, as happy as their natures can bear, muſt be becauſe *variety* and *a gradual advance* are, in the nature of things, neceſſary to their complete and final happineſs.

Beſides, as there is reaſon to believe that the other perfections of God, his wiſdom, power, &c. are infinite, it ſeems to follow, by analogy, that his goodneſs muſt be ſo too, though we may not be able to prove it demonſtrably and conſequentially.

It muſt be owned to be impoſſible completely to anſwer every objection that may be made to the ſuppoſition of the infinite benevolence of God; for, ſuppoſing all his creatures to be conſtantly happy, ſtill, as there are *degrees of happineſs*, it may be aſked, why, if their maker be infinitely benevolent, do not his creatures enjoy a higher degeee of it. But this queſtion may always be aſked, ſo long as the happineſs of any creature is only *finite*, that is leſs than infinite, or leſs than the happineſs of God himſelf, which, in its own nature it muſt neceſſarily be. It muſt be conſiſtent, therefore, even with the infinite benevolence of God, that his creatures, which are neceſſarily finite, be finitely, that is imperfectly happy. And when all the circumſtances relating to any being are conſidered at once, as they are by the divine mind, poſitive evils have only the ſame effect as a diminution of poſitive good, being ba-

lanced, as it were, againſt a degree of good to which it was equivalent; ſo that the overplus of happineſs which falls to the ſhare of any being, after allowance has been made for the evils which he ſuffers, is to be conſidered as his ſhare of *unmixed happineſs.*

It is only owing to our imperfection, or the want of *comprehenſion of mind* (in which, however, we advance every day) that we are not able to make all our pleaſures and pains perfectly to *coaleſce*, ſo as that we ſhall be affected by the difference only. And whenever we ſhall be arrived at this ſtate; whenever, by long experience, we ſhall be able to connect in our minds the ideas of all the things which are cauſes and effects to one another, all partial evils will abſolutely vaniſh in the contemplation of the greater good with which they are connected. This will be perfectly the caſe with reſpect to all *intellectual* pleaſures and pains, and even *painful ſenſations*, will be much moderated, and more tolerable under the lively perſuaſion of their contributing to our happineſs on the whole. However, in the light in which the divine being, who has this perfect comprehenſion, views his works (and this muſt be the true light in which they ought to be conſidered) there is this perfect coincidence of all things that are connected with, and ſubſervient to one another; ſo that, ſince all evils are neceſſarily connected with ſome good, and generally

generally are directly productive of it, all the works of God, appear to him *at all times* very good, happineſs greatly abounding upon the whole. And ſince the works of God are infinite, he contemplates an infinity of happineſs, of his own production, and, in his eye, happineſs unmixed with evil.

This concluſion, however, is hardly conſiſtent with the ſuppoſition that any of the creatures of God are neceſſarily miſerable in the whole of their exiſtence. In the ideas of ſuch creatures, even when they have arrived at the moſt perfect comprehenſion of mind, their being muſt ſeem a curſe to them, and the author of it will be conſidered as malevolent with reſpect to them, though not ſo to others.

It ſeems, likewiſe, to be a reflection upon the *wiſdom* of God, that he ſhould not be able to produce the happineſs of ſome, without the final miſery of others; and ſo incapable are we of conceiving how the latter of theſe can be neceſſary to the former; that, if we retain the idea of the divine benevolence, together with that of his power and wiſdom in any high degree, we cannot but reject the ſuppoſition. That any of the creatures of God ſhould be finally, and upon the whole, miſerable, cannot be a pleaſing circumſtance to their benevolent author. Nay, it muſt, in its own nature, be the laſt means that he would have

have recourſe to, to gain his end; becauſe, as far as it prevails, it is directly oppoſed to his end. We may, therefore, reſt ſatisfied, that there is no ſuch *blot* in the creation as this; but that all the creatures of God are intended by him to be happy upon the whole. He ſtands in an equal relation to them all, a relation in which they muſt all have reaſon to rejoice. He is their common father, protector, and friend.

SECTION VI.

Of the moral perfections *of God deduced from his goodneſs.*

THE power and wiſdom of God, together with thoſe attributes which are derived from them, and alſo thoſe which are deduced from his being conſidered as an uncauſed being, may be termed his *natural* perfections; whereas his benevolence, and thoſe other attributes which are deduced from it, are more properly termed his *moral* perfections; becauſe they lead to ſuch conduct as determines what we commonly call *moral character* in men.

The ſource of all the moral perfections of God ſeems to be his benevolence; and indeed there is no occaſion to ſuppoſe him to be influenced by any other

other principle, in order to account for all that we ſee. Every other truly venerable or amiable attribute can be nothing but a *modification* of this. A perfectly good, or benevolent being, muſt be, in every other reſpect, whatever can be the object of our reverence, or our love. Indeed the connection of all the moral virtues, and the derivation of them from the ſingle principle of benevolence are eaſily traced, even in human characters.

1. If a magiſtrate be benevolent, that is, if he really conſult the happineſs of his ſubjects, he muſt be *juſt*, or take notice of crimes, and puniſh the criminals. Otherwiſe, he would be cruel to the whole, and eſpecially to the innocent, who would be continually liable to oppreſſion, if there were no reſtraint of this kind.

2. But whenever an offence can be overlooked, and no injury accrue from it, either to the offender himſelf, or to others, the benevolence of God, as well as that of a human magiſtrate, will require him to be *merciful*; ſo that implacability, or a deſire of revenging an affront, without any regard to the prevention of farther evil, muſt be carefully excluded from the character of the divine being. He muſt delight in mercy, becauſe he wiſhes to promote happineſs, though he may be under the neceſſity of puniſhing obſtinate offenders, in order to reſtrain vice and miſery.

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There is more room for the diſplay of mercy in the divine government than in that of men; becauſe men, not being able to diſtinguiſh true repentance from the appearance of it, and pretences to it, muſt make but few deviations from general rules, leſt they ſhould increaſe crimes and hypocriſy; whereas the ſecrets of all hearts being open to God, he cannot be impoſed upon by any pretences; ſo that if an offender be truly penitent, and it is known to him that he will not abuſe his goodneſs, he can receive him into favour, without apprehending any inconvenience whatever. Such caſes as theſe, how dangerous ſoever the precedent might be in human governments, are not liable to be abuſed in the perfect adminiſtration of the divine being. Juſtice and mercy, therefore, are equally attributes of the divine being, and equally deducible from his goodneſs or benevolence; both, in their places, being neceſſary to promote the happineſs of his creation.

3. As perfect benevolence is the rule of the divine conduct, and leads him to be both juſt and merciful, ſo we cannot but conceive that he muſt govern his conduct by every other rule that we find to be equally neceſſary to the well-being of ſociety, particularly that of truth, or *veracity*. All human confidence would ceaſe if we could not depend upon one another's word; and, in thoſe circumſtances, every advantage of ſociety would

would be loſt. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the divine being, if he ſhould think proper to have any intercourſe with his creatures, muſt be equally removed from a poſſibility of attempting to impoſe upon them.

4. As to thoſe vices which ariſe from the irregular indulgence of our appetites and paſſions, we can have no idea of the poſſibility of their having any place in the divine being. We therefore conclude that he is, in all reſpects, *holy*, as well as juſt and good.

There are, alſo, ſome evidences of the juſtice and mercy of God in the courſe of providence. The conſtitution of human nature and of the world is ſuch, that men cannot long perſiſt in any ſpecies of wickedneſs without being ſufferers in conſequence of it. Intemperance lays the foundation for many painful and dangerous diſeaſes. Every ſpecies of malevolence and inhumanity conſiſts of uneaſy ſenſations, and expoſes the perſon in whom they are predominant to the hatred and ill offices of his fellow creatures. Want of veracity deſtroys a man's credit in ſociety; and all vices may make men ſubject to contempt, or diſlike; whereas the habitual practice of the contrary virtues promotes health of body and peace of mind; and, in general, they inſure to him the eſteem and good offices of all thoſe with whom he is connected.

Now,

Now, ſince theſe evils which attend upon vice, and this happineſs which reſults from virtue, are the divine appointment (ſince they take place in conſequence of his conſtitution of the courſe of nature) they may be conſidered as the natural puniſhments of vice, and the natural rewards of virtue, diſtributed according to the rules of juſtice and equity, and intended to inculcate the moſt uſeful moral leſſons on all his intelligent offſpring, the ſubjects of his moral government.

We, alſo, ſee ſomething like the exerciſe of *mercy* in the conduct of the divine providence; ſince the natural puniſhments of vice ſeldom take place immediately, but leave a man room to recollect, and recover himſelf; and, if, after a man *has* been addicted to vice, he become truly reformed, the inconveniences he has brought upon himſelf are, in general, either removed, or mitigated; ſo that he finds his condition the better for it.

It may, alſo, according to the reaſoning applied in a former caſe, be conſidered as an argument for all the perfections of God, that we are ſo formed, that we cannot but approve of, and eſteem every branch of virtue. For it cannot be ſuppoſed that our maker would have formed us in ſuch a manner, as that he himſelf ſhould be the object of our diſlike and abhorrence. Our natural love of goodneſs and virtue, therefore, is a proof that every branch of it enters into the character of the divine being,

being, and conſequently that thoſe qualities are the objects of his favour and approbation.

Since, however, all the moral perfections of God are derived from his benevolence; ſo that holineſs, juſtice, mercy, and truth, are in him only modifications, as it were, of ſimple goodneſs; we ſhould endeavour to conceive of him, as much as poſſible, according to his real nature; conſidering benevolence as his ſole ruling principle, and the proper ſpring of all his actions. This is, alſo, the moſt *honourable* and the moſt *amiable* light in which we can view him, remembering that goodneſs neceſſarily implies what we call juſtice, though its natural form be that of mercy.

Upon the whole, it muſt be acknowledged, that it is but a very imperfect idea that we can form of the *moral* perfections of God from the light of nature. It hardly amounts to what may be called an idea of his *character*. We know nothing of God by the light of nature but through the medium of his works; and theſe are ſuch as we cannot fully comprehend; both the efficient and the final cauſes being, in many caſes, unknown to us: whereas the clearer ideas we have of the characters of men, are acquired from a reflection upon ſuch parts of their conduct as we can both fully comprehend, and are capable of ourſelves; ſo that we can tell preciſely how we ſhould *feel* and be diſpoſed,

poſed, if we acted in the ſame manner. The knowledge, alſo, of the *manner in which men expreſs themſelves*, upon known occaſions, is a great help to us in judging of what they feel, and conſequently in inveſtigating their proper character; and this is an advantage of which we are entirely deſtitute with reſpect to God, on the principles of the light of nature.

It is from *revelation* chiefly, if not only, that we get a juſt idea of what we may call the proper character of the divine being. There we may both hear his declarations, and ſee various ſpecimens of his conduct, with reſpect to a variety of perſons and occaſions; by which means we have the beſt opportunity of entering, as it were, into his ſentiments, perceiving his diſpoſition, learning what are the objects of his approbation or diſlike, in ſhort, of gaining a proper and diſtinct idea of his *moral character*.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DUTY, AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND.

SECTION I.

Of the rule of right and wrong.

HAVING ſeen what it is that nature teaches us concerning GOD, our next inquiry reſpects the proper *rule of human conduct*, and our *expectations*, grounded upon that conduct. No man comes into the world to be idle. Every man is furniſhed with a variety of paſſions, which will continually engage him in ſome purſuit or other; and the great queſtion we have to decide is what paſſions we ought to indulge, and what purſuits we ought to engage in. Now there are ſeveral very proper rules by which to form our judgment in this caſe; becauſe there are ſeveral juſt objects that we ought to have in view in our conduct. It is very happy, however, that this variety in our views can never miſlead us, ſince all the great ends we ought to keep in view are gained by the ſame means. They are, therefore, like ſo many different clues to lead to the ſame end; and in the following

following enquiry I ſhall make uſe of any one of them, or all of them, as it may happen that, in any particular caſe, they can be applied to the moſt advantage.

Strictly ſpeaking, there are no more than two juſt and independent rules of human conduct, according to the light of nature, one of which is obedience to the will of God, and the other a regard to our own real happineſs; for another rule, which is a regard to the good of others, exactly coincides with a regard to the will of God; ſince all that we know of the will of God, according to the light of nature, is his deſire that all his creatures ſhould be happy, and therefore that they ſhould all contribute to the happineſs of each other. In revelation we learn the will of God in a more direct method, and then obedience to God, and a regard to the good of others will be diſtinct and independent principles of action, though they both enjoin the ſame thing. The fourth, and laſt rule of human conduct, is a regard to the dictates of *conſcience*. But this is only the ſubſtitute of the other principles, and, in fact, ariſes from them; prompting to right conduct on emergencies, where there is no time for reaſoning or reflection; and where, conſequently, no proper rule of conduct could be applied.

Having thus pointed out the proper diſtinction and connection of theſe rules, I ſhall conſider each

each of them ſeparately. The firſt object of enquiry, in order to inveſtigate the proper rule of right and wrong, is what kind of conduct the divine being moſt approves.

Now the divine being, whoſe own object, as has been ſhewn, is the happineſs of his creatures, will certainly moſt approve of thoſe ſentiments, and of that conduct of ours, by which that happineſs is beſt provided for; and this conduct muſt deſerve to be called *right* and *proper* in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the words. If we examine the workmanſhip of any artiſt, our only rule of judging of what is right or wrong, with reſpect to it, is its fitneſs to anſwer his deſign in making it. Whatever, in its ſtructure, is adapted to gain that end, we immediately pronounce to be *as it ſhould be*, and whatever obſtructs his deſign, we pronounce to be *wrong*, and to want correction. The ſame method of judging may be transferred to the works of God; ſo that whatever it be, in the ſentiments or conduct of men, that concurs with, and promotes the deſign of our maker, we muſt pronounce to be, therefore, *right*; and whatever tends to thwart and obſtruct his end, we ought to call *wrong:* becauſe, when the former prevails, the great object of the whole ſyſtem is gained: whereas, when the latter takes place, that end and deſign is defeated.

2. On

2. On the other hand, if we were to form a rule for our conduct independent of any regard to the divine being, we ſhould certainly conclude that it is the part of wiſdom, to provide for our greateſt happineſs; and, conſequently, that we ſhould cheriſh thoſe ſentiments, and adopt that conduct, by which it will be beſt ſecured. But this rule muſt coincide with the former; becauſe our happineſs is an object with the divine being no leſs than it is with ourſelves; for it has been ſhewn, that benevolence is the ſpring of all his actions, and that he made us to be happy.

3. Since, however, the divine goodneſs is general, and impartial; and he muſt, conſequently, prefer the happineſs of the *whole* to that of any *individuals*, it cannot be his pleaſure, that we ſhould conſult our own intereſt, at the expence of that of others. Conſidering ourſelves, therefore, not as ſeparate individuals, but as members of ſociety, another object that we ought to have in view is the welfare of our fellow creatures, and of mankind at large. But ſtill there is no real diſagreement among theſe different rules of conduct, becauſe we are ſo made, as ſocial beings, that every man provides the moſt effectually for his own happineſs, when he cultivates thoſe ſentiments, and purſues that conduct, which, at the ſame time, moſt eminently conduce to the welfare of thoſe with whom he is connected. Such is the wiſdom of this

this admirable conſtitution, that every individual of the ſyſtem gains his own ends, and thoſe of his maker, by the ſame means.

The laſt rule is *conſcience*, which is the reſult of a great variety of impreſſions, the concluſions of our own minds, and the opinions of others, reſpecting what is right and fit in our conduct, forming a ſet of maxims which are ready to be applied upon every emergency, where there would be no time for reaſon or reflection. Conſcience, being a principle thus formed, is properly conſidered as a *ſubſtitute* for the three other rules, viz. a regard to the will of God, to our own greateſt happineſs, and the good of others, and it is, in fact, improved and corrected from time to time by having recourſe to theſe rules. This principle of conſcience, therefore, being, as it were, the reſult of all the other principles of our conduct united, muſt deſerve to be conſidered as the guide of life, together with them; and its dictates, though they vary, in ſome meaſure, with education, and will be found to be, in ſome reſpects, different among different nations of the world, yet, in general, evidently concur in giving their ſanction to the ſame rules of conduct, that are ſuggeſted by the three before-mentioned conſiderations. For, if we conſider what kind of ſentiments and conduct mankind in general will, without much reflection, and without heſitation,

pronounce to be right; if we conſider what are the actions that we moſt eſteem and admire in others, and that we reflect upon with the moſt ſatisfaction in ourſelves, they will appear to be the ſame with thoſe which tend to make ourſelves and others the moſt truly happy.

Following theſe four guides, we ſhall find that temperance, or the due government of our paſſions, with reſpect to ourſelves; juſtice, benevolence, and veracity with reſpect to others; together with gratitude, obedience, and reſignation to God, ought to be moſt aſſiduouſly cultivated by us; as what are, at the ſame time, the moſt pleaſing to our maker, the moſt conducive to our own happineſs, and that of others, and the moſt agreeable to the natural and unperverted dictates of conſcience.

That we are capable of governing ourſelves by theſe rules, and, from a proper regard to motives, can voluntarily chuſe and purſue that courſe of life which the will of God, a regard to our own happineſs, to the good of ſociety, and the dictates of our conſciences, uniformly recommend to us, is ſometimes expreſſed by ſaying that *we are the proper ſubjects of moral government.* Unleſs we ſuppoſe that men have this voluntary power over their actions, whereby they can, at pleaſure, either obey or diſobey the proper rule of life; that is, unleſs they be ſo conſtituted, that the proper motives

tives to right conduct can have a ſufficient influence upon their minds, all religion is in vain. To what purpoſe can it be to give men a law, which it is not in their power to obſerve; or what propriety can there be either in rewarding them for actions to which they could not contribute, or in puniſhing them for offences which they could not help.

We may, therefore, take it for granted, as the firſt, and moſt fundamental principle of all religion, as neceſſary to our being the proper ſubjects of moral government, that we are equally capable of intending and doing both good and evil; and therefore that it is not in vain that laws are propoſed to us, and motives are laid before us, both to perſuade us to what is right, and to diſſuade us from what is wrong, ſince it depends upon ourſelves, whether we will be influenced by them or not.

If we obſerve the proper rules of conduct, or the laws of our natures, we ſhall ſecure to ourſelves many ſolid advantages; and if we do not obſerve them, we entail upon ourſelves many evils. Theſe are, therefore, called the *puniſhments of vice*, and the former the *rewards of virtue*; and ſince they are diſpenſed by the providence of God, and take place according to his appointment, in the conſtitution of the courſe of nature; he is properly conſidered as our *moral governor*, and *judge*,

and we are ſaid to be *accountable* to him for our conduct.

From a regard to the four rules of right and wrong, explained above, I ſhall now endeavour to analize the ſentiments, the paſſions, and affections of mankind, and lay down particular rules for our conduct in life.

SECTION II.

Of the different objects of purſuit, and the different paſſions and affections of men correſponding to them.

IN order to form a proper judgment concerning the conduct of man, as an individual, and a member of ſociety, according to the rules above laid down, it will be neceſſary to have a juſt idea of, and to keep in view, the different objects of our purſuit, and the different paſſions and affections of our nature correſponding to them.

We find ourſelves placed in a world, in which we are ſurrounded by a variety of objects, which are capable of giving us pleaſure and pain; and finding by our own experience, and the information of others, in what manner each of them is adapted to affect us, we learn to deſire ſome of them, and feel an averſion to others. To theſe

deſires

deſires and averſions we give the name of *paſſions* or *affections*, and we generally claſs them according to the objects to which they correſpond. Theſe paſſions and affections are the ſprings of all our actions, and by their means we are engaged in a variety of intereſting purſuits through the whole courſe of our lives. When we ſucceed in our purſuits, or are in hopes of ſucceeding, we are happy; and when we are diſappointed in our ſchemes, or in fear of being ſo, we are unhappy.

1. The firſt and loweſt claſs of our deſires is that by which we are prompted to ſeek after corporeal or ſenſual pleaſure, and conſequently to avoid bodily pain. Theſe *appetites*, as they are uſually called, to diſtinguiſh them from *paſſions* of a more refined nature, are common with us and the brutes; and to all appearance they are poſſeſſed of them in as high a degree as we are, and are capable of receiving as much pleaſure from them as we are. Indeed, the *final cauſe*, or the *object* of theſe appetites is the very ſame with reſpect to both, namely, the continuance of life, and the propagation of the ſpecies. It was neceſſary, therefore, that all animals, which have equally their own ſubſiſtence, and the continuance of their ſpecies to provide for, ſhould be equally furniſhed with them.

2. It happens, from a variety of cauſes, that pleaſurable ideas are transferred, by aſſociation, upon objects which have not, originally, and in themſelves, the power of gratifying any of our ſenſes; as thoſe which give us the ideas that we call *beautiful* or *ſublime*, particularly thoſe that occur in works of genius, ſtrokes of wit, and in the polite arts of muſic, painting, and poetry. Our capacity for enjoying pleaſures of this kind, depending upon the aſſociation of our ideas, and requiring ſuch advances in intellectual life as brutes are incapable of, they are, therefore, claſſed under the general denomination of *intellectual pleaſures* (a name which we give to all our pleaſures, except thoſe of ſenſe) and more particularly under the head of *pleaſures of imagination*; becauſe the greater part of them are founded on thoſe reſemblances of things, which are perceived and recollected by that modification of our intellectual powers which we call *fancy*.

3. Another claſs of our paſſions may be termed the *ſocial*, becauſe they ariſe from our connections with our fellow creatures of mankind; and theſe are of two kinds, conſiſting either in our deſire of their good opinion, or in our wiſhing their happineſs or miſery. In this latter ſpecies of the claſs, we alſo comprize gratitude for the favours, and a reſentment of the wrongs we receive from them.

Thoſe

Thoſe affections of the mind which reſpect the divine being belong to this claſs, the object of them being one with whom we have the moſt intimate connection, to whom we are under the greateſt obligation, and whoſe approbation is of the greateſt importance to us. All the difference there is between our affections, conſidered as having God or man for their object, ariſes from the difference of their ſituation with reſpect to us. The divine being, ſtanding in no need of our ſervices, is, therefore, no object of our benevolence, properly ſo called; but the ſentiments of reverence, love, and confidence, with reſpect to God, are of the ſame nature with thoſe which we exerciſe towards our fellow creatures, only infinitely exceeding them in *degree*, as the divine power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, infinitely exceed every thing of the ſame kind in man.

Some of the brutes, living in a kind of imperfect ſociety, and particularly domeſtic animals, are capable of ſeveral of the paſſions belonging to this claſs, as gratitude, love, hatred, &c. but having only a ſmall degree of intellect, they are hardly capable of thoſe which have for their object the eſteem or good opinion of others; which ſeem to require a conſiderable degree of refinement. We ſee, however, in horſes, and ſome other animals, the ſtrongeſt emulation, by which they will

exert themselves to the utmost in their endeavours to surpass, and overcome others.

4. A fourth set of passions is that which has for its object our own *interest* in general, and is called *self love.* This seems to require a considerable degree of refinement, and therefore it is probable that brute animals have no idea of it. Their chief object is the gratification of their appetites or passions, without reflecting upon their *happiness in general*, or having any such thingin view in their actions.

There is a lower kind of self interest, or rather *selfishness*, the object of which is the means of procuring those gratifications to which money can be subservient; and from loving money as a *means* of procuring a variety of pleasures and conveniences, a man may at length come to pursue it as an *end*, and without any regard to the proper use of it. It then becomes a new kind of passion, quite distinct from any other; insomuch, that, in order to indulge it, many persons will deprive themselves of every natural gratification.

5. Lastly, as soon as we begin to distinguish among our actions, and are sensible that there are reasons for some of them, and against others, we get a notion of some of them as what *ought* to be performed, and of others of them as what are, or ought to be refrained from. In this manner we get the abstract ideas of *right and wrong* in human actions, and a variety of pleasing circumstances

attend-

attending the former, and diſagreeable ones accompanying the latter, we come in time to love ſome kind of actions, and to abhor others, without regard to any other conſideration. For the ſame reaſon certain tempers, or diſpoſitions of mind, as leading to certain kinds of conduct, become the objects of this moral approbation, or diſapprobation; and from the whole, ariſes what we call a *moral ſenſe*, or a love of virtue and a hatred of vice in the abſtract. This is the greateſt refinement of which we are capable, and in the due exerciſe and gratification of it conſiſts the higheſt perfection and happineſs of our natures.

SECTION III.

Of the ruling paſſion, *and an eſtimate of the propriety and value of the different purſuits of mankind.*

HAVING given this general delineation of the various paſſions and affections of human nature, which may be called the ſprings of all our actions (ſince every thing that we do is ſomething that we are prompted to by one or more of them) I ſhall now proceed to examine them ſeparately, in order to aſcertain how far we ought to be influenced by any of them, and in what caſes, or degrees, the indulgence of any of them becomes wrong and criminal.

Actuated as we are by a variety of paſſions, it can hardly be, but that ſome of them will have more influence over us than others. Theſe are ſometimes called *ruling paſſions*, becauſe, whenever it happens that the gratification of ſome interferes with that of others, all the reſt will give place to theſe. If, for inſtance, any man's ruling paſſion be the love of money, he will deny himſelf any of the pleaſures of life for the ſake of it; whereas, if the love of pleaſure were his ruling paſſion, he would often run the riſque of impoveriſhing himſelf, rather than not procure his favourite indulgence.

It muſt be of great importance, therefore, to know which ought to be our ruling paſſions through life, or what are thoſe gratifications and purſuits to which we ought to ſacrifice every thing elſe. This is the object of our preſent enquiry, in conducting which we muſt conſider how far the indulgence of any particular paſſion is conſiſtent with our regard to the four rules of conduct that have been explained; namely, the will of God, our own beſt intereſt, the good of others, and the natural dictates of our conſcience; and in eſtimating the value of any particular enjoyment, with reſpect to the happineſs we receive from it, we muſt conſider how great or intenſe it is, how long it will continue, whether we regard the nature of the ſenſe from which it is derived, or the

opportunities

opportunities we may have of procuring the gratification of it, and laſtly, how far it is conſiſtent, or inconſiſtent, with other pleaſures of our nature, more or leſs valuable than itſelf.

§ 1. *Of the pleaſures of ſenſe.*

Since no appetite or paſſion belonging to our frame was given us in vain, we may conclude, that there cannot be any thing wrong in the ſimple gratification of *any* deſire that our maker has implanted in us, under certain limitations and in certain circumſtances; and if we conſider the proper object of any of our appetites, or the end it is calculated to anſwer, it will be a rule for us in determining how far the divine being intended that they ſhould be indulged. Now ſome of our ſenſual appetites have for their proper object the ſupport of life, and others the propagation of the ſpecies. They ſhould, therefore, be indulged as far as is neceſſary for theſe purpoſes, and where the indulgence is not ſo exceſſive, or ſo circumſtanced, as to interfere with the greater good of ourſelves and others.

1. But to make the gratification of our ſenſes our *primary* purſuit, muſt be abſurd; for the appetite for food is given us for the ſake of ſupporting life, and not life for the ſake of conſuming food. The like may be ſaid of other ſenſual appetites.

Since, therefore, we certainly err from the intention of nature when we make that an *end*, which was plainly meant to be no more than a *means* to ſome farther end; whatever this great end of life be, we may conclude that it cannot be the gratification of our ſenſual appetites, for they themſelves are only a means to ſomething elſe.

2. To make the gratification of our bodily ſenſes the chief end of living would tend to defeat itſelf; for a man who ſhould have no other end in view would be apt ſo to overcharge and ſurfeit his ſenſes, that they would become indiſpoſed for their proper functions, and indulgence would occaſion nothing but a painful loathing. By intemperance alſo in eating and drinking, and in all other corporeal pleaſures, the powers of the body itſelf are weakened, and a foundation is laid for diſorders the moſt loathſome to behold, the moſt painful to endure, and the moſt fatal in their tendencies and iſſues. The ingenuity of man cannot contrive any torture ſo exquiſite, and at the ſame time of ſo long continuance, as thoſe which are occaſioned by the irregular indulgence of the ſenſes; whereas temperance, and occaſional abſtinence, is a means of keeping all the bodily organs and ſenſes in their proper tone, diſpoſed to reliſh their proper gratifications; ſo that they ſhall give a man the moſt true and exquiſite enjoyment even of ſenſual pleaſure. They prolong life to the utmoſt term of nature,

nature, and contribute to a peaceful and eaſy death.

3. An addictednefs to ſenſual pleaſure blunts the faculties of the mind, being injurious to mental apprehenſion, and all the finer feelings of the ſoul, and conſequently deprives a man of a great many ſources of pleaſures which he might otherwiſe enjoy, and particularly of that moſt valuable complacency which he might have in his own diſpoſitions and conduct; from a proper and temperate uſe of the good things of life.

4. Senſual indulgencies, though, to a certain degree, and in certain circumſtances, they ſeem to promote benevolence, are evidently unfriendly to it when carried beyond that degree; for though moderate eating and drinking in company promotes chearfulneſs, and good humour, exceſs frequently gives occaſion to quarrelling and contention, and ſometimes even to murder. Alſo, when a man makes the indulgence of his appetites his primary purſuit, beſides incapacitating himſelf for the ſervice of mankind in any important reſpect, he will ſcruple no means, however baſe, cruel, or unjuſt, to procure himſelf his favourite pleaſures, which he conceives to be in a manner neceſſary to his being.

5. With reſpect to the bulk of mankind, whoſe circumſtances in life are low, the ſole purſuit of ſenſual pleaſure is exceedingly injurious to that

induſtry

induſtry which is neceſſary to their ſupport. Indeed, it is often ſufficient to diſſipate the moſt ample fortune, and reduce men from affluence to poverty, which, in ſuch circumſtances, they are leaſt able to ſtruggle with.

It is impoſſible that we ſhould not condemn a diſpoſition and purſuit ſo circumſtanced as this. An addictedneſs to ſenſual pleaſure is manifeſtly incompatible with our own true intereſt, it is injurious to others, and on both theſe accounts, muſt be contrary to the will of God. The vices of gluttony, drunkenneſs, and lewdneſs, are alſo, clearly contrary to the natural dictates of our minds; and every man who is guilty of them, feels himſelf to be deſpicable and criminal, both in his own eyes, and thoſe of others.

The only rule with reſpect to our *diet*, is to prefer thoſe kinds, and that quantity of food, which moſt conduces to the health and vigour of our bodies. Whatever in eating or drinking is inconſiſtent with, and obſtructs this end, is wrong, and ſhould carefully be avoided; and every man's own experience, aſſiſted with a little information from others, will be ſufficient to inform him what is nearly the beſt for himſelf in both theſe reſpects; ſo that no perſon is likely to injure himſelf much through mere miſtake.

With reſpect to thoſe appetites that are ſubſervient to the propagation of the ſpecies, I would obſerve,

obſerve, that the experience of ages teſtifies, that *marriage*, at a proper time of life, whereby one man is confined to one woman, is moſt favourable to health and the true enjoyment of life. It is a means of raiſing the greateſt number of healthy children, and makes the beſt proviſion for their inſtruction and ſettlement in life; and nothing more need be ſaid to ſhew that this ſtate of life has every character of what is right, and what ought to be adopted, in preference to every other mode of indulging our natural paſſions.

Marriage is, moreover, of excellent uſe as a means of transferring our affections from ourſelves to others. We ſee, not in extraordinary caſes, but generally, in common life, that a man even prefers the happineſs of his wife and children to his own; and his regard for them is frequently a motive to ſuch induſtry, and ſuch an exertion of his powers, as would make him exceedingly unhappy, if it were not for the conſideration of the benefit that accrues to them from it. Nay, in many caſes, we ſee men riſking their lives, and even ruſhing on certain death, in their defence. The ſame, alſo, is generally the attachment of wives to their huſbands, and ſometimes, but not ſo generally, the attachment of children to their parents.

We may add, that when once a man's affections have been transferred from himſelf to others,

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even his wife and children, they are more eaſily extended to other perſons, ſtill more remote from him, and that, by this means, he is in the way of acquiring a principle of general benevolence, patriotiſm, and public ſpirit, which perſons who live to be old without ever marrying are not ſo generally remarkable for. The attention of theſe perſons having been long confined to themſelves, they often grow more and more ſelfiſh and narrow ſpirited, ſo as to be actuated in all their purſuits by a joyleſs deſire of accumulating what they cannot conſume themſelves, and what they muſt leave to thoſe who, they know, have but little regard for them, and for whom they have but little regard.

A ſeries of family caſes (in which a conſiderable degree of anxiety and painful ſympathy have a good effect) greatly improves, and as it were *mellows*, the mind of man. It is a kind of exerciſe and diſcipline, which eminently fits him for great and generous conduct; and, in fact, makes him a ſuperior kind of being, with reſpect to the generality of thoſe who have had no family connections.

On the other hand, a courſe of lewd indulgence, without family caſes, ſinks a man below his natural level. Promiſcuous commerce gives an indelible vicious taint to the imagination, ſo that, to the lateſt term of life, thoſe ideas will be predominant, which are proper only to youthful vigour.

vigour. And what in nature is more wretched, abſurd, and deſpicable, than to have the mind continually haunted with ideas of pleaſures which cannot be enjoyed; and which ought to have been long abandoned, for entertainments more ſuited to years; and from which, if perſons had been properly trained, they would, in the courſe of nature, have been prepared to receive much greater and ſuperior ſatisfaction.

Beſides, all the pleaſures of the ſexes in the human ſpecies, who cannot ſink themſelves ſo low as the brutes, depend much upon *opinion*, or particular mental attachment; and conſequently, they are greatly heightened by ſentiments of *love* and *affection*, which have no place with common proſtitutes, or concubines, where the connection is only occaſional or temporary, and conſequently ſlight. Thoſe perſons, therefore, who give themſelves up to the lawleſs indulgence of their paſſions, beſides being expoſed to the moſt loathſome and painful diſorders, beſides exhauſting the powers of nature prematurely, and ſubjecting themſelves to ſevere remorſe of mind, have not (whatever they may fancy or pretend) any thing like the real pleaſure and ſatisfaction that perſons generally have in the married ſtate.

§ 2. *Of*

§ 2. *Of the pleaſures of imagination.*

As we ought not to make the gratification of our external ſenſes the main end of life, ſo neither ought we to indulge our taſte for the more refined pleaſures, thoſe called the pleaſures of imagination, without ſome bounds. The cultivation of a taſte for propriety, beauty, and ſublimity, in objects natural or artificial, particularly for the pleaſures of muſic, painting, and poetry, is very proper in younger life; as it ſerves to draw off the attention from groſs animal gratifications, and to bring us a ſtep farther into intellectual life; ſo as to lay a foundation for higher attainments. But if we ſtop here, and devote our whole time, and all our faculties to theſe objects, we ſhall certainly fall ſhort of the proper end of life.

1. Theſe objects, in general, only give pleaſure to a certain degree, and are a ſource of more pain than pleaſure when a perſon's taſte is arrived to a certain pitch of correctneſs and delicacy: for then hardly any thing will pleaſe, but every thing will give diſguſt that comes not up to ſuch an ideal ſtandard of perfection as few things in this world ever reach: ſo that, upon the whole, in this life, at leaſt in this country, a perſon whoſe taſte is no higher than a *mediocrity*, ſtands the beſt chance for enjoying the pleaſures of imagination; and conſequently,

ſequently, all the time and application that is more than neceſſary to acquire this mediocrity of taſte, or excellence in the arts reſpecting it, are wholly loſt.

Since, however, the perſons and objects with which a man is habitually converſant, are much in his own power, a conſiderable refinement of taſte may not, perhaps, in all caſes, impair the happineſs of life, but, under the direction of prudence may multiply the pleaſures of it, and give a perſon a more exquiſite enjoyment of it.

2. Very great refinement and taſte, and great excellence in thoſe arts which are the object of it, are the parents of ſuch exceſſive *vanity*, as expoſes a man to a variety of mortifications, and diſappointments in life. They are alſo very apt to produce envy, jealouſy, peeviſhneſs, malice, and other diſpoſitions of mind, which are both uneaſy to a man's ſelf, and diſqualify him for contributing to the pleaſure and happineſs of others. This is more eſpecially the caſe where a man's excellence lies chiefly in a ſingle thing, which, from confining his attention to it, will be imagined to be of extraordinary conſequence, while every other kind of excellence will be undervalued.

3 With reſpect to many perſons, a great refinement of taſte is attended with the ſame inconveniences as an addictedneſs to ſenſual pleaſure; for it is apt to lead them into many expences, and make,

make them deſpiſe plain honeſt induſtry; whereby they are frequently brought into a ſtate of poverty, ſurrounded with a thouſand artificial wants, and without the means of gratifying them.

A taſte for the pleaſures of imagination ought, more particularly, to be indulged, and even encouraged, in younger life, in the interval between a ſtate of mere animal nature, in a child, and the ſerious purſuits of manhood. It is alſo a means of relaxing the mind from too cloſe an attention to ſerious buſineſs, through the whole of life, promoting innocent amuſement, chearfulneſs, and good humour. Beſides, a taſte for natural, and alſo for artificial propriety, beauty, and ſublimity, has a connection with a taſte for moral propriety, moral beauty, and dignity; and when properly cultivated, enables us to take more pleaſure in the contemplation of the works, perfections, and providence of God. Here, indeed, it is, that a juſt taſte for theſe refined pleaſures finds its higheſt and moſt perfect gratification: for it is in theſe contemplations, that inſtances of the moſt exquiſite propriety, beauty, and grandeur occur.

§ 3. *Of ſelf intereſt.*

A regard to our greateſt happineſs was allowed before to be one of the proper rules of our conduct;

duct; but at the ſame time it was ſhewn to be only one of four; and in fact the proper end of it, or our greateſt happineſs as individuals, is moſt effectually gained, when it is not itſelf the *immediate* ſcope of our actions; that is, when we have not our intereſt directly in view, but when we are actuated by a diſintereſted regard to the good of others, to the commands of God, and to the dictates of conſcience.

1. When we keep up a regard to ourſelves in our conduct, we can never exclude ſuch a degree of anxiety, and jealouſy of others, as will always make us in ſome degree unhappy; and we find by experience, that no perſons have ſo true and unallayed enjoyments, as thoſe who loſe ſight of themſelves, and of all regard to their own happineſs, in higher and greater purſuits.

2. Though it be true, that, when our intereſt is perfectly underſtood, it will be found to be beſt promoted by thoſe actions which are dictated by a regard to the good of others, &c. it requires great comprehenſion of mind even to ſee this, and much more to act upon it; ſo that if the bulk of mankind were taught to purſue their own proper happineſs, as the *ultimate end* of life, they would be led to do many things injurious to others, not being able to ſee how they could otherwiſe make the beſt proviſion for themſelves.

3. If

3. If we conſult the unperverted dictates of our minds, we ſhall feel that there is a kind of *meanneſs* in a man's acting from a view to his own intereſt only; and if any perſon were known to have no higher motive for his conduct, though he ſhould have ſo much comprehenſion of mind, as that this principle ſhould never miſlead him, and every particular action which he was led to by it ſhould be, in itſelf, always right, he would not be allowed to have any *moral worth*, ſo as to command our *eſteem*; and he would not at all engage our *love*. All we could ſay in his favour would be that he was a *prudent* man, not that he was *virtuous*. Nay, we ſhould not allow that any man's conduct was even *right*, in the higheſt and moſt proper ſenſe of the word, unleſs he was influenced by motives of a higher and purer nature; namely, a regard to the will of God, to the good of others, or to the dictates of conſcience.

It ſeems to follow from theſe conſiderations, that this principle, of a regard to our higheſt intereſt, holds a kind of *middle rank* between the vices and the virtues; and that its principal uſe is to be a means of raiſing us above all the lower and vicious purſuits, to thoſe that are higher, and properly ſpeaking virtuous and praiſe worthy. From a regard to our true intereſt, or mere ſelf love, we are firſt of all made ſenſible that we ſhould injure ourſelves by making the gratification of

of our ſenſes, or the pleaſures of imagination, &c. our chief purſuit, and the great buſineſs and end of life; and we are convinced that it is our wiſdom to pay a ſupreme regard to the will of our maker, to employ ourſelves in doing good to others, and, univerſally, to obey the dictates of our conſciences. This perſuaſion will lead us to do thoſe things which we know to be agreeable to thoſe higher principles, though we cannot immediately ſee them to be for our intereſt; and, by degrees, we ſhall get a habit of acting in the moſt pious, generous, and conſcientious manner, without ever having our own happineſs in view, or in the leaſt attending to any connection, immediate or diſtant, that our conduct has with it.

On theſe accounts, it ſeems better not to conſider any kind of ſelf intereſt as an ultimate rule of our conduct; but that, independent of any regard to our own happineſs, we ſhould think ourſelves obliged conſcientiouſly to do what is right, and generouſly and diſintereſtedly to purſue the good of others, though, to all appearance, we ſacrifice our own to it; and at all events to conform to the will of our maker, who, ſtanding in an equal relation to all his offſpring, muſt wiſh the good of them all, and therefore cannot approve of our conſulting our own happineſs at the expence of that of others, but muſt rather take pleaſure in ſeeing us act upon the maxims of his own generous

benevo-

benevolence; depending, in general, that that great, righteous, and good being, who approves of our conduct, will not suffer us to be losers by it upon the whole.

There is a lower species of self interest, or *selfishness*, consisting in the *love of money*, which, beyond a certain degree, is highly deserving of censure. As a means of procuring ourselves any kind of gratification, that can be purchased, the love of money is a passion of the same nature with a fondness for that species of pleasure which can be purchased with it. If, for instance, a man makes no other use of his wealth than to procure the means of sensual pleasure, the love of money, in him, is only another name for the love of pleasure. If a man accumulates money with no other view than to indulge his taste in the refined arts above mentioned, his love of money is the same thing with a love of the arts; or lastly, if a man really intends nothing but the good of others, while he is amassing riches, he is actuated by the principle of benevolence.

In short, the love of money, whenever it is pursued, directly and properly, as *a means* to something else, is a passion, the rank of which keeps pace with the *end* that is proposed to be gained by it. But in the pursuit of riches, it is very common to forget the use of money as a means; and to desire it without any farther end, so as even to sacrifice

ſacrifice to this purſuit all thoſe appetites and paſſions, to the gratification of which it was originally ſubſervient, and for the ſake of which only it was originally coveted. In this ſtate the love of money, or the paſſion we call *covetouſneſs*, is evidently abſurd and wrong.

This groſs ſelf intereſt, which conſiſts in an exceſſive love of money, as an end, and without any regard to its uſe, will ſometimes bring a man to abridge himſelf of all the natural enjoyments of life, and engage him in the moſt laborious purſuits, attended with moſt painful anxiety of mind; it very often ſteels his heart againſt all the feelings of humanity and compaſſion, and never fails to fill him with envy, jealouſy, and reſentment againſt all thoſe whom he imagines to be his competitors and rivals. Much leſs does this ſordid paſſion admit of any of the pleaſures that reſult from a conſcioufneſs of the approbation of God, of our fellow creatures, or of our own minds. In fact, it deprives a man of all the genuine pleaſures of his nature, and involves him in much perplexity and diſtreſs; the immediate cauſe of which, though it be often abſurd and imaginary, is ſerious to himſelf, and makes him appear in a ridiculous light to others.

All theſe obſervations, concerning the love of money, are equally true of the love of *power*, or of any thing elſe, that is originally deſirable as a

means to ſome farther end, but which afterwards becomes itſelf an ultimate end of our actions. It is even, in a great meaſure, true of the love of *knowledge* or *learning*. This is chiefly uſeful as a means, and is valuable in proportion to the end it is fitted to anſwer; but, together with the love of riches and power, it is abſurd, and to be condemned, when purſued as an end, or for its own ſake only.

The amaſſing of money muſt be allowed to be reaſonable, or at leaſt *excuſable*, provided there be a probability that a man may live to enjoy it, or that it may be of uſe to his poſterity, or others in whoſe welfare he intereſts himſelf; but when we ſee a man perſiſting in the accumulation of wealth, even to extreme old age, when it would be deemed madneſs in him to pretend that he could have any real want of it; when he diſcovers the ſame avaricious temper, though he has no children, and there is no body for whom he is known to have the leaſt regard, it is evident that he purſues money as an *end*, or for *its own ſake*, and not at all as a *means* to any thing farther. In this caſe, therefore, it is, without doubt, highly criminal, and deſerving of the above-mentioned cenſures.

§ 4. *Of*

§ 4. *Of the paſſions which ariſe from our ſocial nature.*

The paſſions and affections which I have hitherto conſidered are thoſe which belong to us as individuals, and do not neceſſarily ſuppoſe any relation to other beings; I ſhall now proceed to treat of thoſe which are of this latter claſs, and firſt of the pleaſure that we take in the good opinion of others concerning us, which gives riſe to that paſſion which we call the *love of fame*.

This is a paſſion that diſcovers itſelf pretty early in life, and ariſes principally from our experience and obſervation of the many advantages that reſult from the good opinion of others. In the early part of life this principle is of ſignal uſe to us, as a powerful incentive to thoſe actions which procure us the eſteem of our fellow creatures; which are, in general, the ſame that are dictated by the principles of benevolence and the moral ſenſe, and alſo by a regard to the will of God.

But though, by this account, the love of fame is an uſeful *ally* to virtue, the gratification of it ought by no means to be made our primary purſuit; becauſe, if it were known that *fame* was the ſole end of a man's actions, he would be ſo far from gaining this end, that he would be deſpiſed by mankind in general; and eſpecially if he were

advanced in life, when it is commonly expected that men ſhould be governed by higher and better principles. For no actions are looked upon by the bulk of mankind as properly praiſe worthy, but thoſe which proceed from a principle of diſintereſted benevolence, obedience to God, or a regard to conſcience.

2. Beſides, *humility* is a principal ſubject of praiſe; and, indeed, without this, no other virtue is held in much eſteem. Now this humility ſuppoſes ſuch a diffidence of one's ſelf, ſuch a readineſs to acknowledge the ſuperiority of others, and alſo ſo ſmall a degree of complacence in the contemplation of our own excellencies, as muſt be inconſiſtent with our making this pleaſure our chief purſuit, and the ſource of our greateſt happineſs.

3. In another reſpect, alſo, the love of fame, as a primary object of purſuit, tends to defeat itſelf. We are not pleaſed with praiſe, except it come from perſons of whoſe *judgment*, as well as *ſincerity*, we have a good opinion; but the love of fame, as our ſupreme good, tends to beget ſuch a degree of *ſelf ſufficiency*, and conceit, as makes us deſpiſe the reſt of mankind; that is, it makes their praiſe of little value to us; ſo that the ſprightly pleaſures of *vanity* naturally give place in time to all the ſullenneſs and moroſeneſs of *pride*.

4. If

4. If a man have no other object than reputation, or popularity, he will be led to dwell frequently upon the ſubject of his own merit, of which he will, conſequently, entertain an overweening and unreaſonable opinion; and this can hardly fail to produce, beſides a moſt ridiculous degree of conceit, ſo much envy and jealouſy, as will make him inſufferable in ſociety, and ſubject him to the moſt cutting mortifications.

5. If a man's principal object be thoſe qualifications and actions which uſually diſtinguiſh men, and make them much talked of, both in their own and future ages, ſuch as eminence with reſpect to genius, excellence in the polite arts, diſcoveries in ſcience, or great atchievements in the arts of peace or war, his chance of ſucceeding is very ſmall; for it is not oſſible that more than a *few* perſons, in compariſon, can draw the attention of the reſt of mankind upon them. And beſides that the qualifications which are the foundation of this eminence are very rare among mankind, ſucceſs depends upon the concurrence of many *circumſtances*, independent on a man's ſelf. It is plain, therefore, that very few perſons can reaſonably hope to diſtinguiſh themſelves in this manner, and it would certainly be very wrong to propoſe that as a principal object of purſuit to all mankind, which the bulk of them cannot poſſibly obtain, or enjoy.

The proper uſe of this love of fame, as of the principle of ſelf intereſt, is to be a means of bringing us within the influence of better and truly virtuous principles, in conſequence of begetting a habit of doing the ſame things which better principles would prompt to. If, for inſtance, a man ſhould, firſt of all, perform acts of charity and beneficence from oſtentation only, the joy that he actually communicates to others, and the praiſes he receives for his generoſity, from thoſe who are ſtrangers to his real motive, cannot but give him an idea of the purer pleaſures of genuine benevolence, from which, and not from a deſire of applauſe only, he will for the future act.

The pleaſures that accrue to us from the purſuit of fame, like thoſe of ſelf intereſt, are beſt gained by perſons who have them not directly in view. The man who is truly benevolent, pious, and conſcientious, will, in general, ſecure the moſt ſolid and permanent reputation with mankind; and if he be ſo ſituated as that the practice of any real virtue ſhall be deemed unfaſhionable, and ſubject him to contempt and inſult, he will have acquired that *ſuperiority of mind*, which will ſet him above it; ſo that he will not feel any pain from the want of ſuch eſteem, as muſt have been purchaſed by the violation, or neglect of his duty. But he will rather applaud himſelf, and rejoice that he is not eſteemed by perſons of certain characters,

racters, be they ever ſo numerous, and diſtinguiſhed on certain accounts; finding more than an equivalent recompence in the approbation of his own mind, in the eſteem of the wiſe and good, though they be ever ſo few, and eſpecially in the favour of God, who is the ſearcher of hearts, the beſt judge, and moſt munificent rewarder of real worth.

§ 5. *Of the ſympathetic affections.*

A paſſion for fame, though it be founded on the relation that men ſtand in to one another, and therefore ſuppoſes ſociety, is of a very different nature from the *ſocial principle*, properly ſo called; or a diſpoſition to love, and to do kind offices to our fellow creatures.

1. That it is with the greateſt juſtice that this is ranked among our higheſt purſuits has been ſhewn already. That the ſtudy to do good to others, is placed in this rank, muſt be perfectly agreeable to the will of God, who cannot but intend the happineſs of all his offſpring, and who is himſelf actuated by the principle of univerſal benevolence. If we conſult the natural dictates of our conſcience, we ſhall find that it gives the ſtrongeſt approbation to diſintereſted benevolence in ourſelves or others; and if we examine how our own higheſt intereſt is affected by it, we ſhall find

that, in general, the more exalted is our benevolence, and the more we lay ourſelves out to promote the good of others, the more perfect enjoyment we have of ourſelves, and the more we are in the way of receiving good offices from others in return; and, upon the whole, the happier we are likely to be.

2. A man of a truly benevolent diſpoſition, and who makes the good of others the object of his purſuit, will never want opportunities of employing and gratifying himſelf: for we are ſo connected with, and dependent upon one another, the ſmall upon the great, and the great upon the ſmall, that, whatever be a man's ſtation in life, if he be of a benevolent diſpoſition, it will always be in his power to oblige others, and thereby indulge himſelf.

3. A perſon ſo benevolent may, in general, depend upon ſucceſs in his ſchemes, becauſe mankind are previouſly diſpoſed to approve, recommend, and countenance benevolent undertakings; and though ſuch a perſon will ſee much miſery and diſtreſs, which he cannot relieve, and which will, conſequently, give him ſome pain; yet, upon the whole, his pleaſures will be far ſuperior to it; and the pains of ſympathy do not, in general, agitate the mind beyond the limits of pleaſure. We have even a kind of ſatisfaction with ourſelves in contemplating ſcenes of diſtreſs,

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though we can only *wiſh* to relieve the unhappy ſufferers. For this reaſon it is that tragic ſcenes, and tragical ſtories are ſo engaging. This kind of ſatisfaction has even more charms for mankind in general, than the view of many pleaſing ſcenes of life.

4. Beſides, if to the principle of benevolence be added a ſtrict regard to conſcience, and confidence in divine providence, all the pains of ſympathy will almoſt wholly vaniſh. If we are conſcious that we do all we can to aſſiſt and relieve others, we may have perfect ſatisfaction in ourſelves, and may habitually rejoice in the belief of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God; being convinced that all the evils, which we ineffectually ſtrive to remove, are appointed for wiſe and good purpoſes; and that, being of a temporary nature, they will finally be abſorbed in that infinity of happineſs, to which, though in ways unknown to us, we believe them to be ſubſervient.

Every argument by which benevolence is recommended to us condemns *malevolence*, or a diſpoſition to rejoice in the miſery, and to grieve at the happineſs of others. This baleful diſpoſition may be generated by frequently conſidering our own intereſt as in oppoſition to that of others. For, in this caſe, at the ſame time that we receive pleaſure from our own gain, we receive pleaſure alſo from their loſs, which is connected with it; and for the

ſame reaſon, when we grieve for our own loſs, we grieve at their gain. In this manner emulation envy, jealouſy, and at length actual hatred, and malice, are produced in our hearts.

It is for this reaſon that *gaming* is unfavourable to benevolence, as well as other virtues, and high gaming exceedingly pernicious. For, in this caſe, every man's gain is directly produced by another's loſs; ſo that the gratification of the one and the diſappointment of the other muſt always go together. Indeed, upon the ſame juſt principle, all trade and commerce, all buying and ſelling is wrong, unleſs it be to the advantage of both parties.

Malevolent diſpoſitions, beſides that they are clearly contrary to the will of God, and the dictates of conſcience, are the ſource of much pain and miſery to ourſelves. They conſiſt of very uneaſy feelings; ſo that no man can be happy, or enjoy any ſatisfaction, while he is under the influence of them. Even the pleaſures of revenge are ſhocking to think of, and what a man muſt deſpiſe himſelf for being capable of reliſhing and enjoying; and they are, in all caſes, infinitely inferior to the noble ſatisfaction which a man feels in forgiving an injury. There is a meanneſs in the former, but true greatneſs of mind, and real dignity in the latter, and the pleaſure which it gives does not pall upon reflection. Beſides, a diſpoſition to

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do ill offices to others expoſes a man to the hatred and ill-offices of others. The malevolent man arms all mankind againſt him.

Anger is, indeed, in ſome caſes, reaſonable; as when it is directed againſt the vicious, and injurious, who are the peſts of ſociety; ſo that being enemies to ſuch perſons is being friends to mankind at large. But here great caution ſhould be uſed, leſt this paſſion of anger ſhould, as it is very capable of doing, degenerate into pure *ill will* towards thoſe who are the objects of it. Nay, we ſhould never indulge to anger ſo far as to ceaſe to have the real good and welfare of the offender at heart, but be ready even to do our greateſt perſonal enemies any kind office in our power, provided that the conſequence of it would not be injurious to ſociety. This, indeed, is what the law of univerſal benevolence plainly requires, as it ſtrictly forbids the doing any *unneceſſary* evil; and that evil is unneceſſary, which the good and happineſs of others does not require. If, therefore, we would appear to act upon this principle, we muſt be careful ſo to conduct our reſentment, as that it may be manifeſt that it is with reluctance that we entertain ſentiments of enmity.

If it be our duty to bear good will even to our enemies, much more ſhould we exerciſe it to our real friends, and uſe our endeavours to make the moſt ample return for any kindneſs that they do to

us. Indeed there is no virtue which has a ſtronger teſtimony in the conſciences of all men, than *gratitude*, and no vice is univerſally ſo hateful as ingratitude.

If the good of ſociety be our object, there can be no queſtion, but that *veracity*, with reſpect to all our declarations, and *fidelity*, with reſpect to all our engagements, is one of the moſt important of all ſocial duties. All the purpoſes of ſociety would be defeated, if falſhood were as common as truth among mankind; and in thoſe circumſtances all beneficial intercourſe would ſoon ceaſe among them; and notwithſtanding temporary inconveniencies may ſometimes ariſe from a rigid adherence to truth, they are infinitely overbalanced by the many ſuperior advantages that ariſe from our depending upon the regard to it being inviolable.

Since an *oath*, or an appeal to the divine being, is the moſt deliberate, and the moſt ſolemn of all the modes of aſſeveration, it ought to be the moſt ſcrupulouſly obſerved. There is not, in the nature of things, any ſtronger guard againſt impoſition and deceit; and therefore a perſon who has once *perjured* himſelf, deſerves not only to be deteſted, and ſhunned, as the bane of ſociety, but to be expelled out of it.

§ 5. *Of*

§ 5. *Of the relative duties.*

As we ſtand in a variety of relations to one another, and have much more opportunity of doing kind offices to ſome than to others, we cannot ſuppoſe that the divine being intended that our benevolence ſhould be like his own, *univerſal* and *impartial.* He ſtands in the ſame relation to all his creatures, and he is capable of attending to the wants of them all; whereas our beneficence is neceſſarily limited, and therefore ſhould flow the moſt freely towards thoſe whom we can moſt conveniently and effectually ſerve. Beſides the good of the whole will be beſt provided for by every perſon making this a rule to himſelf; whereas, if every perſon, without any particular regard to his own limited province, ſhould extend his care to the wants of mankind in general, very little good would, in fact, be done by any.

The *domeſtic relations* of life are the foundation of the ſtrongeſt claim upon our benevolence and kindneſs. The intereſts of *huſband and wife* are the ſame, and inſeparable, and they muſt neceſſarily paſs a very great part of their time together. In theſe circumſtances, to be mutually happy, their affection muſt be ſtrong and undivided. The welfare of their offspring, likewiſe, requires this, that they may give their united care and attention to form their bodies and minds, in order to fit them

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for the buſineſs of life, and to introduce them with advantage into the world.

As nature makes children the charge of their parents in younger life, ſo it lays an equal obligation on children to provide for their parents, when they are old and infirm, and unable to provide for themſelves.

Maſters and ſervants are under a variety of mutual obligations; and if that connection be happy; and mutually advantageous, there muſt be juſtice, humanity, and liberality on the one hand, requited with fidelity, reaſonable ſubmiſſion, and affection on the other.

Our own country, likewiſe, claims a particular preference. We ought to give more attention to its welfare than to that of any other country, and its magiſtrates are intitled to our particular reverence and reſpect.

It is for the good of the whole that we proportion our regards and benevolent attention in this manner; that is, regulating them, according to thoſe connections in life that are of the moſt importance to our own happineſs; but ſtill, we ſhould never loſe ſight of the relation we ſtand in to all mankind, and to all the creation of God; with reſpect to whom we are brethren, and fellow ſubjects; and whenever the intereſt of ourſelves, our own families, or country does not greatly interfere, we ſhould lay ourſelves out to do good

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to ſtrangers and foreigners, or to any perſons that may ſtand in need of our aſſiſtance; doing to others as we would they ſhould do to us; which is a rule of the goſpel that is perfectly agreeable to natural reaſon.

§ 6. *Of the Theopathetic affections.*

As benevolence, or the love of mankind, ſo alſo the love of God, and devotedneſs to him bears every character of one of our higheſt and moſt proper principles of conduct.

1. This principle interferes with no real gratification, but in ſuch a manner that all the reſtraint it lays upon any of them is, in reality, favourable to the true and perfect enjoyment we derive from them. No pains that we can expoſe ourſelves to for the ſake of mortifying ourſelves, can be pleaſing to that being who made us to be happy, and who has, for that purpoſe, given us the power, and the means, of a variety of gratifications, ſuited to our ſtate and condition. In this general manner it is ſhewn that the love of God, and devotedneſs to him, is perfectly agreeable to a regard to our own greateſt good. This principle muſt be conſiſtent with our attention to the good of others, becauſe God is the father of us all, and we are equally his offspring; and nature teaches us to conſider him as our father, moral governor, and judge, and therefore

therefore to reverence, love, and obey him without reſerve.

2. An entire devotedneſs to God, faith in his providence, and reſignation to his will, is the beſt antidote againſt all the evils of life. If we firmly believe that nothing comes to paſs, reſpecting ourſelves, our friends, and our dearest intereſts, but by his appointment or permiſſion; and that he appoints or permits nothing but for the beſt purpoſes, we ſhall not only *acquieſce*, but *rejoice* in all the events of life, proſperous or adverſe. We ſhall conſider every thing as a means to a great, glorious, and joyful end; the conſideration of which will reflect a luſtre upon every thing that leads to it, that has any connection with it, or the moſt diſtant reference to it.

3. Other affections may not always find their proper gratifications, and therefore may be the occaſion of *pain* as well as of *pleaſure* to us. Even the moſt benevolent purpoſes are frequently diſappointed, and without faith in the providence of God, who has the good of all his offſpring at heart, would be a ſource of much ſorrow and diſquiet to us. But the man whoſe ſupreme delight ariſes from the ſenſe of his relation to his maker, from contemplating his perfections, his works, and his providence; and who has no will but his, muſt be poſſeſſed of a never failing ſource of joy and ſatisfaction. Every object that occurs to a perſon of this

this diſpoſition will be viewed in the moſt favourable light; and whether it be immediately, pleaſurable or painful, the relation it bears to God, and his moral government, will make it welcome to him.

4. If we conſider the foundation of the duty and affection we owe to God upon the natural principles of right and equity, in the ſame manner as, from the ſame natural dictates, we judge of the duty we owe to mankind, we cannot but readily conclude, that, if a *human* father, benefactor, governor, and judge, is intitled to our love, reverence, and obedience; he who is in a much higher and a more perfect ſenſe, our father, benefactor, governor, and judge, muſt be intitled to a greater portion of our love, reverence, and obedience; becauſe, in all theſe relations, he has done, and is continually doing more to deſerve them. Conſidering what we have received, and what we daily receive from God, even life and all the powers and enjoyments of it; conſidering our preſent privileges, and our future hopes, it is impoſſible that our attention, attachment, ſubmiſſion, and confidence, ſhould exceed what is reaſonable and properly due to him.

In the regulation of our devotion, we ſhould carefully avoid both *enthuſiaſm* and *ſuperſtition*, as they both ariſe from unworthy notions of God, and his moral government. The former conſiſts in

in a childish fondness, familiarity, and warmth of passion, and an aptness on that account, to imagine that we are the peculiar favourites of the divine being, who is the father, friend, and moral governor of all his creatures. Besides this violent affection cannot, in its own nature, be of long continuance. It will, of course, abate of its fervour; and those who have given way to it will be apt to think of God with the other extreme of coldness and indifference; the consequence of which is often extreme dejection, fear, anxiety, and distrust; and sometimes it ends in despair, and impiety.

On the other hand, *superstition* arises from mistaking the proper object of the divine favour and approbation, for want of having a just idea of the moral perfections of God, and of the importance of real virtue. Persons of this character are extremely punctual with respect to the *means* and *circumstantials* of religion, or things that have only an imaginary relation to it, and may be quite foreign to its real nature; instead of bringing to God the devotion of the heart, and the proper fruits of it, in the faithful discharge of the duties of life, in the personal and social capacities. The omission of some mere form, or ceremony, shall give such persons more real uneasiness than the neglect of a moral duty; and when they have complied with all the forms which they think requisite to be observed,

ſerved, their conſciences are entirely eaſy, their former guilt has no preſſure, and they are ready to contract new debts to be wiped off in the ſame manner. Almoſt all the religion of the Mahometans and Papiſts conſiſts in this kind of ſuperſtition, and there is too much of it in all ſects and denominations of chriſtians. I cannot give a clearer idea of the nature of ſuperſtition than by what appeared in the conduct of ſome Roman Catholics in Ireland, who, I have been told, broke into a houſe, where they were guilty of robbery and murder, but, ſitting down to regale themſelves, would not taſte fleſh meat, becauſe it was Friday.

There is no quality of the heart ſo valuable as a juſt and manly piety, and nothing ſo abject as ſuperſtition. Superſtition and enthuſiaſm are generally demoninated the two *extremes* of religion, and in ſome ſenſes they are ſo; but, at the ſame time, they have a near connection with one another, and nothing is more common than for perſons to paſs from the one to the other, or to live under the alternate, or even the conſtant influence of them both, without entertaining one ſentiment of generous and uſeful devotion. Indeed the uſual ground of the preſumption and rapture of the enthuſiaſt is ſome external obſervance, or internal feeling, that can have no claim to the ſolid approbation of a reaſonable being.

§ 7. *Of*

§ 7. *Of the obligation of conſcience.*

In order to govern our conduct by a regard to our own true intereſt, to the good of mankind, or the will of God, it is neceſſary that we uſe our reaſon, that we *think* and *reflect* before we act. Another principle, therefore, was neceſſary, to to dictate to us on ſudden *emergencies*, and to prompt us to right action *without reaſoning* or thinking at all. This principle we call *conſcience*, and being the natural ſubſtitute of all the three other rules of right conduct, it muſt have the ſame title to our regard. As this principle, however, is a thing of a variable nature, it muſt be corrected from time to time, by recurring to the principles out of which it was formed. Otherwiſe, as we ſee exemplified in fact, conſcience may come to dictate things moſt injurious to our own good, or that of others, and even moſt diſhonourable to God. What impurities, what ridiculous penances and mortifications, yea, what villanies and cruelties do we not find to have been acted by mankind, under the notion of rendering themſelves acceptable to the object of their ſupreme worſhip.

If, however, a perſon has been well educated in a chriſtian and proteſtant country, and has lived ſome time under the influence of good impreſſions, ſuch as are favourable to virtue and happineſs, the dictates

dictates of his conſcience (which has been formed from thoſe good principles) will generally be right, and may be depended upon not to miſlead him. At all events, it is very dangerous to ſlight and diſregard the real dictates of our own minds, ſo as either to do what we have a feeling of as wrong, and what we condemn ourſelves for at the time, or to forbear to do what appears to us to be right, what we think we ought to do, and what we feel a ſudden impulſe to do. For if we can diſregard even an *erroneous conſcience*, we may come to diſregard the authority of *conſcience in general*, and *as ſuch*, which after all, is the ſureſt and beſt guardian of our virtue.

2. If the principle of conſcience has been well formed, in conſequence of a juſt train of ſentiments, and proper impreſſions, ſince it is the reſult of rational ſelf intereſt, benevolence, and piety, jointly, it may be conſidered as the very quinteſſence and perfection of our rational natures; ſo that to do a thing becauſe it is *right*, will be to act from a nobler, and more exalted principle of conduct than any of the others. For it is, in fact, every juſt principle united, and reduced into one; and, on this account, it will naturally claim the pre-eminence over the dictates of any of them ſingly, ſuppoſing them to claſh; and many caſes may be put, in which it ought to correct and overrule any of them.

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The regard I have to my own intereſt, believing it to be my higheſt, the love I bear to my fellow creatures, or even what I take to be the command of God, may dictate one thing, when my ſenſe of right and wrong, whether natural or acquired, may dictate another; and it may be ſafeſt and beſt for me to follow this guide. Thus a Papiſt may really believe that he does good to the ſouls, by tormenting the bodies of his fellow creatures, and thereby does God ſervice, and that it is no ſin to deceive hereticks; but if he feel an inward reluctance in purſuing perſecuting meaſures, and cannot tell a deliberate falſehood without compunction, we ſhould not heſitate to pronounce that he would do well to forbear that conduct, notwithſtanding his belief that he is thereby conſulting the good of mankind, and the glory of God; at leaſt till he hath carefully compared the dictates of his conſcience with what he imagined to be the command of God.

3. The ſatisfaction that reſults from obeying the dictates of conſcience is of a ſolid and permanent kind, and affords conſolation under all the pains and troubles of life. Whatever befall a man, if he can ſay that he hath done his *duty*, and can believe himſelf, he will not be wholly unhappy. On the other hand, the pangs of a guilty conſcience are the moſt intolerable of all evils. One villanous action is ſufficient to imbitter a man's whole life, and

and years of remorſe will not make the reflection upon it leſs cutting and diſquieting. All the riches, honours, and luxury of life are not ſufficient to give eaſe to the mind of that man, who thoroughly condemns and abhors himſelf.

4. This mechanical and neceſſary determination in favour of ſome actions, and againſt others, being either connate with the mind, or, which comes to the ſame thing, ariſing neceſſarily from our conſtitution, as influenced by the circumſtances of our being, muſt have been intended for ſome very important purpoſe; and this, in its own nature, can be no other than to be the monitor and guide of life. It is, in a manner, felt to be the repreſentative of God himſelf, and therefore, its ſentence will be conſidered as the forerunner of the righteous ſentence which our maker and ſovereign judge will paſs upon us. It is not only preſent pain that diſquiets the guilty mind, but a dread of future and divine judgments; as, on the other hand, the approbation of our own hearts is the moſt pleaſing feeling a man can have, not on its own account, ſo much as its being a kind of certificate of the divine approbation, and a foretaſte of his future favour and reward.

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SECTION IV.

Of the means of virtue.

HAVING thus ſhown the rank and value of all our paſſions and affections, or the regard that is due to each in the conduct of our lives; I ſhall give ſome practical directions, how to ſuppreſs what is irregular and vicious, and promote what is right and virtuous in us.

1. If any of our inferior paſſions have gained the aſcendency in us, ſo that a propenſity to any ſpecies of indulgence is become exceſſive, and, in conſequence of it, bad habits have been formed, it is certainly a man's wiſdom, as ſoon as he begins to ſuſpect that he is in a wrong courſe, to weigh in his own mind ſuch conſiderations as have been mentioned above, reſpecting the nature and tendency of our paſſions; that he may thoroughly convince himſelf how fooliſh a part he has choſen for himſelf, how injurious his conduct is to others, how diſpleaſing to his maker, and how much it is the cauſe of ſhame and remorſe to himſelf.

It is generally through want of timely *reflection*, that men abandon themſelves to irregular indulgences, and contract bad habits; ſo that if they would give themſelves time to *think*, and conſider deli-

deliberately of the nature and conſequences of their conduct, they would chuſe a wiſe and virtuous courſe. For no man is ſo infatuated as, that when no particular temptation is preſent, when he is perfectly maſter of himſelf, and cannot but ſee what is for his true intereſt, purpoſely and knowingly to lay aſide all regard to it. All mankind wiſh to be happy, and no man can voluntarily chuſe to be miſerable. Were any man, therefore, truly ſenſible, that there is no kind of vice to which he does not ſacrifice either the health of his body, his reputation with the thinking part of mankind, or even his worldly intereſt, ſometimes all theſe together, and always the peace and tranquillity of his mind, who would chuſe to perſiſt in it; admitting that a regard to the good of others, and to the known will of God ſhould have no weight among them; though there are few perſons, I believe, who are not more or leſs influenced even by theſe generous and diſintereſted conſiderations.

2. Particular care ſhould be taken on our entrance into the world, that we contract no bad habits; for ſuch is the nature of habits, that when once a man has been accuſtomed to any thing, it may give him the greateſt pain to break himſelf of it, even though he have no pleaſure, yea, though he be really unhappy in continuing in it. Youth is, on every account, that time of life which re-

quires our greateſt attention, for then only is the mind ſuſceptible of new impreſſions, ſo as to be capable of changing for the better.

When once a man's connections and mode of life have been ſettled, which is generally before, or ſoon after he is arrived at thirty years of age, the bent of his mind is completely formed, and it is a thouſand to one but that after this there will be no material change in his diſpoſition or conduct to the end of his life. If his mind be vitiated then, there is little hope of a change, without a total revolution in his connections and affairs; or unleſs his mind be rouſed by ſome uncommon calamity. In this caſe, entering, as it were, upon life again, with wiſdom bought by experience, his old connections being broken, and new ones to be formed, he may chuſe a wiſer courſe, and in time may make it familiar and pleaſing to him. But ſtill there is a great danger of his relapſing into his former habits, the firſt opportunity.

A new ſet of *principles*, new *views* and *expectations* may be equivalent to ſuch an intire revolution in a man's affairs as was mentioned above. For many perſons are ſo diſpoſed, that if they had more *knowledge*, they would have more *virtue*. Thus the doctrines of a reſurrection, and of a future ſtate of retribution, produced a very great and ſpeedy change in the moral ſtate of the heathen world, at the firſt promulgation of chriſtianity, affecting

affecting the old as well as the young. But when nothing *new* takes place, with reſpect either to a man's circumſtances, or his knowledge, there is but little probability that his conduct will be materially affected by an attention to *truths* and *facts*, to the contemplation of which he has been long accuſtomed.

3. If bad habits have, unhappily, been formed, and a man thinks he has ſtrength of mind to break through them, he has no other way but reſolutely to avoid every aſſociated circumſtance belonging to them, whatever can ſo much as lead him to *think* of his former vicious pleaſures; particularly the *company* he has formerly kept, and by whoſe example, inſinuations, and ſolicitations, he has been ſeduced. A man who confides in his fortitude, and wilfully runs into temptation, is almoſt ſure to be overcome. Our only ſafety, in theſe caſes, conſiſts in flying from the danger, through a wiſe diſtruſt of ourſelves.

4. We muſt, alſo, reſolutely do whatever we are convinced is right, whether we can immediately take pleaſure in it or not. Let a man invariably do his duty, and he will, in time, find a real ſatisfaction in it, which will increaſe, as right conduct grows more habitual; till, in time, notwithſtanding the reluctance with which he entered upon a virtuous courſe, he will have the moſt ſincere pleaſure in it, on its own account. He will

love virtue for its own ſake, and will not change his courſe of life even though it ſhould not be the moſt advantageous to him for the preſent. If the moſt ſelfiſh perſon in the world would make a point of doing generous things, and thus get a cuſtom of befriending and relieving others, till he ſhould look upon it as his indiſpenſable *buſineſs*, and his proper *employment*, he would, at length, find ſatisfaction, in it, and would act habitually from the pure principles of benevolence.

5. The contemplation of virtuous characters is a great means of inſpiring the mind with a love of virtue. If a man attentively conſiders the hiſtory of a virtuous perſon, he cannot help entering into, and approving his ſentiments, and he will intereſt himſelf in his fate. In ſhort, he will feel himſelf diſpoſed to act the ſame part in the ſame circumſtances. It is not equally adviſeable to ſtudy the lives, and contemplate the characters of *vicious* perſons, with a view to be deterred from the practice of vice, by means of the horror with which it would inſpire us. Becauſe, when the mind is familiarized to any thing, the horror with which we firſt viewed it, in a great meaſure, ceaſes; and let a man have been ever ſo wicked, and his ſchemes ever ſo deteſtable, it is hardly poſſible (if his character and hiſtory have been for a long time the principal object of our attention) not to intereſt ourſelves in his affairs, ſo as to be pleaſed with the

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ſucceſs of his ſchemes and ſtratagems. There will be the more danger of this effect, if ſuch a perſon have any good qualifications to recommend him; and no man is ſo far abandoned to vice, as to be entirely deſtitute of all amiable and engaging qualities.

Vice joined with wit and humour, or any talent by which a man gives pleaſure, or excites admiration, is exceedingly dangerous; more eſpecially if a perſon of a profligate character be poſſeſſed of any real virtues, particularly ſuch as ſtrike the mind with an idea of *dignity* and *generoſity*. Thus courage, and humanity too often cover and recommend the moſt ſcandalous vices, and even ſuch as really tend to make men cowardly, treacherous, and cruel; and which, at length, extinguiſh every ſpark of generosity and goodneſs in the heart.

6. In order to cultivate the virtues of piety or devotion to the moſt advantage, it ſeems neceſſary that we frequently meditate upon the works, the attributes, and the character of the divine being, and on the benefits which we daily receive from his hands; that we, more eſpecially, reflect upon his univerſal preſence, and providence; till every object, and every occurrence ſhall introduce the idea of God, as our creator, preſerver, benefactor, moral governor, and judge. In this caſe a regard to him cannot fail habitually to influence our diſ-

poſitions and conduct, ſo as to prove the ſtrongeſt preſervative againſt all vice and wickedneſs.

7. *Prayer* muſt be joined to meditation. We muſt frequently addreſs ourſelves to God, expreſſing our veneration for his character, our gratitude for his favours to us, our humiliation for our offences, our devotedneſs to his will, our reſignation to his providence, and alſo our *deſire* of any thing that he knows to be really good for us. This kind of intercourſe with the deity tends greatly to ſtrengthen every proper diſpoſition of mind towards him. Prayer is the univerſal dictate of nature, not ſophiſticated by the refinements of philoſophy; and, in fact, has been the practice of all mankind.

Beſides, though God be ſo great and good, though he knows all our wants, and is at all times diſpoſed to grant us every proper bleſſing; yet he who made us, ſo as that we cannot help having recourſe to him as our father, benefactor, and protector, in the ſame manner as we have recourſe to our ſuperiors and benefactors on earth, will no doubt approve, encourage, and condeſcend to that manner of behaviour and addreſs to him, which the ſame diſpoſitions and circumſtances neceſſarily prompt us to with reſpect to one another. We may aſſure ourſelves, therefore, that the divine being will *realiſe* our natural conceptions of him, and reward his humble worſhippers. Since we cannot riſe to him, and conceive of him in a manner that

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is ſtrictly agreeable to his nature, and ſince our intercourſe with him is neceſſary to our virtue and happineſs, he will certainly condeſcend to us; ſo that we may depend upon finding him to be what the beſt of his creatures hope, and expect concerning him.

It will not therefore be the ſame thing, whether we apply to him for the good things we ſtand in need of, or not. Do not the wiſeſt and beſt of parents act in the ſame manner towards their children? It has been the ſource of great error, and raſh judgement concerning the ways of God, to confine ourſelves to the conſideration of what God is *in himſelf*, and not to conſider what it even becomes his wiſdom and goodneſs, both to repreſent himſelf, and actually to be, with *reſpect to his imperfect creatures.*

Beſides, if *good diſpoſitions* be regarded as the only object and end of prayer, it ſhould be conſidered, that an addreſs to God for what we want is a *teſt* of good diſpoſitions, as well as a *means of improving* them, ſuppoſing it be known to be the will of God, that we ſhould pray to him. But it muſt be acknowledged that, without revelation, or ſome expreſs intimation of the will of God, in this reſpect, the reaſonableneſs and obligation of prayer is not ſo clearly, though ſufficiently evident.

In fact, there are ſimilar reaſons for *aſking* favours of God, as for *thanking* him for the favours we

have received; ſince it may be ſaid, that if we be truly grateful, it is quite unneceſſary to tell the divine being that we are ſo; and thus all intercourſe with God by words muſt be cut off. But certainly there can be no real impropriety in expreſſing by words whatever is the *language of the heart*; and it can only be an unreaſonable and dangerous refinement to diſtinguiſh, in this caſe, between love, gratitude, deſire, or any other diſpoſition of mind.

CHAP.

PART III.

Of the future expectations of mankind.

HAVING endeavoured to inveſtigate the rules of human duty, from the principles of natural reaſon, I ſhall proceed to aſcertain, from the ſame principles, what we have to expect in conſequence of our obſervance, or neglect of them.

The natural rewards of virtue, and the puniſhments of vice, in this life, have been already mentioned occaſionally. I, therefore, propoſe, in this ſection, to conſider the evidence with which nature furniſhes us, concerning a *future life*, impartially ſtating both its ſtrength and its weakneſs.

1. The argument that, in general, has the moſt weight with the wiſe and good, in favour of a future life, is the promiſcuous and unequal deſtribution of good and evil in this world, in a *general*, indeed, but by no means an *exact* proportion to the degrees of moral worth; which ſeems to be inconſiſtent with the perfect goodneſs and rectitude of God as our mortal governor. If, together with his attributes of infinite wiſdom and power, he be alſo a lover of virtue, may it not be expected, it is ſaid, that he will reward it more completely than is

generally done in this world, eſpecially in the caſe of a man ſacrificing his life to his integrity, when he evidently cuts himſelf off from all proſpect of any reward, except in a future ſtate. It is acknowledged that in this life we find all the perfection we could wiſh, conſidering it as a ſtate of trial and diſcipline in which to *form virtuous characters*; but in order to complete this ſcheme, it ſeems to require another ſtate, to which it may be ſubſervient, and in which the characters that are formed here, may have a ſuitable employment and reward.

2. There is in the human faculties a capacity for *endleſs improvement*, in a conſtant advance from ſenſual to intellectual pleaſures, and theſe growing more complex and refined *ad infinitum*, provided it was not checked by that change in our conſtitution which is at preſent produced by our approach to old age. Our *comprehenſion of mind*, likewiſe, increaſes with the experience of every day; whereby we are capable of enjoying more of the paſt and of the future together with the preſent, without limits, and whereby our happineſs is capable of growing continually more ſtable and more exalted. In compariſon of what we are evidently capable of, our preſent being is but the infancy of man. Here we acquire no more than the rudiments of knowledge and happineſs. And can it be conſiſtent with the wiſdom of God, to leave his workmanſhip ſo unfiniſhed,

finiſhed, as it muſt be, if a final ſtop be put to all our improvements at death?

It is true, that we have no faculties but what have ſome proper exerciſe in this life, and there is a kind of *redundancy* in all the powers of nature. It is the beſt proviſion againſt a deficiency. Brute creatures too have faculties ſimilar to ours, ſince they differ from us in *degree* more than in *kind*. But then the difference is ſo great, eſpecially with reſpect to ſome men and ſome brutes, and man is ſo evidently the moſt diſtinguiſhed of all the creatures of God upon the face of the earth, that there ſeems to be foundation enough for our expecting a preference in this reſpect. Or, if the brute creation ſhould be intereſted in a future life, we ſhall certainly have more reaſon to rejoice in it, than to be offended at it; and many of them ſeem to have more pain than pleaſure in this.

We ſee, indeed, that many things never actually arrive at what we call their *perfect ſtate*. For example, few ſeeds ever become plants, and few plants live to bear fruit; but ſtill *ſome* of each ſpecies come to maturity, and are whatever their nature is capable of being. Allowing, therefore, that, agreeably to this analogy, very few of mankind ſhould arrive at the proper perfection of their natures, we might imagine that, at leaſt, *ſome* would; and therefore that the wiſe and the virtuous, if none elſe, might

hope to ſurvive that wreck which would overwhelm the common maſs of their ſpecies.

It muſt be acknowledged that, conſidering only what we know of the conſtitution of the body and the mind of man, we ſee no reaſon to expect that we ſhall ſurvive death. The faculties and operations of the mind evidently depend upon the ſtate of the body, and particularly that of the brain. To all appearance, they grow, decay, and periſh together. But if the goodneſs, the wiſdom, and the rectitude of the divine being require it, he can eaſily revive both, or continue the ſame *conſciouſneſs* (which is, in fact, *ourſelves*) in ſome other way.

If we had known nothing of a child but its condition in the womb, we ſhould have pronounced, that its ſudden tranſition into a ſtate ſo different from it as that which it comes into after birth, would be certain death to it, though, now that we are acquainted with both the ſtates, and can compare them together, we ſee that the one is preparatory to the other. Equally unfit are we, in this life, to pronounce concerning the real nature of what we call *death*; and when we actually come to live again, we may ſee an evident, and even a natural connection betwixt this life and the future, and may then underſtand the uſe of death, as a paſſage from the one to the other; juſt as we now ſee the neceſſity of the birth of a child, in order to its tranſition to our preſent mode of exiſtence.

Admitting

Admitting that death is an entire ceſſation of thought, ſimilar to a ſtate of *perfectly* ſound ſleep, or a ſtupor, yet, if the purpoſes of God's providence and moral government require it, he can make us to awake from this ſleep at any diſtance of time; and then the interval, let it have been ever ſo long, will appear as nothing to us.

I cannot ſay that I lay much ſtreſs upon the arguments which ſome have drawn either from the *deſire*, or the *belief* of a future life among mankind; becauſe the former is nothing, in fact, but a deſire of happineſs, and ſimilar to other deſires, which, in a thouſand reſpects, we do not ſee to be gratified; and other general opinions may perhaps be mentioned, which, nevertheleſs, are not true.

The general belief and expectation of a future life, is a conſideration of importance, but only as a proof of an *early tradition*, which was probably derived from ſome revelation on that ſubject, communicated by God to the firſt parents of mankind.

Upon the whole, I cannot help thinking, that there is ſomething in the arguments above recited, which ſhews that a future life is very agreeable to the appearances of this, though I do not think them ſo ſtriking, as to have been ſufficient, of themſelves, to have ſuggeſted the firſt idea of it. And though, if we had never heard of a future life, we might not have expected it; yet now that we have heard

of

of it, we may be ſenſible that we ſhould do violence to nature, if we ſhould ceaſe to hope for, and believe it.

Admitting that there is another life, taking place either at death, or at ſome future period, it muſt be acknowledged, that our condition in it is, at preſent, in a great meaſure unknown to us; but ſince the principal arguments in favour of it are drawn from the conſideration of the moral government of God, we may depend upon it, that virtue will find an adequate reward in it, and vice its proper puniſhment. But of what *kind*, it is impoſſible for us to ſay.

We ſeem, however, to have ſufficient reaſon to conclude that, ſince both the happineſs and miſery of a future life will be proportioned to the degrees of virtue and vice in this, they muſt both be *finite*; that is, there muſt be a continuance of virtue, to ſecure a continuance of reward, and a continuance in vice to deſerve a continuance of puniſhment.

Although the goodneſs of God ſhould give a pre-eminence to *virtue* and the rewards of it, in a future ſtate, yet we do not ſee that even his *juſtice*, in any ſenſe of the word, can require him to do the ſame with reſpect to vice. Indeed, we muſt give up all our ideas of *proportion between crimes and puniſhment*, that is, all our ideas of *juſtice* and *equity*, if we ſay that a puniſhment ſtrictly ſpeaking *infinite*,

infinite, either in duration or degree, can be incurred by the ſin of a *finite creature*, in a *finite time*, eſpecially conſidering the frailty of human nature, the multiplicity of temptations with which ſome poor unhappy wretches are beſet, and the great diſadvantages they labour under through life.

There is, indeed, a ſenſe, and a very alarming one too, in which future puniſhments, though not ſtrictly ſpeaking infinite, may, nevertheleſs, be *without end*, and yet be conſiſtent with the perfect rectitude and goodneſs of God. For the wicked, though confined to a ſituation which, after ſome time at leaſt, may not be abſolutely, and in itſelf, painful, may be for ever excluded from a happier ſituation, to which they ſee the virtuous advanced. And having this continually in proſpect, and knowing that there is an utter impoſſibility of their ever regaining the rank they have loſt by their vices, they may never ceaſe to blame and reproach themſelves for their folly, which cannot be recalled, and the effects of which are irreverſible.

If we argue from the analogy of nature, we ſhall rather conceive, that, ſince pain, and evils of every kind, are ſalutary in this life, they will have the ſame tendency and operation in a future; and, conſequently, that they will be employed to correct, meliorate, and reform thoſe who are expoſed to them; ſo that, after a ſufficient time of purification,

cation, thoſe who are not made virtuous by the ſufferings and diſcipline of this life, will be recovered to virtue and happineſs by the long continuance of unſpeakably greater ſufferings, and of a much *ſeverer diſcipline* in the life to come.

Since, however, the longer we live in this life, the more *fixed* are our habits, and diſpoſitions of mind, ſo that there is an aſtoniſhing difference between the *flexibility*, as we may call it, of a child, and that of a grown man, our conſtitution after death may be ſuch, as that any change in the temper of our minds will be brought about with much more difficulty, ſo that a ſpace of time almoſt incredible to us at preſent, may be neceſſary, in order that the ſufferings of a future life may have their proper effect, in reforming a perſon who dies a ſlave to vicious habits.

The motives to virtue by no means loſe any of their real force from the conſideration of the *non-eternity* of *future puniſhments*, eſpecially upon the ſuppoſition that they will be very intenſe, and laſting, though not abſolutely *without end*. For, in the firſt place, what is loſt with reſpect to the motive of *terror* and aſtoniſhment, is gained by that of *love*, and the perſuaſion of the greater regard, in the divine being, both to juſtice and mercy, in *not retaining anger for ever*, on account of the finite offences of his imperfect creatures.

Secondly,

Secondly, if the mind of any man be so hardened, as that he will not be influenced by the expectation of a very long continuance of punishment, a thousand years for instance, he will not, in fact, be influenced by the expectation of any suffering at all, even that of eternal and infinite suffering. For, in reality, if the fear of the former do not affect him, and stop his career of vice, it must be owing to his not allowing himself time to think and reflect upon the subject. For no man who really *thinks* and *believes*, can be guilty of such extreme folly, as to purchase a momentary gratification at so disproportioned a price; and if a man do not reflect about the matter, but will follow his appetites and passions without any reflection, all difference, in the intensity or duration of punishment, is wholly lost upon him.

In fact, we see that the bulk of professing christians, who, if they were asked, would acknowledge their belief of the eternity of hell torments, are by no means effectually deterred from vice by their belief of it. Rather, the vastness of the thing creates a kind of *secret incredulity*. They have a notion that the thing may not, in reality, take place; and, thinking of no medium, they secretly flatter themselves with the hope of meeting with no punishment at all, and consequently indulge the vain hope of going to heaven with a state of mind exceedingly unfit for it, rather than suffer a punish-

a puniſhment ſo vaſtly diſproportioned to the degree of their guilt. Whereas, if they had been taught to expect only a *juſt* and *adequate* puniſhment for all their offences here; and eſpecially ſuch as was neceſſary to their purification and happineſs, their minds might have acquieſced in it, they might have believed it firmly and practically, and ſuch a belief might really have influenced their conduct.

But laſtly, it is perhaps more agreeable to the analogy of nature and (this guide only I am now following) to expect, that, as the greater part of natural productions never arrive at their proper maturity, but periſh long before they have attained to it, ſo the bulk of mankind, who never attain to any high degrees of wiſdom or virtue, ſhould finally periſh alſo, and be intirely blotted out of the creation, as unworthy to continue in it; while the few who are wiſe and virtuous, like full ripe fruits, are reſerved for future uſe. And there is ſomething ſo dreadful in the idea of *annihilation*, as will, perhaps, affect the mind of ſome perſons more than the fear of future torments, with continuance of life, and conſequently with ſecret hope.

Theſe ſpeculations, it muſt be owned, are, in a great meaſure, random and vague, but they are the beſt, as it appears to me, that we can form to ourſelves by the light of nature. What revelation teaches

teaches us concerning ſo difficult but important a ſubject, we ſhall ſee in its proper place.

Such are the concluſions which nature teaches, or rather which ſhe *aſſents to*, concerning the nature, and perfections of God, the rule of human duty, and the future expectations of mankind. I ſay *aſſents to*, becauſe, if we examine the actual ſtate of this kind of knowledge, in any part of the world, not enlightened by revelation, we ſhall find their ideas of God, of virtue, and of a future ſtate, to have been very lame and imperfect, as will be ſhewn more particularly when we conſider, in the next part of this courſe, the *want* and the *evidence* of DIVINE REVELATION.

INSTI-

INSTITUTES

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

RELIGION.

PART II.

CONTAINING

The Evidences of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelations.

THE

INTRODUCTION.

IN the firſt ſection of this part of the work, I have made great uſe of a treatiſe of Dr. Leland's, intitled, *The advantage and neceſſity of the Chriſtian Revelation, ſhewed from the ſtate of Religion in the antient Heathen worla*; and as all the articles I have mentioned are much more largely diſcuſſed in that excellent work, where the proper authorities are alledged, I thought it unneceſſary to make any particular reference to authors here. If any thing in the account that I have given of antient or modern unbelievers be controverted, it is that work, and not mine, which muſt be examined for the purpoſe.

Upon the ſubject of *propheſy*, I have alſo made much uſe of Biſhop Newton's very valuable diſcourſes; and I think it better to make this general acknowledgment, than to refer to theſe writers page by page in the courſe of my work.

My

My readers muſt not forget that I am writing for the uſe of *young perſons*, and therefore that I am glad to avail myſelf of any thing that I can meet with, which I think proper for their uſe. I do not recollect, however, that I have, in any other part of this volume, made ſo much uſe of any particular writer, as to think it worth while to make any acknowledgement for it; except, perhaps, my borrowing from *Dr. Doddridge*'s *Lectures*, ſome arguments againſt the pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus.

Let it be obſerved, alſo, that writing, as I do, for the inſtruction of *youth*, though I have not knowingly concealed any *objection*, which, in my own opinion has the appearance of much weight, I have not thought proper to trouble them with the diſcuſſion of every ſubtile cavil, which has at any time been advanced againſt revelation in general, or chriſtianity in particular; becauſe I conſider ſome of them as the effect of ſuch manifeſt perverſeneſs, as would create difficulties in the cleareſt cauſe in the world. I have mentioned ſo many arguments in favour of revelation, and have replied to ſo many of the objections to it, that, conſidering the general plan of my work, I judged it to be altogether ſuperfluous to advance any thing more, whether there be any weight, or no weight at all, in what I have written.

Trite

Trite as the ſubject of this part of my work is, it is far from being exhauſted; but, like every other ſubject of very great importance, it is hardly poſſible for any perſon to give much attention to it, without finding either ſome new arguments for it, or, at leaſt, ſetting the old ones in ſome new and more ſtriking point of light. Some merit of this kind will, perhaps, be allowed to me, eſpecially as far as it reſpects a commodious *general diſtribution* of my materials; which I flatter myſelf will be thought to be eaſier, and more natural, than that of others who have written upon the ſame ſubject, and to be calculated to exhibit the evidences of revelation with peculiar ſtrength and clearneſs.

Fully ſatisfied as I myſelf am of the truth of chriſtianity, and of the ſufficiency of the proofs which I have, in this treatiſe, advanced in favour of it, I am by no means ſanguine in my expectations from what I have done, any farther than that it may be of uſe in the inſtruction of the *young*, the *ignorant*, or the *unſettled*, which was my primary object. No perſon who knows much of the world can expect that *confirmed unbelievers* will ſo much as look into it, much leſs that they will give it a deliberate and impartial peruſal. They will preſume that they have already thought enough upon the ſubject, and will not chooſe to diſturb their minds with any farther diſcuſſion of a queſtion which they have long ago decided, or change that courſe

of life into which they were led, and to which they have been accuſtomed in conſequence of it.

I mention this circumſtance with no other view than to admoniſh young perſons of the very great care they ought to take in forming their judgments upon a ſubject of ſo much importance as this; ſince in the courſe of a few years, the effect of the impreſſion to which their minds muſt neceſſarily be ſubject, will be either a firm and joyful perſuaſion of the truth of chriſtianity, a great indifference to it, and neglect of it, or an obſtinate and gloomy unbelief. The firſt of theſe ſtates of mind I cannot help conſidering as, in the higheſt degree, favourable to virtue and happineſs, and the laſt to be, in as great a degree, unfriendly to both. I uſe the word *gloomy* in ſpeaking of the ſtate of an unbeliever's mind, becauſe I conſider my own moſt chearful proſpects as derived from that faith which he diſclaims; and unleſs I be wholly miſtaken with reſpect to the object of true chriſtian faith, every defender of it muſt neceſſarily have the prejudices of the vicious and profligate againſt him, and the good will of all the friends of virtue.

If the bible contain a true hiſtory, we can no longer entertain the leaſt doubt, or be under any uncertainty, concerning the exiſtence, or the moral government of God. We are ſure that a being of infinite power and wiſdom is the author of every thing that we behold, that he conſtantly inſpects,

and

and attends to the intereſt of all his creatures, nothing that he has made being at any time neglected or overlooked by him; and, more eſpecially, that he is influenced by a moſt intenſe affection for all his rational offspring; that he is *good and ready to forgive*, and to receive into favour all who ſincerely repent of the ſins they have committed, and endeavour to conform to his will for the future. If chriſtianity be true, we can entertain no doubt with reſpect to a future life, but are abſolutely certain that, though we muſt all die, we ſhall *all be made alive again*, that Chriſt will come, by the appointment of God his father, to judge the quick and the dead, and to give to every man according to his works.

Now the firm belief of theſe important truths (concerning which there are great doubts and difficulties on the light of nature, but none at all upon the ſuppoſition of the truth of chriſtianity) cannot fail to elevate the ſentiments, and ennoble the nature of man. It will effectually ſupport us under all the trials of life, and give us hope and joy in the hour of death. On the other hand, a ſtate of doubt and uncertainty with reſpect to theſe articles of faith muſt make every well diſpoſed mind (which cannot but moſt earneſtly wiſh them to be true) anxious and unhappy; and a total diſbelief of them muſt tend to de-

baſe the ſoul, and prepare a man for giving into every kind of vice and exceſs to which he is ſtrongly tempted. When his views and proſpects are narrow and confined, his purſuits will be ſo too. To adopt a coarſe, but juſt obſervation, which has been made with reſpect to this ſubject, if a man expects to *die* like a dog, it cannot but be ſuppoſed that he will alſo *live* like one.

If, contrary to my expectations, an unbeliever ſhould have the curioſity to look into the following treatiſe, I would premiſe to him, that he is to conſider it as containing nothing more than my own particular view of the evidences of chriſtianity; that if he perceives any thing weak or unguarded in what I have advanced, it behoves himſelf, as well as me, to conſider whether the cauſe in general will not admit of a better defence; that he muſt look into other defences of chriſtianity for the ſupply of any deficiencies which he may find in this; and not think himſelf juſtified in his unbelief, till, after an examination *of his own*, an examination truly impartial, and earneſt, becoming the importance of the ſubject, he is ſatisfied, that not *what has paſſed for chriſtianity*, but, *what is really ſo*, is altogether indefenſible, having had its ſource in enthuſiaſm, or impoſture, or both.

Beſides

Beſides the books I have already mentioned in this introduction, or which I have occaſionally quoted in the body of the work, I would recommend to thoſe perſons who would wiſh to have more ſatisfaction with reſpect to ſeveral branches of the evidences of chriſtianity, the following treatiſes, ſeveral of which are not large or expenſive, among many others which may have great merit of the ſame kind, though I happen not to be ſo well acquainted with them. *Farmer on miracles*, 8vo. *Price's Diſſertations*, 8vo. *Weſt on the reſurrection of Chriſt*, 8vo. *Lyttelton on the converſion of St. Paul*, 8vo. *Letters of ſome Jews to Voltaire*, 2 vols. 8vo. *The Criterion*, 8vo. *Lardner's Jewiſh and heathen teſtimonies*, 4 vols. 4to. and his *Hiſtory of the writers of the New Teſtament*, 3 vols. 8vo. which may be had ſeparate from his larger work on the *Credibility*. *Butler's analogy*, 8vo. *Leland's view of the deiſtical writers*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Jortin's diſcourſes on the truth of the chriſtian religion*, and his *Remarks on eccleſiaſtical hiſtory*, 5 vols. 8vo. *Duchal's ſermons*, 8vo. *Macknight on the truth of the goſpel hiſtory*, 4to. *Doddridge's three ſermons on the evidences of chriſtianity*, eſpecially the ſecond, 12 mo. *Sharp's argument's for the truth of the chriſtian religion*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Lowman on the Ritual*, and alſo on the *Civil government of the Hebrews*, 2 vols. 8vo. and eſpecially *Hartley's view*

of the evidences of christianity, in the 2d vol. of his *Obſervations on man.*

Several of the above-mentioned writers undertake to defend articles which, in my opinion, do not belong to chriſtianity, as will be ſeen in the remainder of this work, as well as in my other writings; and they conſequently make the defence of chriſtianity more difficult than was neceſſary; but, notwithſtanding this, they all contain obſervations that are well worth the cloſeſt attention, in order both to evince the truth of revelation, and to confirm the faith of thoſe who already believe in it.

It ought to be obſerved upon this ſubject, that *faith* is not one abſolute and determinate thing, but that it admits of *degrees*; proceeding from a ſimple *aſſent* to a propoſition, which ariſes from a bare preponderancy of the arguments in favour of it, and advancing by the moſt inſenſible gradation, to that *fulneſs of perſuaſion*, which ariſes from the perception of the greateſt clearneſs and ſtrength of the evidence for it. The paſſions and affections, if they be at all moved by a bare aſſent, will be extremely languid, though the thing itſelf be of the greateſt moment; whereas a full perſuaſion of the reality of an intereſting object excites the moſt vigorous and fervent emotions. The difference of the impreſſion they make upon the mind is properly

perly compared to the effect of an object placed at a very great, or a very ſmall diſtance. If any thing in the conduct of life depend upon belief, we ſhall, in the former caſe, be hardly influenced by it at all; a very ſmall motive being ſufficient to overpower the effect of ſo ſuperficial a faith; at beſt we ſhall be irreſolute and inconſtant; whereas in the latter caſe, we ſhall be determined to vigorous and immediate action.

It is, therefore, a matter of the greateſt conſequence, not only that unbelievers be made converts to the chriſtian faith, but that the faith of believers themſelves be ſtrengthened, and they be thereby converted from merely *nominal* into *real* chriſtians, who live and act under an habitual and lively ſenſe of the great truths of chriſtianity; and who, in all their enjoyments and purſuits in this world, never loſe ſight of their relation to another and a better.

Now faith is *increaſed* by the very ſame means by which it is firſt *generated*, viz. by an attention to the proper evidences, and a frequent contemplation of the object of it. Thoſe perſons, therefore, who call themſelves chriſtians, and who muſt be ſuppoſed to wiſh to feel and act as becomes chriſtians, ſhould ſtudy the evidences of their religion; they ſhould meditate upon the life, diſcourſes, and miracles of Chriſt; and make

familiar to their minds every thing relating to the hiſtory and propagation of chriſtianity in the world. They ſhould both frequently read the ſcriptures, and alſo other books which tend to prove their truth, and illuſtrate their contents.

I ſhall think myſelf very happy, and that I gain a very valuable end, if this part of my work, though it be of no uſe to the converſion of unbelievers, ſhould be a means of *confirming the faith* of any profeſſing chriſtians, leading them to a better underſtanding of the reaſons of their faith, and making them think more frequently, and more highly of their privileges and obligations as chriſtians.

To this part of the work I ſhall ſubjoin *An Eſſay* (publiſhed originally in the *Theological Repoſitory*) *on the analogy there is between the methods by which the perfection and happineſs of men are promoted according to the diſpenſations of natural and revealed religion.* Theſe, I have there endeavoured to ſhew, are exceedingly ſimilar, the immediate object in both being a gradual extenſion of the views, and an enlargement of the comprehenſion of the human mind. This, however, is a conſideration on which I do not lay much ſtreſs. It is acknowledged not to be ſufficient to produce conviction in the minds of unbelievers, but it is hoped

hoped that it exhibits ſuch a *preſumptive argument* in favour of the ſcheme of revelation, as is calculated to give ſome additional ſatisfaction to thoſe who are already the lovers and friends of revealed religion; though to perſons who have not a philoſophical turn of mind, it may ſeem to be too abſtruſe, and to have too much refinement in it.

PART II.

THE

EVIDENCES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

WE have ſeen how far unaſſiſted reaſon has been able to carry us in our inquiries concerning the being, perfections, and providence of God, and alſo concerning the duty and final expectations of mankind; or rather how far unaſſiſted reaſon *might* have been able to carry us in theſe inquiries. For though it be true that all the deductions we have made are derived from the conſideration of nothing but what we *feel* or *ſee*, yet theſe concluſions were never, in fact, drawn from thoſe premiſes, by any of the human race; and it is in vain that we look for ſo complete a ſyſtem of morals among the moſt intelligent of mankind. Indeed, the very imperfect ſtate of this important kind of knowledge in the heathen world, and the growing corruption of morals, which was the conſequence of it, furniſh a ſtrong proof of the expediency, if not of the abſolute neceſſity of divine revelation.

CHAP-

CHAPTER I.

OF THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

IT will be acknowledged that, of all the heathen nations, the greateſt progreſs in uſeful knowledge is to be looked for among the Greeks, who greatly improved upon the ſtock of knowledge which they borrowed from Egypt and the Eaſt. It is, therefore, doing the greateſt juſtice to this ſubject, to conſider the ſtate of knowledge and virtue among theſe nations.

The Greek philoſophers had not failed to give particular attention to the ſubject of morals and theology; ſome of the moſt conſpicuous of their ſects having had no other object; and yet, though they had flouriſhed, unmoleſted, for the ſpace of near ſix hundred years before the time of Chriſt, and had frequently divided and ſubdivided themſelves (the leaders of every new ſect pretending to improve upon all who had gone before them) none of them attained to any thing like a full conviction concerning the unity, the attributes, and moral government of God. They had very imperfect ideas of the juſt extent of moral virtue; and the knowledge they had of a future ſtate added little or no ſtrength to its obligations. The practice alſo of the Gentile world was ſuch as might be expected from the ge-

neral corruption of their moral and religious principles.

All theſe particulars are ſufficiently known to the learned, and may be known to any perſon who will take a little pains to acquaint himſelf with the ſtate of knowledge and virtue in the Gentile world; but as theſe things are not ſufficiently known to the generality of chriſtians, and the ſuperficial thinkers among us have been greatly miſled with reſpect to this ſubject, I ſhall ſelect a few particular facts, which may give thoſe who are attentive and unprejudiced a pretty juſt idea of what the moſt enlightened of our ſpecies actually were before the promulgation of chriſtianity.

SECTION I.

Of the origin and corruption of natural religion in general.

PERSONS who begin to think upon theſe ſubjects when they are arrived to years of maturity, and who find in themſelves a full perſuaſion concerning the great truths of natural religion, concerning the being of God, the unity of his nature, and his moral character and government; as alſo concerning the rule of human duty, and the

the doctrine of a future ſtate, do not ſufficiently conſider how they came by that knowledge; and thinking the whole ſyſtem to be very rational and natural, they are apt to conclude that it muſt therefore have been very *obvious*, and that all the particulars of it could not but have been known to all mankind.

But, in fact, there is no man living whoſe knowledge of theſe ſubjects was not derived from inſtruction, and the information of others; and therefore there is no man living who, from his own ſenſe of things and experience, can be deemed a competent judge of what the powers of his own nature are able to do in this caſe. For the ſolution of this important queſtion, we muſt have recourſe to hiſtory only, and ſee what mankind have *in fact* attained to in a variety of circumſtances.

Now it appears, by the moſt careful inveſtigation, that all the uſeful and practical knowledge of religion, of which we find any traces among the Eaſtern nations and the Greeks, was, by their own confeſſion, derived to them from their anceſtors, in more early ages. Among the Greeks it was more particularly acknowledged, that their wiſdom and religion came from the Barbarians, and eſpecially thoſe who were from the Eaſt, many of whom arrived in Greece by the way of Thrace. It is well known to have been a long time before men pretended to *reaſon* at all upon ſubjects of morals

rals or religion. The celebrated *wisdom of the East*, and also that of the earliest Greek philosophers, consisted in nothing else than in delivering the *traditions of the antients.*

It is another remarkable fact, that it is in the earliest ages of the heathen world that we are to look for the purest notions of religion among them; and that, as we descend into the lower ages, we find religion growing more and more corrupt, even among the most intelligent of the heathens, who arrived at great refinements of taste, and made considerable improvements in science. This was the case universally till the promulgation of christianity in the world.

History informs us that the worship of one God, without images, was in all nations prior to Polytheism. Varro says, expresly, that the Romans worshipped God without images for one hundred and seventy years. This was also the case with all the nations of the East, with the Greeks, and even throughout this Western part of the world. We also find that the belief of future rewards and punishments was never questioned among the Greeks, till they began to reason upon the subject; when, rejecting the old traditions, and not finding satisfactory evidence of any other kind, they came at length to disbelieve them. This scepticism and infidelity, was introduced by the philosophers, and was from them diffused through

through all ranks of men, both in Greece and Rome.

Thefe remarkable facts certainly favour the fuppofition, that the moft important doctrines of natural religion were communicated by divine revelation to the firft parents of mankind.

We even find the moft acute of modern unbelievers acknowledging the improbability that the doctrine of the divine unity, and others abovementioned, fhould naturally have been the firft religion of mankind. Bolingbroke fays that Polytheifm and Idolatry have fo clofe a connection with the ideas and affections of rude and ignorant men, that one of them could not fail to be their firft religious principle, and the other their firft religious practice; and Mr. Hume, after difcuffing the matter very minutely, acknowledges, that the doctrine of one God is not naturally the religion of mankind.

The view of this writer is to make it probable that the rudiments of religious knowledge were acquired by mankind in the fame manner as the rudiments of other kinds of knowledge, and that fimilar advances were made in both; but the teftimony of hiftory is uniformly and clearly againft him. Indeed it cannot, furely, be fuppofed, that, according to his principles, the divine being fhould leave mankind under a neceffity of forming either

either no religion at all, or a falſe and dangerous one.

Is it not, therefore, more agreeable to our ideas of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, to ſuppoſe that, at the ſame time that he inſtructed the firſt parents of mankind how to provide for their ſubſiſtence in the world, and imparted to them that knowledge which was neceſſary for the purpoſe (without which they muſt ſoon have periſhed) and when he taught them the rudiments of ſpeech (without which, notwithſtanding their ſuperior capacities, they would have been little ſuperior to brute animals, perhaps, for ſeveral centuries) he gave them to underſtand the more important particulars concerning their relation to himſelf, as their creator, preſerver, and final judge; and that he inſtructed them in thoſe acts of religious worſhip which correſpond to theſe relations; and alſo that he injoined them the obſervance of the moſt important rules of ſocial duty, and the proper government of themſelves in other reſpects? All the knowledge we have of hiſtory agrees with this ſuppoſition, and the thing is far from being improbable, or abſurd in itſelf.

When this primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, there ſeems to have been no probability that it would ever have been reſtored to its original purity by natural means. Rather, the continued operation of the ſame cauſes might be

expected

expected to render it more and more depraved. The only probable resource was the knowledge of the studious and the learned. But the knowledge of the Greek philosophers was confined to their professed disciples, few of them taking any pains to enlighten the minds of the bulk of the people. Indeed, they generally held the common people in great contempt, considering them as incapable of being benefited by their instructions. And, on the other hand, the bulk of the people either despised the philosophers, or thought themselves unconcerned in any thing that passed within their schools. All that they minded were the religious rites of their country, as directed by their priests; and the philosophers themselves were so far from attempting any reformation of the prevailing idolatry (though it often countenanced the most abominable vices) that they both conformed to it themselves, and enforced conformity to it in others, even as a duty of moral obligation.

At length, however, more and more of the common people began to listen to the philosophers, and then all the remains of the old and useful traditions, of the world being made by God, and that men would be called to an account for their conduct in this world, when they should live in another, were given up. For the great object of the Greek philosophers was to exclude the interposition of the deity both in the formation of the world

world and every thing elſe, ſuppoſing it to have been formed either by the fortuitous concourſe of atoms, or in ſome other neceſſary and mechanical way; and the boaſted end of many of their ſects was to deliver the minds of men from the fear of the Gods, and the terrors of a world to come.

It muſt be obſerved that there is a ſtriking difference between the moral writings of thoſe philoſophers who wrote before, and thoſe who wrote after the promulgation of chriſtianity. The latter lean much more to what has been ſhewn to have been the primitive religion of mankind, and they inculcate purer morals. This, though they do not acknowledge it, was, no doubt, the effect of chriſtianity, with the maxims of which, and the happy influence of them, the philoſophers muſt have been acquainted. In various other reſpects, alſo, the moral ſtate of the heathen world was much improved by chriſtianity. Euſebius enumerates many abſurd and vicious cuſtoms, which, having prevailed before the promulgation of it, grew into diſuſe afterwards. The philoſophers, however, notwithſtanding the improvement of their moral ſyſtem, were the greateſt oppoſers of chriſtianity, and the ſtrongeſt bulwark of idolatry; and when the glaring abſurdities of the popular worſhip were expoſed by chriſtian writers, they invented plauſible apologies for it.

That

That I may impreſs the minds of thoſe who are not much read in antient hiſtory with a juſt ſenſe of the value of revelation, I ſhall point out the ſeveral ſteps by which the primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, and give ſome idea of the conſequence of that corruption with reſpect to the morals of the people; and that ſuch perſons may be more fully ſatisfied how much we are, in fact, indebted to revelation, even where natural reaſon has had the freeſt ſcope, I ſhall, at the ſame time, ſhew how very nearly the ſentiments of the moſt celebrated modern unbelievers, who had an opportunity of knowing, and ſelecting whatever they approved from revelation, tally with thoſe of the heathen philoſophers, who never heard of it, with reſpect to the important doctrines of the unity, the moral character and government of God, the rule of human duty, and the expectation of a ſtate of retribution after death.

SECTION II.

Of the corruption of theology *in particular.*

THE primary and great cauſe of idolatry was low and unworthy notions of God, from whence men were led to conſider all that we aſcribe to God, as too much for *one being*, what no one being

being could have made, or could properly attend to afterwards. They alſo thought it beneath the ſupreme being to concern himſelf with the government of the inferior parts of the creation. They, therefore, imagined that he had *deputies* to act under him; and the firſt objects to which they aſcribed this delegated power, were the ſun, moon, and ſtars, which, on account of their ſplendour, and beneficial influence, they ſuppoſed to be either animated themſelves, or directed by intelligent beings. That the worſhip of the ſtars, and other heavenly bodies, was the earlieſt ſpecies of idolatry, is agreeable to all antient hiſtory.

The temptation to this kind of idolatry appears, from the book of Job, to have been very ſtrong, in the earlier ages of the world; and it is evident, from ſeveral circumſtances, that it had a very firm hold on the minds of men. It was for affirming the ſtars to be inanimate bodies, which was conſidered as denying their divinity, and for advancing that the ſun is a body of fire, and that the moon is a habitable world, that Anaxagoras was accuſed at Athens for *impiety*. Even Socrates thought him guilty of great preſumption and arrogance; and Plato ſpeaks of his opinion as leading to atheiſm, and a denial of divine providence. This worſhip of the ſtars is what he himſelf chiefly recommended to the people.

Next

Next to the worſhip of the ſun, moon, and ſtars, ſucceeded that of *dead men.* This aroſe from cuſtoms which were originally intended to expreſs no more than a juſt regard for their merit and ſervices; but from this they proceeded, gradually, to acts of worſhip properly religious, erecting altars to them, and praying to them in any place and at any time. This introduced the worſhip of images in human forms, whereas they had before contented themſelves with erecting pillars, or even conſecrating rude ſtones and altars to their deities. The philoſophers were far from diſcouraging this practice of worſhipping dead heroes. Cicero in particular much approves of the cuſtom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as Gods.

During this progreſs of idolatry, the worſhip of the true God was gradually ſuperſeded, and the rites of it became intermixed with thoſe of the inferior deities. What contributed to confound theſe things the more was, that to moſt of the heavenly bodies, and alſo to deified men, were aſcribed the names and attributes of the one true God, till the rites peculiar to each of them could be no longer diſtinguiſhed; and at length the worſhip of inferior beings engroſſed all the regards of mankind, the worſhip of the true God being intirely excluded.

Beſides the worſhip of the celeſtial Gods, and of

of dead men, we alſo find Gods of an intermediate nature, ſuch as are now uſually called *genii*. Of theſe there were ſuppoſed to be various claſſes, and the worſhip that was paid to them made a conſiderable article in the heathen ſyſtem.

As if theſe three ſources could not ſupply divinities enow, we find that even different *names* of the ſame God, and acknowledged to be the ſame, were made to paſs for different deities, and had their peculiar religious rites and worſhip. Similar to this are the virgin Marys' of different places in Popiſh countries. It was another ſource of the multiplicity of heathen Gods, that the *ſymbols* and *images* of their principal Gods were converted into deities, and made the objects of religious worſhip, as Fire among the Chaldeans, and the Bull, and other animals, among the Egyptians.

There can be no doubt but that the images erected to their Gods were generally ſuppoſed to have divine powers in them. The philoſopher Stilpo, of Megara, was baniſhed by the Areopagus at Athens for aſſerting that the ſtatue of Minerva, made by Phidias, was not a God; and all that he ventured to alledge in his defence, was that this celebrated piece of ſtatuary was not a *God*, but a *Goddeſs*.

Farther, all the *parts of the univerſe* being conſidered as ſo many parts of the divinity by ſome, or expreſſions of his power by others, were made

made objects of religious worſhip. Even the qualities and *affections* of mankind, and alſo the *accidents* to which they are expoſed were worſhipped, as if a ſeparate intelligence had preſided over each of them; and ſome of theſe were not only natural evils, but even things of a morally vicious nature. Thus there was at Rome an altar to the *Fever*, another to *Evil Fortune*, and others to *Luſt* and *Pleaſure*. At Athens there was a religious ſervice appropriated to *Impudence*, and it was done by the advice of *Epimenides*, who paſſed for a great diviner and a prophet.

We find, in fact, that deities of a bad character engroſſed more of the attention of the heathen world, in general, than thoſe of which they entertained a good opinion, theſe being thought to be of themſelves diſpoſed to do them kind offices. Even Plutarch cites with approbation the opinion of Xenocrates, who, ſpeaking of unlucky days and feſtivals, which were celebrated by ſcourging, beatings, lamentations, faſtings, ill-boding words, and obſcene expreſſions, ſaid that theſe things could not be pleaſing to the good Demons, but that there are in the air about us certain great and powerful natures, of croſs and moroſe tempers, which take pleaſure in theſe things, and having obtained them, do no farther miſchief.

The Egyptians paid divine honours not only to the uſeful animals, as the Ibis and Ichneumon, but alſo

alſo to the Crocodile, and other noxious animals. Worſhipping ſome of theſe Gods from love, and others from fear, we are not ſurprized to find that the ſame Gods which they worſhipped in ſome of their religious feſtivals, were the conſtant objects of their curſes and execrations in others.

Such were the Gods whom we find to have been the objects of religious worſhip among the moſt celebrated heathen nations; and from the idea which has been given of their characters, we may eaſily imagine what kind of attention they were ſuppoſed to give to human affairs; but the doctrine of a *providence*, without which the belief of a God can have no influence, was, on other accounts, exceedingly imperfect and confuſed among the heathens. It was, more eſpecially, not a little embarraſſed with their notions of the influence of *fate* and *fortune* on human affairs. They even imagined that there was a fate which was uncontroulable by the greateſt of their Gods; and *Fortune* they conſidered as a deity altogether blind and capricious, ſo that no kind of conduct could recommend them to her favourable notice more than another. Beſides, the providence of the greateſt of their Gods was hardly ſuppoſed to extend any farther than to the outward conveniences of life. They therefore prayed to them for life, health, riches, or power, but ſeldom or never for wiſdom, or any moral endowment.

This

This, it will be ſaid, was the religion of the *vulgar*; but the ſame was the religion which the philoſophers conformed to, and enjoined. They even laid great ſtreſs upon the ſtrict obſervance of it, and made it a matter of moral obligation. Indeed, their own real ſentiments were not much more favourable to virtue. The learned Varro ſeems to value himſelf, as having deſerved well of of his fellow citizens, becauſe he had not only given an account of the Gods which the Romans ought to worſhip, but of the powers and offices belonging to each of them, that the people might not be at a loſs whom to addreſs on any particular occaſion. Socrates, the Stoics, and the beſt of the philoſophers generally ſpeak of *the Gods*, in the plural number, and ſeldom or never diſtinguiſh any one being as ſupreme with reſpect to the reſt. Plato, indeed, in one paſſage of his works, ſpeaks of one ſupreme God, but as a thing that was not fit to be communicated to the vulgar, and in general he alſo ſpeaks of *the Gods* in the plural number. Plutarch, who lived in the times of chriſtianity, acknowledges, indeed, one ſupreme being; but he alſo admits of a co-eternal evil principle.

The generality of the philoſophers held the whole animated ſyſtem of the world, or at leaſt the ſoul of it, (of which every ſeparate intelligence was a part) to be God. Balbus, among a number of excellent things in proof of the being of a God,

(in that celebrated treatiſe of Cicero concerning *the nature of the Gods*) maintains that the world is an animal, and has intelligence, that it is reaſonable, wiſe, and happy, and therefore a God. The great argument of the Stoics for the unity of God, is that there is but one world. In later times ſome of the philoſophers endeavoured to turn the popular religion into allegory, pretending that Jupiter, for inſtance, meant the air, and Juno the earth, &c.

Many of the philoſophers denied that there is any providence of the Gods at all. Pliny, the great naturaliſt, repreſents it as ridiculous to imagine that the God who is ſupreme gives any attention to the affairs of men; and many were of opinion that the Gods attend to the greater events of the world only. Indeed, it was the object of many of the ſects of philoſophy, and particularly of the Epicureans, who were very numerous about the time of Chriſt, and eſpecially in the higher ranks of life, to exclude the interpoſition of God both in making and governing the world.

Of what advantage can ſuch a religion as this, the outlines of which I have been deſcribing, be ſuppoſed to have been to the intereſt of virtue and good morals. Indeed, *religion* and *morals* were never conſidered by the heathens as having any proper connection at all. It was never ſuppoſed to be any

part

part of the buſineſs of a prieſt to teach the people virtue, their office being confined to the due performance of religious rites and ceremonies. When the Gods were ſuppoſed to be offended, and public calamities were conſidered as tokens of the divine diſpleaſure, they never had recourſe to repentance and reformation as a means of averting their anger; but always to ſome more exact or more expenſive ceremony. The uſual method of making an atonement at Rome, was a ſolemn proceſſion, and driving a nail into the temple of Jupiter. Lord Herbert acknowledges, that all the religion of the Gentiles was ſunk into mere ſuperſtition.

Every thing that the common people had any opportunity of hearing or ſeeing belonging to religion, among the Greeks or Romans, inſtead of inſpiring good ſentiments, and leading to regularity of conduct, generally tended to inflame their paſſions, and furniſhed excuſes for the undue gratification of them. Public games and plays, in which the flagitious actions of the Gods were repreſented, were conſidered as acts of religion, encouraged by their deities, and celebrated in honour of them; and ſeveral circumſtances lead us think that they had a very immoral tendency. In Terence we find a young man encouraging himſelf in an act of lewdneſs by the example of Jupiter, and the Cretans apologized for their addictedneſs to the

love of boys by the example of the ſame God and Ganymede.

Indeed, it was hardly poſſible to attend upon, and eſpecially to aſſiſt in the feſtivals of ſome of the heathen Gods, without committing actual wickedneſs, and contracting the very worſt of habits. Bacchus was worſhipped with the moſt indecent revelling and drunkenneſs, and the greateſt philoſophers never remonſtrated againſt ſuch practices. It was a ſaying of Plato, that to drink to exceſs was not allowable, except upon the feſtival of that God who is the giver of wine. The licentiouſneſs of ſuch religious rites as theſe was ſo notorious, that it was not thought ſafe for married women to go to the feaſt of Bacchus, Ceres, or Cybele. Hence a ſaying of Ariſtippus, concerning a remarkably chaſte woman, that ſhe could not be corrupted even at the Bacchanals.

In the *Ludi Florales* at Rome, the chief part of the ſolemnity was managed by a ſet of ſhameleſs proſtitutes, who ran up and down naked, dancing in laſcivious poſtures, and this cuſtom was not diſcountenanced but encouraged by the graveſt magiſtrates. Strabo relates, that there was at Corinth a temple of Venus, ſo rich, that it maintained above a thouſand proſtitutes, dedicated to the ſervice of the Goddeſs. Herodotus, and the moſt credible hiſtorians aſſure us, that by a law of the Babylonians, every woman, a native of the country, was obliged to receive

ceive the embraces of the firſt ſtranger that offered himſelf in the precincts of ſome of their temples, before ſhe could be married. There were cuſtoms ſimilar to this in many other parts of the eaſt. Even ſodomy and beſtiality were openly practiſed in ſome of their temples, and the figures of the parts of generation, carved in wood, were carried about in many of their proceſſions, and had divine honours paid to them.

The miſchiefs of this religion were not confined to the encouragement of the ſofter vices. It even authoriſed the moſt horrible *cruelties*, ſo that the religious rites of the heathens were ſhocking to humanity. In ſome of the feſtivals of Bacchus, the prieſts uſed to tear and devour the entrails of goats, raw and reeking, in imitation of their God. The prieſts of Cybele caſtrated themſelves, and in their proceſſion made the moſt hideous noiſes and howling, cutting themſelves till the blood guſhed out, as they went along. The prieſts of Baal, alſo, were wont to cut and ſlaſh themſelves in the ſame manner. At Sparta boys were often whipped in honour of Diana till they died, in which caſe they were honoured with a public and ſplendid funeral; and, in ſome towns of Arcadia, women were whipped with the ſame ſeverity.

Human ſacrifices prevailed all over the heathen world, and in no country were they more common than among our anceſtors the ancient Britons.

On ſome occaſions the Britons were uſed to conſtruct large images of wicker work, which they filled with living men, and eſpecially priſoners taken in war; and, ſetting fire to it, they put to death in this moſt cruel manner, all the unhappy wretches it contained. In other reſpects, alſo, the religion of the Britons was no better, but worſe, and more barbarous than that of the Greeks and Romans. The whole country was held in a ſtate of the moſt ſlaviſh ſubjection to their prieſts, the Druids, who had a power of excluding perſons from the privilege of attending their ſacred rites; after which excommunication, the perſon who had incurred it was cut off from all human intercourſe, and every advantage of civil ſociety. The exerciſe of this horrid religion was, by Auguſtus, prohibited in Gaul, under pain of death. The Britons were not at that time ſubject to the Romans.

Both the Peruvians and the Mexicans uſed human victims, and the latter are ſaid to have ſacrificed, at one particular time only, five thouſand priſoners of war.

Human ſacrifices were even uſed in the Roman empire, as Porphyry, a heathen writer, informs us, till the time of the Emperor Adrian, who ordered them in moſt places to be aboliſhed, but this was after the promulgation of chriſtianity. The ſame writer ſays, that in his own times, and in the city of

Rome

Rome itſelf, it was the cuſtom to ſacrifice a man at the feaſt of Jupiter Latiaris; and Lactantius, a chriſtian writer ſays, that the ſame thing was done in his time.

Theſe human ſacrifices were thought to be of all others, the moſt acceptable offerings to their Gods, being the ſtrongeſt proof they could give of their devotedneſs to them; and ſo far were public calamities from leading them to renounce this horrid cuſtom, that they were always a means of confirming them in it. It had grown into a cuſtom at Carthage to ſacrifice not *freemen*, as they had done originally, but only *ſlaves*, or priſoners taken in war, at the feaſt of Saturn; but after a war in which they were great ſufferers, they concluded that their loſſes were owing to the diſpleaſure of the Gods, on account of their ignoble offerings, and immediately they ſacrificed three hundred youths of the beſt families in Carthage.

Among other deteſtable methods of divination, one was the murder of infants, and others, who were ſacrificed on purpoſe, that by raking into their entrails, they might gain an inſight into futurity, as appears from the teſtimony of Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Juvenal, Tacitus, Philoſtratus, Porphyry and many other learned Pagans, as well as from the intimations of the ſacred writers.

When the blood of young children was made uſe of, it was not deemed ſufficient in ſome caſes merely

to put them to death, for it was imagined to be neceſſary for their purpoſe that their death ſhould be lingering and painful.

The Cimbri ripped open the bowels of human victims, and from them formed a judgment concering future events, and the Celtæ divined by the agonies and convulſions of men offered in ſacrifice, and from the effuſion of their blood.

All heathen nations, when they wanted to pry into futurity, or to engage the aſſiſtance of their Gods in any enterprize, at the beſt, had recourſe to the moſt abſurd methods of learning their will; as by obſerving the appearance of the entrails of beaſts offered in ſacrifice, the flight of birds, or the ravings of men and women, who had the art of throwing themſelves into convulſions, and pretending to be inſpired. The ſolemn *auſpices* of the Romans conſiſted in obſerving the manner in which chickens pecked their food, and to this every Roman general was obliged to give the cloſeſt attention every morning. A thouſand things of this nature might be enumerated, every heathen nation abounding with them; and there are many remains of them in all countries of the world, the nations of chriſtendom, and this country, by no means excepted. All theſe methods of conſulting the Gods could riſe from nothing but the loweſt, and the moſt abſurd notions of the divine power and providence.

It

It will be ſaid that philoſophy muſt certainly have been ſome check upon theſe enormities; but, ſtrange as it may ſeem, this does not appear to have been the caſe. Human ſacrifices, indeed, became leſs frequent, and were, in a manner, aboliſhed both in Greece and Rome; but this does not ſeem to have been owing to the philoſophy, but to the greater humanity of later times. The philoſophers were ſo far from attempting the reformation of any religious rite, however abominable, that they are known to have encouraged the moſt abſurd of all their ſuperſtitions, and to have connived at leaſt, at the moſt ſcandalous of them. Socrates, and their beſt moraliſts, ſtrongly recommend even the divinations, and oracles of their times; and when Ariſtotle expreſſes his diſapprobation of obſcene pictures, he excepts thoſe of the Gods, which religion had ſanctified.

If we conſider the real ſentiments of the philoſophers, abſtracted from any relation to the people, or connection with civil government, they will be found by no means to furniſh a ſufficient foundation for a ſpirit of juſt and uſeful devotion, conſiſting of the ſentiments of reverence and love to God, confidence in his providence, and a regard to virtue from his authority. Thoſe who are thought to have had the moſt ſublime notions concerning the deity, after the times of chriſtianity, ſeem to have been againſt all external worſhip of the ſu-

preme God. Cicero, in all his treatiſe concerning *human duty*, never draws any argument to enforce the practice of it from the authority, or command of God. Maximus Tyrius has a whole diſſertation to prove that we ought not to pray at all, and Seneca repreſents it as altogether needleſs to apply to God by prayer. *Make thyſelf happy*, ſays he. But the language of the Stoics was not uniform, or conſiſtent, on this, or on ſeveral other ſubjects. Notwithſtanding they ſpeak much of God, or the Gods, they never mention repentance, and confeſſion of ſin, as any part of our duty.

If the heathen philoſophers had been impreſſed with a proper reverence for God, they could never have indulged themſelves in the indecent practice of *common ſwearing*, which they ſeem to have done without the leaſt reſtraint. The dialogues of Plato, in which Socrates is always a ſpeaker, are full of oaths; and ſo are the works of Marcus Antoninus.

It will be ſaid that ſuch a religion, and ſuch philoſophy, were the produce of an early age; and that it may be preſumed that, in time, men would have formed juſter notions of the attributes and moral government of God, have attained to a practical and ſteady dependence upon him, and have expreſſed their devotional ſentiments by proper acts of homage. But we ſhall be obliged to give up this flattering idea, when we conſider what

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has been advanced upon theſe ſubjects by philoſophers of a more enlightened age, who have abandoned revelation, and have pretended, at leaſt, to be guided by nature only.

Mr. Hobbes ſays, that whatever is incorporeal is nothing at all, and he makes religion a buſineſs of the ſtate only. Mr. Hume ſubverts the very foundation of all our reaſoning from effects to cauſes, ſo that from what we ſee round us, we cannot with certainty infer an intelligent author. Mr. Blount, the author of a celebrated treatiſe called *The oracles of reaſon*, repreſents the opinion of the origin of good and evil from two different eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, as not unreaſonable; and he makes objections to the duty of prayer. Mr. Chubb expreſsly denies the doctrine of a particular providence, and not only ſpeaks of the impropriety of praying to God, but even ſuggeſts a ſuſpicion that it may be diſpleaſing to the divine being.

Bolingbroke, who has been much extolled as a writer and philoſopher, blames even the Pagan theiſts for flattering human nature, when they taught that a good man imitates God. He will admit of no proof that God is a lover of mankind, and made man to be happy. He altogether rejects the ſcripture doctrine of a particular providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men. He acknowledges

that God is a being of almighty power, and infinite wiſdom; but he ſays, that we muſt not pretend to aſcribe to him any *moral* attributes, as holineſs, juſtice, or goodneſs. He ſays that he neither has theſe qualities, nor any thing equivalent to them.

SECTION III.

Of the moral ſentiments *of the Heathens.*

HAVING taken a view of the ſtate of theology in the Gentile world, I ſhall proceed to conſider ſome of their general maxims relating to *morals*, and eſpecially ſuch as were patronized by the philoſophers; and we cannot but be ſenſible that they were by no means favourable to virtue, taken in its juſt extent. At the cloſe of this I ſhall alſo ſhew how modern unbelievers have relapſed into the ſame looſe kind of morality.

Many of the philoſophers maintained that there is nothing juſt or unjuſt by nature, but only by poſitive law and cuſtom. This was the opinion of Theodorus, Archelaus, and Ariſtippus, of the Alexandrian ſchool, which prevailed the moſt a little before the time of Chriſt. All the earlier philoſophers allowed too much to the obligation of poſitive law. Even Socrates himſelf repreſents it

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as eſſential to the character of a good man to obey, without reſerve, the laws of his country. On the other hand, Epicurus taught that a man is to do every thing for his own ſake, his own happineſs being the great rule of life.

The moſt diſtinguiſhed ſyſtems of morals among the Greeks was that of the Stoics, and it is generally eſteemed to have been peculiarly favourable to virtue. It carries, indeed, an air of greatneſs and ſublimity in it; but when examined will be found to be no friend to the humane and pleaſing virtues. It was the great maxim of the Stoics that the ſoul of man, being of the ſame nature with God, is ſelf ſufficient for virtue and happineſs, inſomuch that it is not in the power of the Gods themſelves to make a good man unhappy. Nay, ſo arrogantly did ſome of them talk, that they repreſented men as ſuperior to the Gods, ſaying that theſe are wiſe by the neceſſity of their nature, but men by choice. Such notions as theſe could not but lay a foundation for a very dangerous and inſufferable pride.

To ſupport this ſtrange hypotheſis, with reſpect to a world in which the wiſeſt and beſt of men are ſubject to pain and death, they were obliged to maintain, and they did it reſolutely, that pain is no evil, and that length of time makes no addition to happineſs. To promote an inſenſibility to pain, they maintained that men muſt ſup-

ſuppreſs all paſſions, whether they be of the nature of love or hatred. They would not allow of anger, even at vice or injuſtice; and to make it the eaſier for perſons to ſtifle their reſentment on theſe occaſions, they frequently repreſented all crimes as involuntary, and conſequently ſuch things as no perſon could have any reaſon to be ſurprized or offended at, eſpecially ſince nobody could be a ſufferer but the injurious perſon himſelf. For it was the great maxim of Epictetus, that it is naturally impoſſible for one man to be in fault, and another to be the ſufferer. It is certainly very hard to conceive what real virtue ſuch maxims as theſe could produce; and we ſhall ſee their miſchievous tendency in ſeveral reſpects hereafter.

It is not difficult to point out ſeveral general maxims relating to morals, among modern unbelievers, which bear as unfriendly an aſpect upon human virtue, if the idea that was given of it in the firſt part of theſe Inſtitutes be juſt. Mr. Hume, the moſt acute of all modern unbelievers, confounds natural and moral qualities; repreſenting virtue to conſiſt of any agreeable diſpoſition or accompliſhment, without diſtinction. Among the virtues, he particularly mentions wit, ingenuity, eloquence, quickneſs of conception, facility of expreſſion, delicacy of taſte, politeneſs, cleanlineſs, and even force of body. On the other hand he excludes

cludes from the rank of virtues *humility* and *self denial*, ſaying that they are rejected by men of ſenſe, becauſe they ſerve no manner of purpoſe.

Spinoza alſo ſpeaks of *repentance* as a mean, unreaſonable, and deſpicable thing. Agreeably to theſe maxims, Mr. Hume ſpeaks of a certain degree of *pride* and *ſelf valuation*, the want of which is a vice, and the oppoſite to which is meanneſs. It is poſſible, indeed, to explain theſe terms ſo as to vindicate Mr. Hume's aſſertions; but if we collect his meaning from all that he has ſaid upon the ſubject, it is impoſſible not to conceive that he intends to ſtigmatiſe as a vice, that which is recommended in the goſpel as an amiable virtue, as peculiarly pleaſing in the ſight of God, and what even right reaſon approves.

Mr. Chubb confines the whole buſineſs of criminality to acts which affect the community. He ſpeaks of it as unworthy of God to reſent any blaſphemies againſt himſelf, and he treats with nearly the ſame indifference all injuries to private perſons only. Bolingbroke alſo ſays, that all the ſanctions of the law of nature affect men collectively conſidered, and not as individuals. So low an opinion had Mr. Chubb of the excellent and truly rational morals of our Saviour, that he ſcruples not to aſſert, that all the alteration he made in Judaiſm was for the worſe, that thoſe percepts by which chriſtianity is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed,

guiſhed, are leſs perfect than thoſe which prevailed before, and that they are inconſiſtent with the welfare and happineſs of mankind.

The obligation of *ſincerity* and integrity ſeems to have been very weak in the minds of ſeveral unbelievers. Hobbes advanced that that idolatry to which a man is compelled by the terrors of death, is not idolatry. Others have adopted the ſame maxim, and have even ridiculed chriſtians for dying martyrs to the truth.

The apologies that were made for vice by the Stoics, have likewiſe been adopted by unbelievers of modern times. Lord Herbert ſays, that thoſe perſons are not lightly to be condemned who are carried to ſin by their bodily conſtitution; and he particularly inſtances in luſt and anger. Such perſons he repreſents as no more to be blamed than a dropſical perſon for his immoderate thirſt, or a lethargical perſon for his lazineſs and inactivity. He alſo apologizes for many vices, as not being committed out of enmity to God, but with a view to men's own particular advantage or pleaſure, being choſen by them under the appearance of ſome good. He might not attend to it, but certainly there is no crime, for which this maxim will not furniſh an apology.

The moſt obvious of all virtues, and thoſe of the moſt acknowledged obligation, are the *ſocial* ones. When any of the ſocial duties are neglected,

ed, ſome of our fellow-creatures are injured, and cannot forbear complaining, or ſeeking ſome method of redreſs. Indeed, without a tolerable obſervance of ſocial duties, ſociety could not ſubſiſt. Public wrongs are always things of great notoriety, ſo that mankind cannot but attend to them, and be convinced of their malignant and deſtructive nature. Among all nations, therefore, we find a pretty juſt notion of the diſtinction between right and wrong; and the duties of ſociety have always been the moſt generally practiſed. But even this branch of the ſyſtem of morals was exceedingly imperfect among the Greeks and Romans, and was by no means favourable to the ſentiments of a refined, generous, and extenſive humanity, which conſiders all mankind as brethren, the common offſpring of one great and good parent, and admoniſhes us to do to others as we would that they ſhould do to us.

The Greeks, in general, do not appear to have had any higher object than the good of their reſpective ſtates, or at moſt that of the community of Greeks. Even Socrates, when he directs his hearers to conſider all Greeks as brethren, ſpeaks of the Barbarians (by whom were meant all other nations) as their natural enemies; and he preſcribes ſuch rules of conduct with reſpect to them, as are not reconcileable to the common rules of humanity. It is well known to have been a maxim

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at Sparta, that probity and every thing elſe is to be ſacrificed to the good of the ſtate. Theſe Spartans, having conquered a neighbouring nation, the Helots, kept them for ſeveral hundred years in a ſtate of the moſt abject ſlavery; and leſt they ſhould grow too numerous, they frequently butchered them in cold blood; and their youths were not only connived at, but applauded when they killed them by ſurpriſe, to enure them to the bloody and deceitful buſineſs of war. For with them a victory gained by artifice was reckoned to be of double value.

In moſt of the heathen ſtates we find cuſtoms utterly irreconcileable with humanity and virtue, particularly that of expoſing ſickly children to be devoured by wild beaſts. In Sparta every child was examined by public inſpectors, who determined whether it ſhould be brought up or expoſed, and for this they are commended by Plutarch. Plato, in his book of laws, orders, that when perſons are paſt the age of having ſtrong children, they ſhould uſe means to prevent their being born alive, or kill them after they were born. Ariſtotle alſo ſays, that there ſhould be laws to prevent the education of weak children. In ſeveral antient heathen nations, the aged and infirm were expoſed. Among the Perſians this was done without any ſcruple.

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At Rome it was the general cuſtom to leave their old and ſick ſlaves to periſh on a certain iſland in the Tiber; and the favourite entertainment of the Roman people, for many ages, was the barbarous exhibition of gladiators, ſome of whom fought with each other, and ſome with wild beaſts. In this manner many hundreds of ſlaves, carefully trained up for the purpoſe, have been ſacrificed at one time. This was one of the horrid cuſtoms which owed its abolition to the mild ſpirit of chriſtianity.

One would have thought that compaſſion for the diſtreſſed had been ſo deeply rooted in the human heart, and had ſo much the ſanction of natural conſcience, that it could not have been in the power of philoſophy to exclude it from a ſyſtem of morals; and yet thoſe great moraliſts the Stoics, abſolutely proſcribed it. Their *wiſe man* muſt have no paſſions, and conſequently no ſympathy. Epictetus, indeed, allows a philoſopher to condole with his common friends *in words*, if that will afford them any relief; but he bids him be very careful that, in reality, he *feels* nothing all the time.

Some of the philoſophers recommend the forgiveneſs of injuries, but others praiſe a ſpirit of *revenge*, particularly Democritus; and when Plato introduces Socrates as recommending forgiveneſs, he

he ſpeaks of it as contrary to the ſentiments of the generality of the philoſophers.

The obligation of *truth* ſeems to be equal, if not ſuperior to that of humanity and compaſſion, on account of its obvious importance to ſociety, and yet the maxims of ſome of the philoſophers tended to undermine it. The Stoics thought that lying was lawful if it was profitable, and Plato ſays, that man may tell a lie who knows how to do it at a proper time.

Having found the Greek philoſophers ſuch looſe moraliſts with reſpect to the ſocial virtues above-mentioned, we cannot expect from them any great ſtrictneſs with reſpect to the *commerce of the ſexes.* None of the philoſophers ever repreſented ſimple fornication, eſpecially on the part of the man, as any vice at all, though its tendency is ſo pernicious to ſociety, and the practice of it ſo much depraves the heart. Cato commended a young man for frequenting the public ſtews, and Cicero expreſsly ſpeaks of fornication as a thing that was never found fault with.

Many of the *cuſtoms* of the Greeks and Romans, and eſpecially their religious cuſtoms promoted a diſpoſition to lewdneſs. Some of theſe have been already mentioned. At Sparta, young women appeared naked in the public exerciſes, and when married women had no children, their huſbands were encouraged to lend them to other men, a

cuſtom

cuſtom which Plutarch vindicates. This was alſo agreeable to the doctrine of the Stoics; and it is well known that that rigid Stoic, Cato of Utica, lent his wife to his friend Hortenſius. Plato, in his book of Laws, recommends a community of women, and he adviſes that ſoldiers be not reſtrained with reſpect to any kind of ſenſual indulgence, even the moſt unnatural ſpecies of it, when they are upon an expedition.

Inceſtuous marriages were common in ſome Gentile nations, eſpecially Egypt and Perſia; but they were condemned in Greece and Rome.

Let us now ſee what maxims relating to the mutual intercourſe of mankind have been adopted by the more celebrated of our modern unbelievers. Bayle ſays, that the prohibition of *revenge* is contrary to the law of reaſon and nature, and Tindal makes the doctrine of the *forgiveneſs of injuries* an objection to chriſtianity. This writer alſo ſpeaks very ſlightly of the obligation of *truth*.

Unbelievers in general make very light of the obligation of *chaſtity*, eſpecially Tindal and Bolingbroke. This laſt mentioned writer does not admit that *adultery* (which, in ancient heathen ſtates, was generally puniſhed with death) is a violation of the law of nature, and he ſays that *polygamy* is founded on the law of nature. *Inceſt* he admits to be unnatural, but only in the higheſt degrees, as between fathers and daughters, ſons and

and mothers; but concerning this he does not pretend to be very positive.

If men do not feel and acknowledge the obligation of social virtue, it cannot be expected that they should think themselves under any restraint where the rights of others have no place. When the authority of God, and of the magistrate, are both out of the question, the reasons for *purity* and *decency of conduct*, derived from nature only, cannot be supposed to weigh much against the bias of inclination. To provide for a man's happiness in this life was the great object of all the philosophers of antiquity; and though some of them considered happiness as consisting in virtue only, and others in tranquillity of mind as well as of body, Aristippus, and the Alexandrian school, which was one of the last that was formed, made *corporeal pleasure* only to be the ultimate end of man.

The Stoics allowed of very great indulgence of the senses, and were generally great drinkers. Cato of Utica was remarkably addicted to this vice, so was Zeno, the founder of the sect, and Chrysippus died in consequence of drinking to excess at a sacrifice.

The maxims of the heathen philosophers with respect to the commerce of the sexes have been already mentioned, and their practice with respect to those vices which are justly stiled *unnatural* was not less exceptionable; and though it is hardly credible,

credible, yet these vices also had too much of the sanction of some legislators and *philosophers*, and were countenanced by the example of many of them. Xenophon informs us that *sodomy* was encouraged by the public laws of several of the states of Greece. It was more especially so among the Cretans, in order to prevent their having too many children. Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece, and the celebrated lawgiver of Athens, forbad this practice to slaves, which necessarily conveys the idea of his thinking it fit for free men only. According to Cicero, the Greek philosophers not only generally practised, but even gloried in this vice; and Plutarch informs us, that many parents would not suffer their children to keep the company of those philosophers, who pretended to be fond of them. Diogenes was remarkable for indulging himself in the most abominable practices openly, and without any sense of shame, affecting, according to the maxim of the Cynics, to live according to nature. These unnatural vices were increased in a most astonishing manner about the time of the promulgation of christianity. Seneca says, that in his time they were practised openly, and without shame at Rome.

When *pleasure* was considered as the great end of living, and when the authority of God and of conscience was disclaimed, it cannot be wondered that whenever this end of life was despaired of,

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life itſelf ſhould be abandoned. We therefore naturally expect that *ſelf-murder* ſhould be recommended by the Epicureans, and other philoſophers, whoſe principles were ſimilar to theirs, when life ſhould become a burthen; and in this we are not diſappointed. But it was chiefly recommended and practiſed by the Stoics, who pretended to renounce pleaſure, as an act of heroiſm and magnanimity. The uſual ſaying of their graveſt philoſophers on this ſubject was, *If the houſe be ſmoaky, the door is open, and you may walk out*; and hiſtory informs us, that many of the moſt eminent Stoics died by their own hands, eſpecially the famous Cato of Utica, and Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, who killed himſelf when he was very old, after breaking a finger which proved to be very painful to him.

Sometimes, indeed, theſe philoſophers talked in a different ſtrain, and adviſed perſons not to abandon life, till God, who placed them in it, ſhould give the ſignal; but, it is in vain to expect a perfect conſiſtency in any of the ſyſtems of the philoſophers. They were perpetually charging one another, and indeed very juſtly, with inconſiſtencies, and many other abſurdities. Whatever the philoſophers might think, or practice, in this reſpect, the legiſlators of antiquity did not adopt the ſame maxims. For, in ſeveral ancient ſtates, we find

find ſelf-murder branded by an ignominious treatment of the body, and other penalties.

If we look into the writings of many of the modern unbelievers, we ſhall find them as little reſtrained in their pleaſures while they live, and as little ſcrupulous with reſpect to abandoning life when it becomes diſagreeable to them. Helvetius, in his celebrated treatiſe, *De l'Eſprit*, repreſents the love of pleaſure as the voice of God; and leſt we ſhould miſtake his idea of pleaſure, he ſays, that it is of two kinds only; conſiſting either in the gratification of the ſenſes, or in procuring the means of gratifying them. He alſo ſays, that it is not agreeable to good policy to repreſent *gallantry* (under which term he includes commerce with married women) as a vice in a moral ſenſe. Indeed the deſign of his whole treatiſe is to ſhew that happineſs conſiſts in ſenſual pleaſure, and wiſdom in purſuing it.

Modern unbelievers are almoſt univerſally advocates for *ſelf-murder*, and Mr. Blount, who wrote the *Oracles of reaſon*, both recommended it, and practiſed it upon himſelf. The ſame has been the end of many other unbelievers.

Such having been the ſtate of the heathen world, we ſhall ſee the propriety of thoſe deſcriptions of it which we find in ſeveral parts of the New Teſtament, and which are ſuſpected by many perſons, who have not a ſufficient knowledge of antient

 times,

times, to be hyperbolical and exaggerated. For though every corruption of genuine chriſtianity has tended, as will be ſhewn in its proper place, to debaſe the ſpirit of it, and to defeat the great purpoſe of it, in reforming the world, and promoting purity of morals; the corruption was never ſo great, not even in the darkeſt ages of popery, but that the belief of it was more favourable to virtue than the belief of the prevailing doctrines of the heathens at the time of the promulgation of chriſtianity. We often complain, and very juſtly, of the corruption of the times: and ſuch complaints were never more particularly loud than in the period preceding the reformation; but the corruption was ſtill ſhort of that which (as we learn from the heathen writers themſelves) generally prevailed in the heathen world.

Peter, ſpeaking of the Gentiles, ſays that *they walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.* And the apoſtle Paul ſays, *that being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts, they gave themſelves up to laſciviouſneſs, to commit all iniquity with greedineſs.* There are alſo many other paſſages in the writings of Paul, which repreſent the ſtate of the heathen world as exeeedingly corrupt indeed; and it was far from being in the way of being mended by the philoſophy of thoſe times.

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SECTION IV.

Of the doctrine of a future ſtate *among the Heathens.*

WE ſhall the leſs wonder at the imperfect ſtate of morals, both with reſpect to theory and practice, in the heathen world, when we conſider that they were deſtitute of thoſe great ſanctions of virtue, which are derived from the conſideration of the authority and moral government of God, eſpecially as extending to a life beyond the grave. We find more of the belief of a future life of retribution in the earlier ages of the heathen world; but, if we judge of it from the repreſentation of the poets, among whom only we muſt look for the real opinion of the vulgar, and the maxims of the popular religion, we ſhall find that, about the time of the earlieſt Greek poets, the popular notions of a future ſtate were ſuch as could be of no farther uſe than to reſtrain the greater kinds of crimes, but that it could furniſh no motives to aim at any high degree of purity, and real excellence of character.

According to the poets, the ſtate of the beſt men after death was very melancholy, and undeſirable, notwithſtanding the charming deſcriptions which

they ſometimes give of it. In Homer, Achilles in the Elyſian ſhades tells Ulyſſes, who is repreſented as meeting him there, that he had rather be a ruſtic on earth, ſerving a poor man for hire, and having but ſcanty fare, than have a large empire over the dead.

Lame as theſe popular notions of a future ſtate were, the Greeks and Romans had no opportunity of having their minds impreſſed with them, but by liſtening to the traditions of their parents, or the ſongs of their poets, or by gazing at the pageantry which was exhibited at their religious myſteries. There was no proviſion in any heathen country, for making theſe things the ſubject of grave diſcourſes, delivered to the common people, by perſons for whoſe character they had a reſpect.

When this ſubject came to be canvaſſed by the philoſophers, who rejected the traditions on which the vulgar belief was founded, the doctrine of a future ſtate was firſt doubted of, and then generally diſbelieved and diſcarded. And conſidering what ſlender evidence there is for this doctrine on the principles of the light of nature only, it is no wonder that this ſhould have been the conſequence of reaſoning upon the ſubject. We ſhall ſee that all things have taken the very ſame turn among modern unbelievers, who have rejected the authority of revelation, which is the great ſupport of the doctrine of a future life in the preſent age.

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All the heathen philoſophers, not excepting Socrates himſelf, ſpeak with great uncertainty concerning a future life. One of the laſt things he ſaid to his friends, who attended upon him at the time of his death, was, "I am going to die, and "you continue in life, but which of us ſhall be "in a better ſtate is known to none but God." Beſides, this philoſopher ſpeaks of a future ſtate as the privilege of thoſe only who addict themſelves to philoſophy, and ſays that the ſouls of the wicked tranſmigrate into bodies of ignoble animals; while the better kind of men, who are not philoſophers, inhabit the better kind of animals. Cicero in his philoſophical treatiſes, in which, however, he only profeſſes to contend for the more *probable* opinions, and does not pretend to any certainty, declares in favour of the doctrine of a future life; but in his private letters to his friends he talks in a quite contrary ſtrain, or at leaſt with the greateſt poſſible uncertainty.

The Stoics did, in general, believe a future life, but it was of ſuch a kind, as to be of little or no uſe in a moral reſpect. For they ſuppoſed that the ſouls of men, and of brutes alſo, having been originally part of the common ſoul of the univerſe, would, at length, be abſorbed into it again, and conſequently that all ſeparate conſciouſneſs would be loſt.

The *arguments* which are produced by the heathen philoſophers in proof of a future life are exceedingly weak. That on which they ſeem to have laid the greateſt ſtreſs was derived from the doctrine of *pre-exiſtence*, and Cicero, in his reaſoning upon this ſubject, aſſerts that the ſouls of men have exiſted from all eternity. On this notion is founded the doctrine of the Platoniſts, that the knowledge we acquire in this preſent ſtate is only a recollection of what we had been poſſeſſed of in a former.

Had the heathen philoſophers believed a future life, in the ſame manner as chriſtians believe in it, they could not have failed to make the ſame obvious uſe of it, in ſtrengthening the ſanctions of virtue, and ſupporting them under the troubles of life, and the fear of death. But all the motives to virtue on which they lay any ſtreſs, are altogether independent of the conſideration of a future life, being derived from the intrinſic excellence of virtue, and its complete ſufficiency for happineſs here, notwithſtanding all the pains and troubles of life. Alſo, though we have many ſpecimens of their *topics of conſolation* to their friends in diſtreſs, and of their own ſoliloquies in theſe circumſtances, we find nothing in their writings that approaches to the joyful ſentiments of chriſtians. The argument they univerſally have recourſe to is the following: Death cannot be formidable, becauſe it

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is either a remove for the better, or an utter extinction of being. For it is to be obſerved, that the philoſophers, with one voice, rejected the opinion of *future torments*; ſo that let a man have been ever ſo wicked, death, according to them, was the termination of all his ſufferings.

Pythagoras, one of the oldeſt of the Greek philoſophers, rejects the notion of future puniſhments as a vain terror. Plato, ſometimes adopts the repreſentations of the poets in this caſe, and at other times rejects them, as conveying too frightful an idea of a future ſtate. Cicero not only diſavows, but even ridicules the doctrine of future puniſhments, and he repreſents it as the opinion of all the philoſophers, that the Gods are never angry, and that they are incapable of hurting any body.

It muſt alſo be obſerved, upon this ſubject, that the doctrine of *tranſmigration*, which was the belief of many heathen nations, conveys no idea of *puniſhment*, properly ſo called; becauſe it was not ſuppoſed to have been attended with any conſciouſneſs of what had paſſed in a former ſtate.

The antient Germans had a notion of a future ſtate, and of certain brutal pleaſures, to be enjoyed in the palace of Odin; but they had no reſpect to moral virtue, as they were ſuppoſed to be reſerved for thoſe who ſhould die in battle only.

Uncertain and imperfect as were the notions of a future ſtate among the Greeks and Romans, we find little or no remains of them about the time of the promulgation of chriſtianity. In that learned and inquiſitive age we have the moſt undeniable evidence that the belief of a future life was generally rejected, both by the philoſophers and the vulgar. This was chiefly owing to the pretended *ſcience* of thoſe days; and the æra of the declenſion of the traditional opinions at Rome is well known to have been the introduction of the Greek philoſophy into that city. Polybius blames the great men of his time for teaching the common people to deſpiſe the fables of the poets, repreſenting them as *uſeful fictions*; and Cicero ſpeaks of future puniſhments as what hardly an old woman in his time believed. Bolingbroke ſays, that the belief of a future ſtate was rejected by many who made pretenſions to learning and philoſophy, that it was conſidered as doubtful and uncertain by the reſt of them, and that it had been ſo much blended with fables, that it had but little hold even on the vulgar opinion.

It was the opinion of Bolingbroke himſelf, that the whole man is diſſolved at death, and he certainly had no hope of a reſurrection; and though he acknowledges it may be uſeful to mankind to believe the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, yet he ſays, it is a fiction, having no real foun-

foundation in nature and reaſon; and both he and Mr. Collins, who likewiſe rejects this doctrine, ſay, but without any proof, that it was an invention of the Egyptians.

It is uſual with many perſons, on their firſt becoming unbelievers, to boaſt of the ſufficiency of the light of nature, with reſpect to the knowledge of God, the rule of human duty, and the doctrine of a future ſtate. But, if we judge from obſervation; we ſhall be led to conclude, either that this was a mere pretence, in order to get rid of revelation, or elſe, that theſe unbelievers themſelves were not ſufficiently aware how much the ſerious belief of a future life depends upon the belief of revelation; and conſequently how much that belief would be ſhaken when the ground on which it had been built was removed. For after rejecting revelation for ſome time, they have generally given up the belief which, at firſt, they profeſſed to have in the moral government of God here or hereafter and at preſent there are, I believe, very few unbelievers in revelation, who will pretend to have any ſerious expectation of a future life. In foreign countries this fact is notorious, and they are therefore generally called *Atheiſts*; and, indeed, when the doctrine of a future life is abandoned, men may almoſt as well reject the belief of a God alſo.

Mr. Chubb is a remarkable inſtance of one who went through all the ſtages of free thinking and infidelity, ſpeaking at firſt of a future ſtate with certainty, then with uncertainty, and laſtly, with abſolute unbelief. Upon the ſuppoſition of a future life, he ſays, that thoſe who die in their youth will not be called to judgment, nor thoſe who act a low part in life. In another place he repreſents it as abſolutely doubtful, whether the ſoul periſhes with the body, or ſubſiſts after it; and at the ſame time he declares that, if the ſoul be periſhable with the body, "there can be no place for argument "with regard to a future ſtate of exiſtence to men, "or of a future retribution; becauſe when the "human frame is once diſſolved by death, the "man ceaſes to be, and is no more."

Mr. Hume directly argues againſt the doctrines of a providence, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. Thoſe, ſays he, are vain reaſoners, and invert the order of nature, who, inſtead of regarding this preſent life, and the preſent ſcene of things, as the ſole object of their contemplation, render it a paſſage to ſomething farther; and yet, he ſays, that thoſe who attempt to diſabuſe men of their prejudices in favour of a future ſtate, may, for ought he knows, be good reaſoners, but he cannot allow them to be good citizens or politicians; ſince they free men from reſtraint upon their paſſions, and make the infringement of the laws

laws of equity and ſociety in one reſpect more eaſy and ſecure.

I would obſerve, in this place, that the inference I draw from theſe obſervations reſpecting the moral maxims of unbelievers, is not, by any means, that there are no good moral characters in that claſs of men. As it is well known that many perſons are much *worſe*, ſo there are others, no doubt, much *better* than their principles. The conduct of men is greatly influenced by principles which they do not avow, and the operation of which they do not diſtinctly perceive; and alſo by early habits and diſpoſitions, which act mechanically, and independently of any declared principle. But as far as avowed principles have any effect (and their effect on the minds of thoſe who attend to them muſt be of *ſome* moment, and that continually increaſing) their real operation, as well as their tendency, muſt be unfavourable to virtue.

Perſons who have had a chriſtian education, may continue to act, in a great meaſure, upon chriſtian principles, after they become *nominal unbelievers*; eſpecially if a virtuous and decent conduct have become habitual to them, if temptations to act otherwiſe be not very ſtrong, and if they act without much reflection. But I own, that I do not ſee how I can have the ſame dependence upon a man's acting a truly virtuous and diſintereſted part, eſpecially in a caſe where a conſidera-

ble risk must be run, with respect to fortune or life, whether he believe in a future state or not; especially if he have time to *reflect* on the hazard that he runs with respect to things of the most importance to him. If, however, an unbeliever should sacrifice his fortune, or his life, in a good cause, which I do not say is impossible, it would give me a very high idea of the force of good habits, and mechanical propensities in him, but a proportionably low opinion of his understanding. It would argue such a weakness of intellect, or such inattention to his known interest, as I should not presume to find in any man. In order to gain my *intire confidence*, I must see a man's reason, his *interest*, and his *passions*, all leading the same way.

But the use that I would make of the observations above-mentioned, is to shew that we are not to expect either *clearness* or *consistency* of moral principles upon the light of nature; and therefore that, as far as clearness and consistency of such principles are of importance to mankind (and no doubt they must be of great importance) they furnish an evidence of the great *expediency*, if not of the absolute *necessity* of divine revelation, without which so important an advantage was not to be expected.

Whatever we may now think of the *sufficiency of the light of nature*, some of the most intelligent of the heathen philosophers were not insensible of the

the darkneſs in which they were involved, and expreſſed the ſenſe they had of the want of ſome divine illumination. There are ſeveral remarkable expreſſions of Socrates and Plato to this purpoſe. Socrates, ſpeaking of the corruption of his times, ſaid, that "there was no hope of amending men's "morals, unleſs God ſhould be pleaſed to ſend "ſome other perſon to inſtruct them;" and Plato ſays, that "whatever is right, and as it ſhould "be, in the preſent evil ſtate of the world, can "only be ſo by the particular interpoſition of "God." Socrates meeting Alcibiades, as he was going to a temple to pray, endeavoured to convince him that he knew not what to pray for as he ought, till God ſhould diſpel the darkneſs of his mind, and ſeems to refer to ſome *inſtructor*, whom God might ſend for that purpoſe*. To mention no more inſtances, one of the ſpeakers in the celebrated dialogue of Plato, relating to the laſt ſcenes of the life of Socrates, ſpeaking of the uncertainty in which they were, with reſpect to the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, concludes, that it is beſt to follow that opinion which ſhould appear to be the moſt probable, after their moſt diligent enquiry; unleſs they could have a ſtill more ſure nd certain conduct, to carry them through this

* *Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed religion, p.* 201, &c.

life,

life, ſuch as a divine diſcovery of the truth would be.

The later Platoniſts and Pythagoreans were ſo far from thinking divine communications to be either needleſs or incredible, that after the promulgation of chriſtianity, they themſelves pretended to frequent impulſes and inſpirations, and had recourſe to their initiations, and various magical ceremonies, in order to procure them. It was, moreover, the general opinion of the heathens, that Orpheus, and others of their antient poets, wrote by a divine afflatus.

It is alſo a conſideration of great importance, that when the authority of the old *traditional religion* was worn out, ſomething of the ſame *poſitive* nature was wanted to ſupply its place. The *reaſon* of mankind was by no means ſufficient for this purpoſe. When the paſſions of men are ſtrongly engaged, and a favourite gratification is in view, reaſon interpoſes with little effect; whereas a poſitive precept, coming from *acknowledged authority*, might have real weight. Beſides men are ſeldom at a loſs to find excuſes for their favourite indulgences, and they will define *virtue* in ſuch a manner, as to make their own vices either not criminal at all, or to be ſo in a very ſlight degree.

We have ſeen that, in fact, this was the caſe with the antients, in the moſt enlightened ages of the

the world; and it is remarkably the caſe with modern unbelievers. Nay, though the tendency of ſome vices, eſpecially thoſe which conſiſt in the irregular indulgence of the ſenſes, is, no doubt, highly injurious, debaſing the very ſouls of men, and laying a foundation for great evils and diſtreſſes, both to individuals and ſociety, and this at no great diſtance; yet the minds of men are ſo blinded and infatuated by theſe vices, that though they may think and act juſtly in other reſpects, they cannot, or will not ſee thoſe conſequences, but perſiſt in making plauſible apologies for the moſt flagitious conduct. How deſirable then is it, that the wiſe parent of the human race ſhould interpoſe, and, by his expreſs authority, forbid thoſe practices, which he ſees to be ultimately injurious to us.

If we attend but for a moment to the ſentiments and conduct of mankind, we ſhall be convinced that *the ten commandments*, the plain rules of conduct laid down by our Saviour, and the authoritative denunciations of the apoſtles, are of infinitely more ſervice to the cauſe of virtue, than all that men uninſpired of God could ever ſay, or write upon the ſubject.

What is the great guardian of ſobriety and chaſtity among us? Certainly not reaſon, or philoſophy, which has generally made very light of the

the ſanctions of thoſe virtues, but ſuch commands as theſe, *Thou ſhalt not commit adultery*, Ex. xx. 14. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor drunkards, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, &c. &c.

A reverence for God is not preſerved upon the minds of men by the ideas they naturally have of the awful ſanctity of every thing belonging to that great being, who is the maker, preſerver, and judge of all, but by ſuch precepts as theſe, *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, For the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain*, Ex. xx. 7; the expreſs commands of Chriſt, *I ſay unto you ſwear not at all*; and the advice of the apoſtle James, *Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not.*

Even our lives and properties are, in many caſes, more effectually ſecured by the precepts, *Thou ſhalt not commit murder, Thou ſhalt not ſteal*, and the ſolemn declaration of the apoſtle, *Neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*, than by any ſenſe that men, inflamed by avarice, or revenge, can be ſuppoſed to have of the *value of life*, and the *natural right* which every man has to it, and to his goods lawfully acquired.

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If these observations be just, and I doubt not but that the recital of them will impress upon the minds of all persons, who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature and of the world, a conviction of their truth, divine revelation must have been a matter of great importance, if it had been nothing more than the interposition of a *competent authority*, in favour of those rules of conduct which right reason might have investigated, but which reason, in a variety of circumstances, might also have *evaded*; and it ought ever to be considered, that, in proportion to the real value, usefulness, and consequently desirableness of positive or revealed religion, is its *antecedent credibility*.

Upon the whole, such was the actual state of the heathen world, that it cannot surely be doubted, but that divine revelation was highly *expedient*, and even *necessary*, for the restoration of virtue and happiness.

Without pretty just notions of God, and his moral government; without a satisfactory knowledge of our duty and future expectations, we should have been little better than brute animals. At least, a man destitute of this knowledge must be incapable of these *exalted sentiments*, and that *dignity of conduct*, which render him an unspeakably greater and happier being. And, since we are naturally capable of these improvements, nothing but

but a ſufficient degree of *knowledge* being requiſite to the attainment of them; the nobleſt end of human nature ſeems to be defeated in a ſtate of groſs ignorance. It is like fixing a plant in a ſoil where it cannot find its proper nouriſhment, and for want of which it can never flouriſh, ſo as to be what it was capable of being.

For, admitting that it may not be abſolutely impoſſible for the divine being to ſuffer an entire race of rational creatures, and the moſt conſpicuous inhabitants of ſuch a world as this, to become wholly degenerate and depraved, ſo as never to anſwer the important purpoſes for which they ſeem to have been made, there certainly can be no impropriety in his interpoſing to check that depravity, by communicating to them that knowledge, which alone is wanting to effect ſo great and benevolent a purpoſe.

Now let us form what idea we pleaſe of the *natural powers* of the human mind, it is hardly poſſible not to be ſatisfied, from a juſt view of the ſtate of morals in the heathen world, that it was *morally impoſſible* they ſhould ever have recovered even that degree of uſeful religious knowledge, of which they ſeem to have been formerly poſſeſſed, and much leſs that they would ever have made any important additions to their original ſtock. In ſuch a ſtate of things, the expectation of ſome divine

vine interpoſition muſt, *a priori*, have been even reaſonable, on account of its being ſo exceedingly ſeaſonable, and advantageous. We may almoſt ſay, that *it became* the great and good parent of the human race to afford his creatures and offſpring that aſſiſtance, which, in their ſituation, they ſo much wanted, and which they were not capable of procuring for themſelves.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

OBSERVATIONS PREVIOUS TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE PROPER EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

SECTION I.

Of the nature and use of miracles.

SOME may think it not suitable to the wisdom of God, to leave his creatures in need of occasional assistance. A being of infinite wisdom, they say, would make his works so perfect at first, as never to want it. But the only reason why it is wise in men to aim at this is, because they cannot always be present with their works, or because it would be troublesome to attend to them. Also, their being present, or not present with their works, is of no consequence to their operation. Whereas God is already every where present, and as he constantly supports all the laws of nature, the changing the course of it implies no additional attention or trouble.

Besides, it is of the utmost importance to the great ends of the rational creation, that the Almighty maker should be *considered* as present with his

his works. For any thing that we know, therefore, the beſt of all ſchemes may be that in which the divine agency and interpoſition are never wholly ſuperſeded; and though, as was ſhewn before, it be wiſe, and even neceſſary to eſtabliſh *general laws*, yet occaſional deviations from them may contribute more to promote the ſame great end than a perfect uniformity.

With reſpect to *men*, and perhaps all other moral agents, there ſeems to be an evident propriety in the divine being exciting their attention to his preſence and government by occaſional *departures* from the laws of nature; for by this means we more eaſily preſerve a juſt ſenſe of our connection with, and dependence upon God. Whenever any appearances become quite *uniform*, and *conſtant*, they ceaſe to ſtrike; inſomuch, that it is very poſſible even for nations of mankind, who have never been taught any thing concerning God, to paſs their whole lives, in the view of all the wonders of creation, without ever raiſing their thoughts to the great author of all. Whereas, if the uſual connection of cauſes and effects be interrupted, and things happen contrary to their fulleſt expectations, founded upon long experience, their attention is immediately rouſed, and they cannot be ſatisfied till they underſtand both the efficient and final cauſe of ſo ſtrange an appearance, that is, without knowing both what produced it, and for what

what reaſon it was produced. And a little reflection muſt ſatisfy them, that he only who ordained and eſtabliſhed the courſe of nature, can alter it.

Whenever, therefore, the courſe of nature is interrupted, by the performance of a real miracle, men may be ſure that the immediate finger of God is in it; and, therefore, that their attention ought to be excited to it.

Strictly ſpeaking, indeed, it is improper to ſay that the laws of nature are violated in working of miracles, becauſe they are no more than the effect of an adequate power in nature, exerted at proper ſeaſons. It may be compared to a man's relieving a fly, or any ſmall inſect ſtruggling with difficulties inſurmountable by itſelf. But this view of miracles by no means affords any objection to the uſe of them that is here contended for, ſince whatever demonſtrates the interpoſition of a power *ſuperior to human*, muſt be referred to the operation of God mediately or immediately, nor is it poſſible that any ſyſtem of religion ſhould have a ſtronger ſanction than ſuch works as theſe.

Some, indeed, have advanced, that there is no natural or neceſſary connection between *miracles* and *doctrines*. But though this might have been urged very ſeriouſly by the antient Jews or Pagans, who believed in magic, we need not ſcruple to ſay that, in this age, it muſt be moſt egregious trifling, and that it does not deſerve any reply. At leaſt it

it will be time enough to conſider this objection, when ſome perſon ſhall be produced, who ſhall ſeriouſly ſay, that he believes the miracles, but not the doctrines. Spinoza himſelf, as Mr. Bayle aſſures us, ſaid to his friends, that "if he could "be convinced of the reſurrection of Lazarus, he "would break his whole ſyſtem in pieces, and "readily embrace the common faith of chriſtians."

It may alſo be alledged as an argument for the uſe of miracles, that the more general is the corruption of religion, and conſequently the more neceſſary revelation is, the leſs capable men are of perceiving the *internal* proofs of the excellence of a divine religion, and therefore the more occaſion they have for *external* proofs, ſuch as miracles afford.

It is poſſible that there may be intelligent beings, ſuperior, and inviſible to us, and, their powers far exceeding ours, they may exert them in ſuch a manner, as that to us the appearance will be the ſame as of a divine interpoſition. But ſuch an abuſe of ſuperior powers would be ſo fatal, that it cannot be ſuppoſed that a wiſe and good being would permit it. Indeed, if this were the caſe, the divine being would leave himſelf no certain method of making his own power and deſigns known to his creatures, whatever occaſion there might be for his interpoſition; as it would not be in their power to guard themſelves from artful and mali-

malicious beings, who might take pleasure in misleading and confounding them. If ever, therefore, such beings be permitted to work miracles, we may depend upon it that they will be so circumstanced, that it will be in the power of men of virtue and good understanding to discover the cheat.

Upon the whole, however, it is not in the least degree probable, that any being, besides the supreme, ever worked a real miracle; and, consequently, that all the wonders in which God himself has not been concerned have been the effects of *artifice* and *deceit*, so as to impose upon none but the ignorant and the credulous; and that men of understanding, who have opportunity of making proper inquiries, may see through and detect them.

SECTION II.

Of the nature of the evidence for revelation.

NATURAL religion being that knowledge of of God, of our duty, and future expectations, which we acquire from our observations on the usual course of nature, *revealed religion* may be defined to be the knowledge, relating to the same subjects, which we acquire from *interruptions* of the usual course of nature, by the interposition of the God of nature, the sole controller of the laws which

which he himſelf has eſtabliſhed. Now the proper evidence that there has been any ſuch interruption in the uſual courſe of nature, or that any real miracles have been performed, muſt be the *teſtimony* of thoſe who had an opportunity of examining the facts, in the ſame manner as, by our own obſervation, and that of others together, we acquire a knowledge of the laws of nature themſelves.

In ſome reſpects, however, the evidence of revelation borrows aid from other conſiderations, independent of human teſtimony, ſo as to be perfectly ſimilar to the evidence for natural religion. The proper evidence for natural religion ariſes from *preſent appearances*, the doctrines of it being nothing more than the concluſions we draw from them. Could we poſſibly account for every thing that we ſee in the world around us without the ſuppoſition of an uncauſed being, there would have been no foundation for natural religion; but not being able to account for what we ſee without ſuppoſing the exiſtence and agency of a ſupreme being, we are under a neceſſity of admitting that there is ſuch a being, and conſequently of aſſenting to every other article of natural religion.

In like manner a variety of *preſent appearances* may be conſidered as ſo many ſtanding evidences of ſeveral leading articles in revealed religion; becauſe, unleſs we admit that the divine being has interpoſed in the government of the world, in

ſuch a manner as the hiſtories of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations aſſert, it is impoſſible to give a ſatisfactory account of the known ſtate of the world in paſt and preſent times; as, for inſtance, that ſuch a ſyſtem as Judaiſm ſhould have been eſtabliſhed, and ſuch a religion as chriſtianity ſhould have had that ſpread in the world, which all hiſtory ſhews that it had, in ſuch circumſtances as the ſame hiſtory informs us both the profeſſors of that religion, and the world in general, then were.

In fact, the evidence from teſtimony itſelf is ultimately the ſame with this, being reduceable to the method of judging from known and even preſent appearances. For the reaſon why we are influenced by it, and act upon it, in any particular caſe, is that, from our knowledge of human nature, we have found that, ſo circumſtanced, it never has deceived us; ſo that human nature muſt be changed before ſuch teſtimony could be fallacious. For the ſame reaſon, all hiſtorical evidence is ultimately an appeal to preſent appearances. For if things in time paſt had not been as they repreſent, the information we now receive concerning them, could not have been conveyed to us.

The argument from *prophecy* is of a mixed nature, reſting, in general, upon the teſtimony of the friends of revelation, that ſuch prophecies were actually delivered a ſufficient time before the event, and

and upon the teſtimony of general hiſtory, and the preſent ſtate of things, for the accompliſhment of them. Many of the ſcripture prophecies, however, even in the Old Teſtament, and almoſt all thoſe of the New, are univerſally acknowledged to have been publiſhed prior to the events to which they correſpond.

Theſe three kinds of evidence for the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, viz. from *teſtimony*, from *preſent appearances*, and from *prophecy*, I ſhall conſider in the order in which they are here mentioned.

SECTION III.

Of the importance of teſtimony, and the credibility of miracles.

SINCE one principal evidence of revelation depends upon *human teſtimony*, I ſhall firſt conſider the importance of it, and then lay down ſome general rules for eſtimating the value of it.

The greateſt part of our knowledge has no other foundation than teſtimony; and even when the proper foundation is of a different kind, our faith is much ſtrengthened by means of it. For inſtance, when we ourſelves form any rational concluſion from appearances, as that there is a God, we are much confirmed in our belief, by finding

that many other perſons have drawn the ſame concluſion, either from the ſame appearances, or from any other.

Beſides, the knowledge on which we act every day depends chiefly upon *memory*, or our recollecting and believing that we once ſaw the evidence of the truths which may not now be obvious to us. For no perſon can pretend to be able at all times clearly to demonſtrate every propoſition to which he gives his firmeſt aſſent. Now belief, which depends upon *recollection*, is ſomewhat ſimilar to that which depends upon *teſtimony*. In one caſe we believe that we *ourſelves* have ſeen a thing to be what we now apprehend it to be, and in the other caſe we believe that *other perſons* have ſeen it to be ſo.

We ought not, therefore, to think lightly of the nature of faith in revelation, becauſe it is an *hiſtorical faith*, and depends upon *human teſtimony*; for the ſame is the foundation of the greateſt, and moſt valuable part of human knowledge.

If we appeal to *experience*, to determine the *actual weight* and effect of different kinds of evidence, we ſhall be convinced that the evidence of teſtimony is adapted to give as much ſatisfaction to the mind of man as any other kind of evidence. No perſon, I believe, who has read hiſtory, has any more doubt of there being ſuch a city as Rome, of there having been ſuch a perſon as Julius Cæſar, or of his having been killed there, than he

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has of the truth of the propoſition that 2 and 2 make 4. At leaſt, if there be any difference in the *fullneſs of perſuaſion* in theſe two caſes, it is altogether imperceptible; and any perſon would, in fact, venture as much upon the truth of the one, as upon that of the other.

Though it be true, indeed, in theory, that there is ſome ſmall degree of uncertainty in every ſingle teſtimony, which can never be wholly removed by any ſubſequent teſtimony (ſince this, alſo, muſt be liable to the ſame kind of uncertainty) yet there is alſo a degree of uncertainty, and a ſource of miſtake, in drawing concluſions from ſelf-evident truths, and eſpecially when the chain of deduction is of conſiderable length.

Conſidering the great weight which teſtimony naturally has with mankind, we cannot but conclude that any thing may be proved by it, except ſuch things as are contradicted by ſuperior evidence, and ſuch is, certainly, that of our own ſenſes, comprehending not only our immediate perceptions, but even neceſſary concluſions from thoſe perceptions. How incredible, therefore, ſoever, any fact may be *a priori*, ſince, if it be not abſolutely impoſſible, it *may* be true, ſo alſo a certain degree of hiſtorical evidence muſt be ſufficient to prove the truth of it.

We judge of other perſons, and of the connection between their ſentiments, language and con-

duct, by ourſelves; and knowing, by our own conſciouſneſs, that a *regard to truth* is a natural, and very ſtrong principle in the human mind, we take it for granted that the ſolemn declarations of others are founded in truth; and the general experience of *human veracity* confirms our diſpoſition to give credit to human teſtimony, unleſs we can diſcover ſome reaſon for ſuppoſing that thoſe who give us any information were either deceived themſelves, or were much intereſted in deceiving others.

Mr. Hume, indeed, has advanced, that we ought not to liſten to any evidence in favour of *miracles*, or of there ever having been a departure from the laws of nature, becauſe every ſuch evidence is contradicted by our own conſtant experience, of the abſolute uniformity of the laws of nature.

But, with reſpect to paſt facts, this is taking for granted the very thing to be proved, becauſe it is aſſerted by the friends of revelation, that the courſe of nature has not always proceeded without interruption, but that, for great and good purpoſes, the divine author of it has not confined himſelf to it, but has occaſionally departed from it. In reality, therefore, all that Mr. Hume has advanced, with reſpect to this caſe, is that there have been no miraculous events becauſe there have been none. At leaſt, it is judging from the experience of one age, againſt the expreſs teſtimony of former

former ages, and in a caſe in which there is no contradiction between them; ſince both may be equally true. For the courſe of nature may be perfectly uniform now, and yet may not have been ſo, in all caſes, formerly.

But let us ſuppoſe that we lived in the age in which the firſt miracle was ſaid to be performed, and that there was no pretended evidence of any thing like it having happened before. In this caſe our conſtant experience of any courſe of events can only be a foundation for a *reaſonable, or a certain degree of, expectation*, that the ſame courſe will be continued, and by no means amounts to any thing like a demonſtration that the ſame courſe will always be continued. The uſual operations of nature, we have ſeen, are only different modes of the divine agency; but though the divine being has thought proper to act in a perfectly uniform manner, during any given period of time, it cannot follow from thence, that there never can be a reaſon for his changing that mode of operation; unleſs our reaſoning concerning him and his agency be quite different from our reaſoning concerning other intelligent beings and their agency; and in this caſe there can be no foundation for ſuch a difference.

Beſides, if there be a God, and if the world, in its preſent ſtate, have not been eternal, there muſt have been a time when the divine being did pro-

perly *interpose*, so as to form both it, and the plants and animals which are peculiar to it; and if there *has been* but one proper interposition in any period of time past, there *may*, according to Mr. Hume's own method of reasoning, be another.

It would also follow from Mr. Hume's principles, that every *new fact* in philosophy must be absolutely incredible, till we can see how it arises from principles, the operation of which we have seen in other cases; and so the king of Siam will be justified in giving no credit to the Dutchmen, who informed him that, in their country, water became sometimes so hard, that it would even bear men and carriages; for, living in an uniformly warm climate, he had never seen any such thing, and could not conceive that it was possible.

The evidence that the course of nature has been departed from, is the very same with that by which we judge when it is not departed from, and must be equally competent in both cases. For certainly the eyes, ears, and other senses of men, are equally capable of judging concerning all things which they are equally capable of perceiving. If a number of persons could distinguish their friend from all other men before he died, they must, being possessed of the same organs, be equally capable of distinguishing him from all other persons after he should be risen from the dead. And whatever Mr. Hume, or any other person, may pretend concern-

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ing the *natural incredibility* of all accounts of miracles, I doubt not but that ſuch teſtimony as this would have its weight even with themſelves.

Nothing can be naturally more improbable than the caſe I have mentioned, viz. of a perſon riſing from the dead; and yet I do not believe that any perſon can be ſo incredulous, but that, if only half a dozen perſons, of his own previous nomination, ſhould ſeriouſly report, that, having perfectly known a perſon who was ſaid to be riſen from the dead, and having converſed with, and examined him, they were ſatisfied he was no impoſtor, but the very ſame perſon with whom they had been acquainted before, he would believe them; ſo that his own real feelings would be ſuch a demonſtration of the *actual power of teſtimony*, as none of his ſophiſtry could evade. Now it will be ſhewn, that the evidence of the reſurrection of Chriſt is even much more ſatisfactory than this; the witneſſes of it being, in reality, more unexceptionable, than ſuch as any perſon would have previouſly nominated for the purpoſe.

It is readily acknowledged, that many propoſitions are, in their own nature, abſurd, and therefore that no evidence whatever can be of any avail to the proof of them. If, for inſtance, a perſon ſhould do what I ſhould not be able to diſtinguiſh from a real miracle, pretending to prove by it that the ſun did not riſe yeſterday, to contradict ſuch

a notorious hiſtorical fact as there is ſuch a place as Rome, or to refute ſo plain a propoſition as this, that 2 and 2 make 4, he will not perſuade me to admit any thing ſo contrary to experience, to common ſenſe, or to unqueſtionable human teſtimony.

Alſo, the great outlines of natural religion, reſpecting the providence, and goodneſs of God, and the great rules of human duty, though they be not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, demonſtrable, yet their very high degree of probability, and their great importance to mankind, give them ſuch a ſanction, that we ought not to liſten to any evidence that would tend to undermine them. We may take it for granted that God cannot contradict himſelf. Whatever, therefore, he clearly appears to be in his works, we may aſſure ourſelves that he will alſo appear to be in any revelation that he ſhall pleaſe to make of himſelf. He cannot appear good and merciſul in one method of making himſelf known, and cruel and unjuſt in another. Nothing, therefore, can be admitted as contained in any revelation, that is pretended to come from God, which is contrary to the plain principles of natural religion already demonſtrated.

Since, however, there appear to be many *difficulties* on the ſubject of natural religion, and many of our concluſions have only a ſmall degree of probability in their favour, we muſt by no means take it

it for granted that ſuch concluſions are always juſt, but muſt expect that a revelation from God will diſcover many miſtakes, and eſpecially that it will ſupply many defects, in the beſt formed ſyſtem of natural religion.

From the obſervations which have now been made, it may be ſeen, that we ought to be very far from relinquiſhing our reaſon, when we come to conſider the ſubject of revelation. On the contrary, then, it is that we ought to make the moſt uſe of it, to ſee that we be not impoſed upon in a matter of ſo much conſequence to us. It is only by the help of that faculty which we call *reaſon*, that we can diſtinguiſh between any two ſyſtems of religion that may be propoſed to us. It is by reaſon only that we can judge both of their previous probability, and alſo of the poſitive evidence that is produced in favour of them. Let us, therefore, upon all occaſions, call to our aid that power which God has given us to be the guide of life, and eſpecially in matters of ſo great importance to us as thoſe certainly are which relate to the will of God, what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him.

SECTION IV.

Rules for eſtimating the value of human teſtimony.

THE plain rules for eſtimating the value of *ſingle evidences* are the two following. Any thing, capable of being proved by mere teſtimony, is credible in proportion to the opportunity the witneſs had of being well informed concerning it himſelf, and his freedom from any bias that might make him wiſh to impoſe upon others. If the perſon who gives us information concerning any tranſaction, at which we ourſelves were not preſent, appears to be a competent judge of it, and have been in a ſituation in which he had the beſt opportunity of being rightly informed, and if there be no appearance of its being his intereſt to deceive us, we give our aſſent; but we heſitate, in proportion to the doubts we entertain on either of theſe heads.

The *more* perſons there are who relate the ſame tranſaction, of which they are equally credible witneſſes, the ſtronger is the evidence for it. But the more perſons there are through whoſe hands the *ſame narration* is conveyed to us, the weaker is the evidence. In this latter caſe, the witneſſes are called *dependent* ones; but in the former they are ſaid to be

be *independent*. Whatever imperfection there may be in any one of a number of independent witneſſes, it is in part removed by the teſtimony of others; but every imperfection in the original evidence is increaſed in proportion to the number of dependent witneſſes, through whoſe hands the ſame ſtory is tranſmitted.

The marks of a ſtory being related by a number of independent witneſſes, of full credit, is their agreement in the principal articles, and their diſagreement with reſpect to things of leſs conſequence, or at leaſt a variety, or diverſity in their manner of relating the ſame ſtory.

The reaſon of this is, that to things of principal importance they will all equally *attend*, and therefore they will have their minds equally impreſſed with the ideas of them; but that to things of leſs conſequence they will not give the ſame attention, and therefore they will be apt to conceive differently concerning them.

If a number of perſons agree very minutely with reſpect to all the facts of any narrative, general and particular, and alſo in the order and manner of the narration, it will amount to a proof that they have agreed together to tell the ſame ſtory; and in this they will be ſuppoſed to have been influenced by ſome motive not favourable to the value of their teſtimony; and beſides, having learned circumſtances one of another, they cannot

not be conſidered as independent of one another. All hiſtories which have been written by different perſons, in all reſpects equally credible, agree in the main things, but they are as certainly found to differ with reſpect to things of leſs conſequence.

We likewiſe diſtinguiſh with reſpect to the *nature of the fact* to which our aſſent is required, for we expect more numerous, more expreſs, and in all reſpects, more unexceptionable evidence, according to the degree of its previous improbability, ariſing from its want of analogy to other facts already known; and in this there is a *gradation*, from things which are antecedently highly probable, and therefore require but little poſitive evidence, to things which are utterly incredible, being ſo contrary to what we already know of the courſe of nature, and the author of it, that no evidence could convince us of it.

If my ſervant ſhould tell me that, as he was paſſing through a certain place, he ſaw a friend of mine, who I knew had buſineſs in that neighbourhood, and the character of my ſervant was ſuch that I had never known him to tell me a wanton lie, I ſhould readily believe him; and if I had any thing to do in the caſe, I ſhould, without heſitation, act upon the ſuppoſition that what he told me was true. But if the ſame ſervant ſhould ſay that, coming through the ſame place, he ſaw another of my friends whom I knew to have been

dead

dead, I ſhould not believe him, though the thing in itſelf was not naturally impoſſible; and if ten or a dozen perſons of our common acquaintance, perſons of knowledge and curioſity, ſhould, independently of one another, ſeriouſly inform me that they were preſent themſelves, and had no doubt of the fact, I might believe it.

It follows, however, from this obſervation, that miracles require a much ſtronger teſtimony than common facts. The latter are analogous to ſuch other facts as are the ſubject of every day's experience, ſo that we are continually expecting ſuch things, and they are never any ſurprize to us; whereas the former are contrary to that analogy, and are therefore unexpected.

By the help of theſe maxims I ſhall now proceed to examine the evidence of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, ſhewing how far they are in themſelves credible or incredible upon the whole; then examining the evidence which has been produced in their favour, and laſtly conſidering ſome particular objections which have been made to them.

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SECTION V.

Of the antecedent credibility *of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations.*

THE belief of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, which have ſo cloſe a connection that they muſt ſtand or fall together, is to believe that the divine being has, from time to time, interpoſed in the moral government of the world; having, upon ſeveral important occaſions, ſpoken to mankind by perſons called *prophets*, in order to give them information concerning various truths, of the greateſt moment to them, and to reclaim them from vice and wickedneſs; and that many perſons have wrought inconteſtible miracles in proof of their having received a commiſſion from God for this purpoſe.

In the hiſtory of the Jewiſh religion we are informed, that the divine being made choice of one particular nation, the poſterity of Abraham, by Iſaac and Jacob, as the principal medium of his communications to mankind; making eſpecial proviſion againſt their falling into idolatry, and making their temporal proſperity manifeſtly to depend upon their adherence to his worſhip.

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In the hiſtory of the chriſtian religion, we are informed that, after many predictions, which did, in fact, raiſe the expectation of the Jewiſh people, and, in ſome meaſure, alſo, that of the reſt of mankind, concerning a very extraordinary perſon, who ſhould be in a more eminent manner diſtinguiſhed by God, for the benefit of men, *Jeſus Chriſt* (whoſe character and hiſtory ſtrictly correſponded to thoſe prophetic deſcriptions) was born in Judea; that he received from God a power of working miracles, in a more illuſtrious manner than any other prophet who had gone before him; that he inculcated the great duties of natural religion in their full extent, with the expreſs promiſe of a reſurrection from the dead, and an everlaſting life of happineſs, to all who ſhould believe and obey his doctrine; and that, after living an irreproachable and moſt uſeful life (being a perfect pattern of the moſt genuine piety and benevolence, and of a proper moderation without auſterity, with reſpect to all the things of this life) he was put to death by the Jews and Romans; but that he roſe again from the dead on the third day, as he himſelf had foretold that he ſhould; and that he aſcended to heaven in a viſible manner.

We are alſo informed in the ſame hiſtory, that after the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, perſons appointed by him, with the title of *apoſtles*, and many others of his diſciples, had the power

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of working miracles in his name; that, at the risk of every thing that was valuable to them in this life, and of life itself, they preached the gospel; publishing in all places the history of Jesus Christ (the same that is contained in the books called gospels) as what they could attest upon their own knowledge; particularly reciting his doctrines, precepts, and promises, and assuring all men, that he would come again, with a commission from God to judge the whole race of mankind, according to their works; when he would most amply reward all the virtuous and good, especially those who had been sufferers in the cause of righteousness and truth, and that he would inflict an adequate punishment on all the wicked.

Lastly, if these histories be true, a very great number both of Jews and Gentiles were, in consequence of this preaching of the gospel, converted to the belief of christianity, many of them suffered long and severe persecutions on this account, and even courageously died martyrs to their faith, and christianity kept continually gaining ground in the world as Jesus Christ had foretold.

This is a general idea of what is contained in the Jewish and christian revelations, all the particulars being found in the *bible*, which is a collection of such books as contain the most authentic account of those revelations; being written, as is pretended by men who themselves had received communications

tions from God, and who were witneſſes of the moſt important of thoſe tranſactions of which they give an account.

Now, before we examine the evidence on which our belief of the particulars which I have now recited reſts, it is proper to conſider how far the account is in itſelf *credible*; by which I now mean, whether it be capable of being proved at all; and, if it be, what kind of evidence is neceſſary to procure to it the aſſent of reaſonable and thinking men.

That ſuch a revelation, and miracles in proof of it, are *poſſible*, cannot, I think, be diſputed, ſince the ſame being who made the world, muſt neceſſarily have it in his power to interpoſe in the government of it; and not only to reverſe the laws of it, but even to deſtroy it, if he ſhould think proper. The only queſtion, therefore, is whether there could be a *ſufficient reaſon* for ſuch an interpoſition as has been deſcribed. But ſince *goodneſs* has been ſhewn to be the characteriſtic of the divine being, ſuch a revelation muſt, *a priori*, appear credible, in proportion to its being uſeful and ſeaſonable. If the ſtate of things before revelation was ſuch as made it highly expedient, at that particular juncture, in exact proportion to that *expediency*, it might even have been expected; and it would have been expected with abſolute certainty,

tainty, by any being who was a proper judge of the real value and ſeaſonableneſs of it.

Now that ſuch a revelation was in fact highly expedient, has been ſufficiently ſhewn already, in the view which has been given of the ſtate of the heathen world antecedent to it; for without it mankind were actually involved in the groſſeſt ignorance concerning their maker, and alſo concerning many important moral duties, and the ſanctions of virtue in a future life; and, in conſequence of this, they were abandoning themſelves more and more to the moſt deſtructive vices.

That God ſhould ſuffer his offſpring of mankind to fall into ſo deplorable a ſituation, is only one branch of the complaint concerning the introduction and prevalence of *evils* in general; and ſo long as goodneſs appears, upon the whole, to be the governing principle of the divine being, they ſhould lead us to look for, and expect with confidence, a remedy for theſe and all other evils; and we may aſſure ourſelves, that ſuch a remedy will be provided, as ſoon as ever theſe evils ſhall have anſwered the benevolent intention of him who has appointed, or permitted them.

So far, therefore, was ſuch a revelation as I have been deſcribing from being incredible, *a priori*; that, ſince it has been proved to have been highly *deſirable*, thoſe of mankind who had a juſt idea of their

their ſituation, and of the character of the ſupreme being, might have been led to expect, or at leaſt to wiſh for ſome extraordinary interpoſition, to ſave a ſinking world, to reſtore the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and to provide more effectual ſanctions of virtue.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, DERIVED FROM TESTIMONY, AND ESPECIALLY THAT OF ITS FRIENDS.

SECTION I.

Of the authenticity of the books of ſcripture.

SUCH revelations as the Jewiſh and chriſtian being highly probable, or not unlikely to be true, what we have to do, in order to aſcertain their *proper credibility*, is to conſider whether the accounts of miracles, ſaid to have been wrought in atteſtation of them, may be depended upon. In other words, we are to enquire whether the books, which we uſually call the *ſcriptures*, contain a faithful hiſtory of facts. For, if what we there read be true, the divine being has unqueſtionably interpoſed in the government of the world, and many perſons, in proof of it, have worked the moſt undeniable miracles; having performed ſuch things as no men could have done, except they had been authoriſed and empowered by him who appointed the

the laws of nature, and who alone can ſuſpend or control them.

Now it may be ſhewn that, according to all the rules of judging concerning the value of teſtimony, we muſt admit the truth of theſe hiſtories, if the books themſelves be *genuine*, that is, if they were written by the perſons whoſe names they bear, or in the circumſtances in which the contents of them repreſent them to have been written; if, for inſtance, the books of Moſes were written by Moſes; or, which is the ſame thing with reſpect to their credibility, if they were written by any perſon who copied from, or digeſted what he had written, though they might add ſome circumſtances of later date; or indeed if the chief of their contents were written by any perſon who was contemporary with Moſes. The book of Joſhua will alſo be genuine, if it was either written by Joſhua himſelf, by any of his contemporaries, or by any perſon who lived within a ſufficient time after his death, ſo as not to be unacquainted with the tranſactions of which he gives an account. The ſame obſervation may be made concerning all the remaining books of the Old Teſtament, and likewiſe thoſe of the New; becauſe ſuch perſons as the apoſtles, or their contemporaries, were (as will be ſhewn at large) in circumſtances, in which they could not poſſibly have been impoſed upon themſelves, and alſo in which, we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe, they could be under the

the influence of any ſufficient motive to attempt to impoſe upon others.

Now, that the books of ſcripture are genuine, we have, in all reſpects, the ſame reaſon to believe as we have to receive any other antient writings as genuine; as that the books of Homer, for inſtance, were written by Homer, thoſe of Thucydides by Thucydides, thoſe of Tacitus by Tacitus, or any other of the moſt celebrated antient writings, by their reputed authors, or their cotemporaries. In all theſe caſes, the proof is ſimply this, that ſuch writings have been quoted and referred to, as the works of their reputed authors, or their cotemporaries, by ſubſequent writers, without any conſiderable variation, to the preſent time. Nay, we have much ſtronger evidence for the authenticity of the moſt important of the books of ſcripture, than we have for that of any other writings in the world; becauſe they are much oftener quoted, and referred to, in every age, from the very times in which they were written, quite down to the preſent; which has been owing to nothing but the very great credit they have gained, in conſequence of their being conſidered as of the greateſt importance to mankind.

Indeed, ſo convincing has been the evidence of the authenticity of the books of ſcripture, that it had been almoſt univerſally allowed, by thoſe who have hated and oppoſed the ſyſtem of religion which they

they contain. Neither the Jews, for inſtance, nor any early writer among the heathens, who undertook to controvert the principles of chriſtianity, ever intimated that they had ſo much as a doubt concerning the genuineneſs of the books which contain an account of it. The *four goſpels* are particularly mentioned by Julian, and a very conſiderable part of the contents of them are quoted by Celſus. Accordingly, theſe, and other early oppoſers of chriſtianity, admit the truth of the hiſtory in general, without excepting what is miraculous in it; aſcribing theſe wonderful works either to the agency of ſome evil ſpirit, or endeavouring to account for them in ſome other manner, in which the interpoſition of the divine being in favour of Chriſt and the apoſtles, might not be neceſſary.

It affords an argument exceedingly favourable to the authenticity of the books of the New Teſtament, that they were very ſoon tranſlated into various foreign languages, and that a multiplicity of copies, both of the originals, and of theſe tranſlations, were likewiſe preſently diſperſed into all parts of the known world, which at that time abounded with men of reading and curioſity; and that all our preſent copies, both of the originals and of theſe tranſlations, agree with one another, and with the quotations made by antient writers from them, in every thing material. We have, therefore, all the reaſon in the world to conclude, that

theſe books have not been materially corrupted, notwithſtanding the *various readings*, and other errors of ſmall conſequence, by which all antient writings have ſuffered in the ſame proportion; and which were, indeed, unavoidable, unleſs every particular tranſcriber had been prevented, by a miracle from making any miſtake, which was by no means neceſſary for any valuable purpoſe.

It is only upon the *leading facts* in the goſpel hiſtory that the truth of chriſtianity is founded; ſo that if the books of the New Teſtament come to us in ſuch a ſtate, as to contain a ſufficiently credible account of the miracles which Chriſt wrought, of the doctrines he taught, of his death and reſurrection from the dead, and alſo of the miracles and preaching of the apoſtles, and the manner in which their doctrine was received by the Jews and Gentiles, at the firſt promulgation of it, they are quite ſufficient to induce us to live and die as becomes chriſtians, having a full aſſurance of a future judgment, and of a ſtate of retribution after death. And no corruption of the books of ſcripture, deſigned or undeſigned, can be ſuppoſed to have vitiated them ſo much, as not to have left them even far more perfect than this great purpoſe and uſe of them requires.

It is alſo to be obſerved, that the controverſies in which chriſtians began to be engaged, even before the publication of the books of the New Teſtament, and

and eſpecially about that time, and from thence to the preſent day, are of great moment to eſtabliſh their authenticity; ſince the writers in all thoſe controverſies conſtantly appealed to, and expreſsly quoted the books of ſcripture; and in all the writings which are come down to us, we find the texts they quoted, in every thing material, the ſame as in our preſent copies, ſo that we may depend upon it, that the principal books of the New Teſtament are the genuine productions of the perſons, and of the age to which they are uſually aſcribed. And from this it will be made to appear that they ſupply a ſufficient evidence of the facts on which the chriſtian hiſtory is founded.

The particular teſtimonies of antient writers, Chriſtian, Jewiſh, and Heathen, which demonſtrate the authenticity of the books of the New Teſtament, have been produced at full length by Dr. Lardner; and, as it would be too tedious to recite ſuch particulars in this place, I muſt refer my readers to his moſt valuable work, intitled, *The Credibility of the goſpel hiſtory.* They may aſſure themſelves, however, that, notwithſtanding the authenticity of ſome of the books has been queſtioned, there never was any doubt with reſpect to any of them, except to the epiſtles of James and Jude, the ſecond of Peter, the two ſmall epiſtles of John, that which is inſcribed to the Hebrews, and the book of Revelation. The authority of the four goſpels, the

book of Acts, and the reſt of the epiſtles, was never called in queſtion. It is true, indeed, that ſome of the Judaizing chriſtians having conceived an averſion to St. Paul, had no opinion of his writings, but they were never denied to be his. Alſo ſome of the early chriſtians rejected the genealogy of Chriſt, and the hiſtory of the miraculous conception, as related in the goſpels of Matthew and Luke, but they do not appear to have been numerous, nor was their opinion of long continuance.

Beſides, we are by no means to infer that, becauſe ſome early chriſtians rejected any particular *opinion* or *fact* contained in any of the four Evangeliſts, they did not therefore think them to be the genuine writings of the perſons whoſe names they bear. For though they were ſatisfied that they wrote thoſe things, they might think them to be *ſo far* miſtaken. We find, in the hiſtory of the Acts, that the opinion of a ſingle apoſtle did not always paſs uncontroverted; and with reſpect to any thing except the leading facts, ſuch as were mentioned above, and which have never yet been queſtioned by any perſons who call themſelves chriſtians, any difference of opinion among the apoſtles, or others, is of no moment whatever, with reſpect to the proper evidence of chriſtianity.

With reſpect, however to all thoſe books of the New Teſtament, the authenticity of which has been queſtioned, the arguments in favour of them

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are conſiderably ſtronger than thoſe againſt them. It is not certain who was the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, but if it was not written by St. Paul, which ſeems to be the more probable opinion, yet it was certainly written in the apoſtolical age, and by ſome perſon of authority in the chriſtian church. The goſpel of Matthew, was, perhaps, written in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jewiſh converts; but either Matthew himſelf, or ſome other perſon of the ſame age, muſt have tranſlated it into Greek, the language in which we now have it; ſo that, with reſpect to every thing of importance, it is of the ſame value as the original Hebrew would have been. The book of *Revelation* was not received in all chriſtian churches for ſome time; but afterwards it gained univerſal credit, and its authority is now juſtly conſidered as of the higheſt rank. The reaſons for which it was diſregared by ſome are, indeed, ſufficiently obvious, and appear to be of no manner of weight, as they aroſe chiefly from the doctrine of the *millenium*, of which ſome antient heretics were thought to avail themſelves too much.

There can be no doubt but that the canon of the Old Teſtament was the ſame in the time of our Saviour as it is now; nor could it have been corrupted materially after the return of the Jews from the Babyloniſh captivity, on account of the ſect of the Samaritans, which took its riſe about that time.

For these people professed the same regard to the sacred books with the Jews themselves, and were always at variance with them about the interpretation of the scriptures. The Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch is now in our hands, and excepting some *numbers*, in which the different copies and translations of all antient writings are peculiarly subject to vary, and a single text, in which mount *Gerizim* and mount *Ebal* are interchanged, it is the very same with the Jewish copy. Not long after this, the books of the Old Testament, beginning with the Pentateuch, were translated into Greek, and dispersed by means of the Jews, into almost every part of the known world.

There is not the least probability that any change, worth any men's attempting to make, or in the least affecting any principal point of the Jewish religion, was made during their captivity; which, however, was not long, reckoning from the time of the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, but that many of those who returned from it had a perfect remembrance of the temple of Solomon, which had been burned in the siege by Nebuchadnezzar; for they wept when they saw how much the new temple was inferior to it; and can it be supposed but that some of these people would have taken the alarm, and a schism have been occasioned, if any material change had been attempted to be made in the

the conſtitution of the law, or the contents of the ſacred books.

Leaſt of all, can it be ſuppoſed that Ezra would, at that particular time, have introduced the injunction on which he laid ſo much ſtreſs, about putting away all their ſtrange wives. In his circumſtances this meaſure muſt have appeared exceedingly hazardous, conſidering how many perſons, even among the prieſts themſelves, had contracted ſuch marriages, how conſiderable they were by their birth and alliances, and conſequently how many enemies the Jews would thereby make themſelves. We find, in fact, that this meaſure did meet with the moſt violent oppoſition, produced a laſting diviſion among themſelves, and made them incur the hatred and ill offices of all their neighbours. Beſides, ſince many of the prieſts, who muſt have known as much of the law of Moſes as Ezra himſelf, were highly exaſperated at this proceeding, they would never have ſuffered him to publiſh that as one of the laws of Moſes, which they knew to be a mere forgery.

If we go farther back into the Jewiſh hiſtory, we ſhall ſtill be unable to pitch upon any time in which any material change in the ſacred books could have been attempted, with the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs. It was one of the moſt earneſt inſtructions of Moſes himſelf, that the book of the law, a copy of which was lodged in the ark, ſhould be the

ſubject of conſtant reading and meditation in every Iſraelitiſh family; and it was expreſsly appointed that it ſhould be read publicly every ſeven years, at the feaſt of Tabernacles, Deut. xxxi. 9, 13; and the Levites, who were diſperſed through all the twelve tribes, were particularly appointed to ſtudy and to explain it to the reſt of the nation; and, notwithſtanding the times of defection and idolatry, they were never intirely without prophets, and even many thouſands of others, who continued firm in the worſhip of the true God, and therefore muſt have retained their regard to the ſacred books of the Law.

As to the alarm of king Joſiah and his court, on finding a copy of the Law in the temple, it may be accounted for many ways better than upon the ſuppoſition of that being the firſt copy of all, either impoſed upon the king, or impoſed by him upon the people; neither of which could poſſibly have been effected. It is not improbable, but that this particular copy might have been the original one, which had been taken out of the ark, and miſlaid, in ſome former idolatrous reign; and the paſſages which they read might contain ſome awful denunciations againſt idolatry, to which they had given but little attention before. Whatever we may conjecture with reſpect to this particular fact, it can never be thought in the leaſt probable, that a nation ſo prone to idolatry as the Iſraelites were,

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from the time of their ſettlement in the land of Canaan to the Babyloniſh captivity, ſhould either forge, or not detect and expoſe the forgery of books pretending to ſo high authority, and ſo hoſtile to their favourite propenſity.

Upon the whole, the Jews have, no doubt, acted the part of moſt faithful and even ſcrupulous guardians of their ſacred books, for the uſe of all the world in the times of chriſtianity. After the laſt of their prophets, Malachi, they admitted no more books into their canon, ſo as to permit them to be read in their ſynagogues, though they were written by the moſt eminent men in their nation; it being a maxim with them, that no book could be entitled to a place in the canon of their ſcriptures, unleſs it was written by a prophet, or a perſon who had had communication with God.

That the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament have not been materially corrupted by the Jews ſince the promulgation of chriſtianity, notwithſtanding it is thought that, out of enmity to chriſtianity, they attempted it in a few paſſages, (though it was more with reſpect to the Septuagint Greek than the original Hebrew) is evident from the many prophecies ſtill remaining in their ſcriptures, concerning the humiliation and ſufferings of the Meſſiah, in which the chriſtians always triumphed when they diſputed with the Jews. Theſe paſſages, therefore, we may aſſure ourſelves, would

have been the firſt that the Jews would have practiſed upon, if it had been in their power, or in their inclination to do it.

All the books of ſcripture have alſo many internal marks of their being the genuine production of the ages in which they are ſaid to have been written, as they contain ſo many alluſions to particular perſons, places, opinions, and cuſtoms, which are known, from other allowed hiſtories, to have exiſted in thoſe times; and the hiſtorical incidents which the ſacred writers occaſionally mention, are ſufficiently agreeable to other authentic accounts; the variations being no greater than ſuch as are to be found in other genuine hiſtories of the ſame period. This branch of the evidence of chriſtianity has alſo been particularly illuſtrated by Dr. Lardner.

SECTION II.

Of the evidence from teſtimony in favour of the chriſtian revelation.

TAKING it for granted that the books of ſcripture are the genuine productions of the perſons and times to which they are uſually aſcribed, I ſhall proceed to conſider the value of the evidence which they contain, for thoſe facts, on which

which the truth of the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions depends, beginning with the latter.

We find in the books of the New Teſtament, and eſpecially the four *Evangeliſts*, and the book of *Acts*, not only that twelve perſons who are called *apoſtles*, but that thouſands of others were witneſſes of a continued courſe of miracles performed by Jeſus Chriſt, during the whole courſe of his miniſtry; eſpecially that he was actually put to death, and that great numbers of perſons had the moſt ſatisfactory evidence that he roſe again from the dead, as he himſelf had foretold. Theſe were perſons who had attended upon him conſtantly, and had had the faireſt opportunity of inquiring into the truth of the facts. Many of theſe witneſſes of the miracles of Chriſt were *ſtrangers*, and others were his moſt inveterate *enemies*; who, notwithſtanding this, could not deny but that he performed many real miracles, though they aſcribed ſome of them to the agency of evil ſpirits.

The miracles of Chriſt were of ſo great notoriety, that Peter, addreſſing himſelf to the body of the Jews at Jeruſalem, within a ſhort time after the reſurrection, had no occaſion to produce any particular witneſſes of them; but, without being contradicted by any perſon, appealed to the whole body of the people preſent, as having already the fulleſt conviction concerning them, Acts ii. 22. St. Paul, alſo, when he had an audience of King

Agrippa, appealed to his own knowledge and conviction; ſaying that the things were *not done in a corner*, Acts xxvi. 26.

Even the friends and diſciples of Chriſt were only thoſe who were made ſo by the evidence of his miracles, and his excellent doctrine, and who muſt have come to him with ſtrong prejudices, againſt his being the perſon that he pretended to be, and againſt his being poſſeſſed of thoſe extraordinary powers which they ſaw him exert. Had he even performed all that they expected from the Meſſiah, the obſcurity of his birth, and his paſſing for a Galilean, were ſufficient, we find, to make many perſons conclude without farther inquiry, that he muſt be an impoſtor. All the Jews, however, even the moſt intelligent, and the moſt virtuous of them, expected nothing leſs than a temporal prince, who ſhould aſſert the freedom of the Jews, and the empire of the world. Nothing, therefore, but the ſtrongeſt evidence of his having a divine commiſſion, can be ſuppoſed to have induced them to receive him in that character, after he had peremptorily declined all kingly honours, and eſpecially after his ſufferings and death.

When Chriſt was actually put to death, we ſee that his moſt intimate companions forſook him and fled; and conſidering the damp which was thrown upon all the views and expectations of the apoſtles by the ignominious death of their maſter, their reaſſembling

aſſembling ſo ſoon afterwards, and undertaking, in the face of the greateſt oppoſition, to preach the doctrine of their maſter, and gain converts to the belief of his divine miſſion, cannot be accounted for, but upon the ſuppoſition of their having received the fulleſt conviction that he roſe from the dead, and had authorized them to preach in his name.

So incredulous were the diſciples of Chriſt with reſpect to the truth of his reſurrection, though it was what he himſelf had expreſsly foretold, that Thomas, one of the twelve apoſtles, declared, even after he was informed of it by the reſt (who aſſured him that they themſelves had lately ſeen, and converſed with him) that he could not believe the fact, unleſs he ſhould actually handle and examine his wounds; and yet even this man did afterwards receive the fulleſt ſatisfaction.

That ſo many of the Jewiſh nation ſhould have been converted to chriſtianity by the preaching of the apoſtles, is ſuch a fact, as cannot be accounted for, but upon the ſuppoſition of their having received the moſt ſatisfactory evidence with reſpect to the reſurrection of Chriſt, and the power with which the apoſtles were inveſted to work miracles in his name.

The whole nation of the Jews are to this day, and, according to all the accounts that we have of them, they ever have been the moſt obſtinate and incre-

incredulous of all mankind, and therefore the laſt people in the world to convince or perſuade; and they muſt have been more eſpecially ſo in ſuch a caſe as this, where their moſt favourite prejudices were directly oppoſed. They muſt, therefore, have been the leaſt liable to have been impoſed upon, and the moſt unexceptionable witneſſes that can be thought of for this purpoſe.

No reaſonable motive can be aſſigned for the aſtoniſhing *perſeverance* of the apoſtles, aud other primitive chriſtians, in preaching the goſpel, bearing all hardſhips, and even undergoing death for the ſake of it, but the moſt firm perſuaſion of their having a reward in heaven; and how could they have come by that firm perſuaſion, but in conſequence of having received the cleareſt evidence of miracles, in favour of the pretenſions and power of Chriſt.

That a few perſons might have had their heads turned, and have acted in an abſurd and unaccountable manner, may be ſuppoſed; but unleſs human nature was conſtituted in a manner quite different from what we ſee and experience at preſent (which would be much more extraordinary than any thing that the ſcheme of revelation requires us to believe) it can never be ſuppoſed that *ſo many* perſons as actually incurred reproach and perſecution, even unto death, for the ſake of the goſpel, at the firſt promulgation of it, ſhould, all of

of them, for ſo long a courſe of time, have been ſo infatuated, as to riſk and abandon every thing, without a well-grounded hope of a ſufficient recompenſe; that is, without a rational conviction concerning the reſurrection and power of Chriſt.

Beſides, they all of them pretended to ſome *miraculous gift*, and cannot be ſuppoſed to have continued to act the part which they did through life, without a conſciouſneſs of their having, and exerting ſuch miraculous powers on proper occaſions.

If the heads of the apoſtles and other primitive chriſtians had been turned by the moſt prepoſterous ambition, and they had meant nothing farther than to make themſelves conſpicuous in the world, it can hardly be ſuppoſed but that ſome of them, at leaſt, would have thought of ſetting up for themſelves, and that the ableſt among them would have endeavoured to make tools of the reſt. On the contrary, there is not the leaſt appearance of any one of them endeavouring to aſſume authority over the reſt; but they perſiſt through life, as brothers and fellow labourers, in their allegiance to their crucified Lord, referring all their mighty works to his power and ſpirit.

With this humility and perfect harmony they preached the religion of their maſter, not only when they were together, but when they were ſeparated from one another, in very diſtant countries; where, if what they performed were mere *tricks of their*

their own, they had an opportunity of eſtabliſhing themſelves independently of one another. Even the apoſtle Paul, who preached the goſpel without conferring with any of the other apoſtles, purſued the ſame conduct, engaging in the very ſame perſecuted intereſt, and promoting it by the very ſame methods.

This unambitious conduct of the apoſtles is the more remarkable, as before the crucifixion of Chriſt, ſome of them appeared to be of a different character, eagerly aſpiring after worldly honours, and ambitious of pre-eminence over their brethren. This, and other remarkable changes in their diſpoſition and conduct after the death of Chriſt, and eſpecially their ſuddenly taking courage to preach the goſpel in the face of the greateſt dangers, immediately after their cowardly deſertion of their maſter, and after a cataſtrophe which intirely overturned all their fond hopes and expectations from him, are eaſily accounted for on the hypotheſis of their having been *endued with power from on high*, on the day of Pentecoſt, but are inexplicable, on the known principles of human nature, without ſuch an hypotheſis.

Chriſtians, even in the times of the apoſtles, were divided into various ſects and parties, and the contention was carried on with great heat and animoſity among them, ſome of them oppoſing the apoſtles themſelves. Now, had any of them been

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but ſuſpected of contriving or conniving at a fraud, with reſpect to the foundation of the religion they profeſſed, it could not, in thoſe circumſtances, but have been detected and expoſed. Yet in arguing with theſe divided chriſtians, the apoſtle Paul ſcruples not to appeal to miracles wrought among them, and even by them, and gives particular directions about the moſt proper uſe of the ſupernatural gifts of which they were poſſeſſed. In theſe circumſtances how could he have written in this manner, if he had been ſenſible that no ſuch miracles had been wrought, and no ſuch ſupernatural gifts poſſeſſed either by himſelf or them.

That the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians could not expect to make any laſting advantage of their impoſture, admitting that their ruling paſſion was the ambition of being the founders of a new religion, may be argued from this conſideration, that for ſome time they univerſally expected the ſecond coming of Chriſt, to put an end to the world, in that very generation.

If Chriſt and his apoſtles were not the weakeſt of all enthuſiaſts, which their whole conduct ſhews them not to have been, they could not but know whether they were inſpired of God, and had a power of ſpeaking and acting in his name, or not. Now that men of virtue ſhould pretend to act from God, at the ſame time that they knew that they had no ſuch commiſſion, cannot be ſuppoſed. It

follows,

follows, therefore, that, not being grofs and weak enthufiafts, they could not be under an illufion themfelves; and being good men, friends of virtue, and fhewing the moft genuine marks of an unfeigned reverence for God, and for truth, they would not attempt to impofe upon others.

That the apoftles were men poffeffed of the greateft cunning, fo as to conduct, with ability and fuccefs, all the parts of fo complex an impofture, and which required fo many agents of ability equal to their own, and that at the fame time they were dupes to the groffeft illufions, are contradictory fuppofitions. To a certain degree, indeed, there may be a mixture of artifice and enthufiafm; and therefore men may be deceived themfelves, and endeavour to deceive others. But the *degree* in which it is neceffary, for the purpofe of infidelity, that thefe two oppofite qualities fhould be found in Chrift and his apoftles, and in all thofe who muft neceffarily have been in the fame fcheme, is abfolutely impoffible, while human nature is what it is; and no example of any thing approaching to it can be found in the hiftory of mankind.

Moft of the preceding arguments are peculiarly ftrong with refpect to St. Paul. He had been an inveterate enemy, and perfecutor of the chriftians, a man of great ability, learning, activity, and influence with the leading men of his country; fo that

that he had every thing in this world to expect from his oppofition to chriftianity, and nothing but perfecution, ignominy, or almoft certain death from embarking in that caufe. Yet, notwithftanding this, he fuddenly, and without difcovering any marks of infanity, or giving any inftance of abfurdity of conduct in other refpects, preached that doctrine which he had oppofed, and continued in it to the end of a laborious and painful life, which terminated in a bloody death.

How this can be accounted for, excepting in the manner in which he himfelf explains it, is to me impoffible to conceive. But upon his hypothefis every thing is perfectly eafy. He fays that Chrift fpake to him in perfon, to convince him of his error, and of the folly of his purfuits, after he had been thrown down from his horfe, by the flafhing of a fupernatural light, as he was on his road to Damafcus. And this fact is itfelf extremely probable from the circumftances of it.

This was not in the night time, when apparitions are commonly pretended to be feen, but at mid-day; not when he was alone, and his mind fubject to a fudden panic, or fit of remorfe, but in company; and not in the company of chriftians, or of thofe who faw and heard enough to make them become chriftians, but of inveterate enemies to chriftianity, probably his favourite companions, and who when they were afterwards appealed to, could

could not contradict the facts, of the extraordinary light, and the ſound of a voice, though they could not diſtinguiſh the *words*; nor could they deny that he was actually ſtruck blind. He was confirmed in the truth of what he was informed of in this viſion by recovering his ſight, as Chriſt at the ſame time foretold, on the prayer of Ananias who baptized him.

The treachery of Judas Iſcariot affords a ſtriking evidence of the innocent character, and divine miſſion of Chriſt. Circumſtanced as this traitor was, and diſpoſed as he muſt have been, he would certainly have given information of any ſiniſter deſign of Chriſt, if he had known of any ſuch thing; and he had the ſame means of information as the reſt of the apoſtles. His hanging himſelf was natural enough as the effect of extreme agony and remorſe of mind, after ſo baſe a piece of treachery, but altogether unaccountable upon the ſuppoſition that, by telling the truth only, he might have gained a conſiderable reward, and at the ſame time have eſtabliſhed himſelf in the eſteem of his country, by expoſing an impoſtor who was the object of general odium, and eſpecially with thoſe who had the chief influence in public affairs.

Upon the whole, it cannot, I think, but be allowed, that the teſtimony that is given to the hiſtory and miracles of Chriſt, of which we have an account in the books of the New Teſtament,

is

is the teſtimony of men who were competent witneſſes in the caſe; having had the faireſt opportunity of ſatisfying themſelves concerning the facts, and who had no motive, that we can imagine, for impoſing upon the world with reſpect to them.

Beſides the evidence of the divine miſſion of Chriſt which ariſes from the teſtimony to the reality of his *miracles*, by thoſe who ſaw and converſed with him, and the tacit acknowledgement of all his contemporaries, we have (on the authority of the ſame hiſtorians) the evidence which ariſes from the teſtimony of another prophet, whoſe claim to a divine communication was allowed by almoſt the whole body of the Jewiſh nation, and even the teſtimony of God himſelf, declared in ſupernatural voices from heaven.

The teſtimony of John the baptiſt is of conſiderable importance to the evidence of chriſtianity. The circumſtances which attended his birth were very extraordinary, and excited great expectations concerning him. He led a remarkably auſtere life, without any connection with the world, or its affairs, and had no perſonal knowledge of Jeſus, though they were related. By his exemplary virtue he ſo far gained the eſteem and confidence of the body of the Jews, that the moſt bigotted and envious of the Phariſees and chief prieſts, notwithſtanding their authority with the people, durſt

not

not ſay in public that he was no prophet. He even died a martyr to his integrity and fidelity, in reproving king Herod.

This remarkable perſon did not pretend to work miracles, but ſolemnly declared that he was commiſſioned to preach the doctrine of repentance, by way of preparation for the coming of the Meſſiah; and he alſo ſolemnly declared that he knew Jeſus to be the perſon by ſome viſible token attending the deſcent of the ſpirit of God upon him; by which, he ſays, it was foretold to him, that he ſhould be able to diſtinguiſh the perſon to whoſe miſſion his own was ſubordinate. Notwithſtanding the great credit which John acquired, equal, if not ſuperior to that of any of the former Jewiſh prophets, he did not pretend to ſet up for himſelf, but conſtantly referred his diſciples to Jeſus, when they were zealouſly attached to him, and jealous of the riſing reputation of the new prophet.

Chriſt was alſo declared to be the ſon and meſſenger of God by miraculous voices from heaven; the firſt of theſe was pronounced immediately upon his baptiſm, probably in the hearing of great numbers; the ſecond on the mount of transfiguration, when only three of his diſciples were preſent; and the third in the temple, in the hearing of a promiſcuous multitude, of whom ſome, who were at a diſtance, thought that it thundered, and others

ſaid

ſaid that an angel ſpake to him. See Luke iii. 22. Mat. xvii. 5. John xii. 28.

To theſe three different kinds of evidence, namely that of his works, of John the Baptiſt, and of God his father, as well as to that of antient prophecies, Jeſus himſelf appeals in his converſation with the Jews: John v. 31, &c.

Some perſons ſeem to be ſurpriſed that we find ſo little in favour of chriſtianity in the writings of Jews and Heathens, who lived about the time of its promulgation. But how can it be ſuppoſed that men ſhould ſpeak very favourably of a religion which they did not chuſe to embrace? Beſides, chriſtianity has all that teſtimony which can poſſibly be had from adverſaries. It would be highly unreaſonable to expect that Jews or Heathens, continuing ſuch, ſhould expreſsly acknowledge their belief of the reſurrection of Chriſt; but they acknowledge what is a ſufficient ground of *our* belief, namely, that the diſciples of Chriſt declared that he did riſe from the dead, and that they profeſſed to have ſeen and converſed with him after his reſurrection. This is particularly done by Celſus, and the emperor Julian.

Such facts as theſe being admitted, we are certainly at liberty to reaſon from them as well as they. The earlier Jews aſcribed ſome of the miracles of Chriſt to the power of Beelzebub, and many of the later Jews to the ſecret virtue of ſome *ineffable*

name

name of God, which they pretend that he ſtole from the temple, or to ſome arts of ſorcery, which they conceit that he learned in Egypt; but, the miraculous works of Chriſt being allowed, we are certainly at liberty to laugh at ſuch hypotheſes as theſe, and may think that we act more reaſonably in aſcribing them to the power of God only.

Beſides, chriſtianity has the teſtimony of thouſands, who, having been bitter enemies, became converts to it, on farther examination; and theſe are, in fact, the moſt valuable of all teſtimonies. Indeed, all the early converts to chriſtianity, the apoſtles themſelves not excepted, may be conſidered as belonging to this claſs; becauſe they had ſtrong prejudices to overcome before they could entertain the thought of ſuch a Meſſiah as Jeſus was.

It were to be wiſhed that unbelievers of the preſent age would carefully conſider the evidences which were alledged in favour of chriſtianity by Chriſt and his apoſtles themſelves, as they are propoſed in the Goſpels and the book of Acts, and endeavour to account for them. Let them particularly conſider the objections that were made to them by the unbelievers of thoſe days, and obſerve what it was which they then took for granted, and let them conſider whether, at this day, they can reaſonably take leſs for granted; or putting themſelves in the place of their predeceſſors, whether they can, in any other reſpect, make any im-

provement on their reaſonings. If their objections to chriſtianity were really weak and inſufficient, their conduct muſt be condemned, even by modern unbelievers, who muſt acknowledge that, with their views of things, they ought to have become chriſtians.

Now it is well known that all the early adverſaries of chriſtianity, Jews and Gentiles, not only allowed the authenticity of the books of the New Teſtament, but alſo admitted that miracles were really wrought by Chriſt and his apoſtles, as an evidence of their having a divine commiſſion. And it may be preſumed that men who were ſo much intereſted in detecting the impoſture of chriſtianity, as the high prieſts and rulers among the Jews, and alſo as the heathen prieſts, philoſophers, and magiſtrates (ſome of whom immediately, and all of whom very ſoon took alarm at the ſpread of chriſtianity, being in the higheſt degree exaſperated at it) and who had every poſſible opportunity for examining the credentials of Chriſt and his apoſtles, would have taken the moſt effectual methods to prevent the growth of a religion that was ſo exceedingly offenſive to them; and they muſt, no doubt, have been ſenſible, that the moſt effectual method would be to remove what the chriſtians themſelves alledged to be the foundation of their faith, namely, the credibility of their miracles, which they aſſerted to have been wrought, and to be at that very time

wrought in its favour. And it appears from the Gospels and the book of Acts, that the enemies of christianity did give the closest attention to the miracles of Christ and his apostles, and not being able to question their reality, they had recourse to such hypotheses to account for them, as any unbeliever of the present age would be ashamed of.

Had christianity given no alarm in Judea at the time when it was first proposed, or had the heathen philosophers and magistrates taken no notice of it till after the death of the apostles, the evidence of the truth of christianity would not have had the strength which it now has, from considering that Christ himself was so obnoxious to the Jewish rulers, that they put him to death, and that so violent a persecution was raised against the disciples of Christ, beginning with the very year of his ascension, that only one of the apostles, and hardly any other person of much eminence among the christians, died a natural death, but died martyrs to their religion; and that all the primitive christians, without exception, suffered very great hardships.

The various circumstances which concur to authenticate the miracles of Christ, and the apostles are well collected into one view by Dr. Jortin, and with it I shall conclude this section. "They were "wrought by persons who solemnly appealed to "God, and who often declared that they would "perform

" perform them. They were wrought in a public " manner, before enemies and unbelievers, in a " learned age, and civilized countries, not with " any air of oſtentation, or for the ſake of worldly " advantage, but in confirmation of precepts and " doctrines agreeable to reaſon, and uſeful to " mankind, and at a time when their enemies " wanted neither power nor inclination to expoſe " them if they had been impoſtures, and were in " no danger either of being inſulted by the popu- " lace, or perſecuted by the civil magiſtrates for " ridiculing the chriſtians.

" Theſe miracles were alſo various and nu- " merous, they were of a permanent nature, and " might be reviewed and re-examined; they had " nothing fantaſtical or cruel in them, but were " acts of kindneſs and beneficence. Miracles " having ceaſed for a long time before Chriſt ap- " peared, the revival of them raiſed the greater " attention. They were atteſted by proper wit- " neſſes, were acknowledged by adverſaries, were " foretold by the prophets, and ſuch as the Jews " expected from the Meſſiah, and actually con- " verted multitudes."

SECTION IV.

Considerations on the resurrection *of Christ, and other facts of a similar nature.*

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of such particular consequence to the truth of christianity, and is so remarkably circumstanced with respect to its evidence, that it well deserves a distinct consideration. To this fact our Lord himself had appealed, as one considerable evidence of his divine mission; and though he spake figuratively when he gave his enemies warning of it, it is plain that he was sufficiently understood by them. For no sooner was he dead, and laid in the sepulchre, than the chief priests and rulers of the Jews informed the Roman governor concerning it; and, to prevent any possibility of their being imposed upon by his disciples stealing the body, and pretending that he had risen from the dead, they obtained a guard of Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre continually; and lest the soldiers themselves should have been bribed, or, by any other method have been gained over by the disciples, to connive at their scheme of conveying away the body, they fixed a seal to a very large stone, which covered the mouth of the sepulchre.

Having

Having uſed theſe precautions, which ſeem to have been all that human prudence could have dictated, they, no doubt, concluded that, if the diſciples ſhould make any attempt to break the ſepulchre, they could not but have been obſerved, and prevented; or if the diſciples ſhould have brought an armed force, ſufficient to overpower the Roman guard, at leaſt ſome reſiſtance would have been made; and the carrying off the body by *violence* could have anſwered no purpoſe whatever; ſo that, upon the whole, they might reſt aſſured that if the body was not found when they came to inſpect the ſepulchre, the removal muſt have been effected either by a miracle, or in ſuch a manner, as could not anſwer the purpoſe of any impoſture.

The event was, that the body was removed from the ſepulchre, on the day on which Chriſt had foretold that he ſhould riſe from the dead, and this happened very early in the morning, ſo that very probably, it was not long after the watch had been changed the third time that night.

Let us now examine whether the account which the diſciples of Chriſt, or that which the Jews gave of this event, is the more probable. The apoſtles, who might have had the account from ſome of the guard, ſay that, juſt before the body was removed, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of God came and rolled away the ſtone from the mouth of the ſepulchre, and ſat upon it; that his raiment was

white as ſnow, and his whole appearance particularly bright and dazzling, ſo that the ſoldiers were ſeized with extreme fear, and became as dead men.

Upon this, they all diſperſed, and ſome of them went into the city, and told the high prieſts all that had paſſed; but they immediately aſſembling together, with the other rulers of the Jews, gave money to theſe ſoldiers, making them promiſe to give out that while they ſlept the diſciples of Chriſt ſtole his body, and aſſuring them; that they would take care that the Roman governor ſhould not puniſh them for their negligence. Accordingly they did what was required of them, and, no doubt, endeavoured to engage all their companions to tell the ſame ſtory. But it is not improbable, but that ſome of them might, in the mean time, have told the truth; and other circumſtances, and a variety of ſubſequent evidence, unqueſtionably prove that there had been a real reſurrection.

The angel was ſtill ſitting upon the ſtone, about break of day, where he was ſeen by Mary Magdalene, and ſome other women, who had come with a deſign to embalm the body, and had brought ſpices with them for that purpoſe, not having any expectation of his riſing again; but being informed of it by the angel, they went in haſte, to acquaint his diſciples with it. Two of theſe, Peter and John, immediately ran to the ſepulchre, which they

they found open, and the body gone; but, inſtead of any marks of a violent removal, they found the grave cloaths carefully folded up, and laid in ſeparate places, ſo that ſome think the body muſt havmiraculouſly ſlipped out of them. However, it is not at all probable, that they would have been left behind, and eſpecially ſo carefully folded, and ſo regularly diſpoſed, if the body had been removed by violence or ſtealth.

That Chriſt ſhould riſe again from the dead, was perfectly agreeable to the tenor of his former life, and a proper ſequel to it; but the more ſubſtantial evidence of it is, his having been frequently ſeen by, and having intimately converſed with his former diſciples, whoſe account of it exhibits, in a moſt natural manner, their ſurpriſe and joy, on the occaſion of ſo agreeable, but ſo unexpected an event. Beſides, all the miracles that were wrought by the apoſtles afterwards, the evidence of which is no leſs convincing than that of the miracles of Chriſt himſelf, and wholly independent of it, are all ſo many proofs of his reſurrection; for they are plainly parts of a great ſcheme, which neceſſarily ſuppoſes that moſt important event.

Let us now attend to ſome circumſtances which ſhew the extreme improbability of the account which the Jews gave of the removal of the body of Jeſus, which is that which the chriſtian writers ſay they put into the mouths of the ſoldiers above-

mentioned. It is evident, from all the circumſtances of the hiſtory, that the diſciples of Chriſt were too much diſconcerted and diſheartened by the unexpected death of their maſter (which entirely deſtroyed all the hopes which they had entertained from him) to think of making any attempt to remove his body; or if they could have removed, and effectually ſecreted it, what end could that have anſwered, without powers to carry on the ſcheme.

But the ſcheme of conveying away the body *by ſtealth* muſt have appeared the moſt improbable of all, as it was neceſſary for this purpoſe, that every ſoldier of the guard ſhould not only have been found ſleeping at the ſame time, but ſo ſound aſleep, that the removal of a ſtone, which ſeveral women deſpaired of being able to ſtir, ſhould not awaken any of them, and that they ſhould all have ſlept long enough to give them an opportunity both of removing the ſtone, and taking off the cloaths and ſpices, in which the body was wrapped; and thoſe who are acquainted with the manner in which the Jews prepared the bodies of their dead for ſepulture, ſay that this muſt have required a conſiderable time; more, indeed, than it can be imagined that perſons who had ſtolen the body would have ventured to employ; and laſtly, they muſt alſo have had time to carry away the body undiſcovered.

This

This was alſo to be done upon a hill, ſo near the city of Jeruſalem, that it is now incloſed within the walls of it, when the moon was at the full, and at the time of paſſover, when both Jeruſalem itſelf, and all the neighbouring places muſt have been crouded with people from all parts of Judea.

It adds to the improbability of this ſtory, that the diſcipline of the Roman ſoldiers is known to have been exceedingly ſtrict; ſo that they muſt all of them have expected either death, or ſome ſevere puniſhment for ſleeping upon watch; nor could they have expected any mercy in this caſe; leaſt of all could they imagine that the Jewiſh rulers would interpoſe in their favour, when it was at their particular requeſt that the guard was obtained, and they were ſo much intereſted in the watch being ſtrictly kept; and yet no puniſhment followed upon the occaſion, which amounts to a full proof that the Jewiſh rulers were convinced that the ſoldiers had done all that could be expected of them.

If it be aſked how the ſoldiers could be brought to fall into the meaſures of the Jewiſh rulers, and ſo readily to tell the lye which they put into their mouths; it may be anſwered, that, in the terror and conſternation they were in, and afraid of puniſhment, they might be glad to do any thing they were directed to do, eſpecially upon the promiſe of impunity and a reward. They might be ſatisfied that Pilate and their Roman officers would

believe nothing of their account of the appearance of an angel, and the miraculous removing of the ſtone (and they ſaw nothing more) and they could not pretend that they had been overpowered, when they returned without any marks of having made reſiſtance. Improbable, therefore, as the ſtory was, they might think it the beſt thing they could do in their circumſtances to tell it. It is not unlikely, however, that, reflecting upon the affair afterwards, and hearing the teſtimony of the apoſtles to the truth of the reſurrection, ſome of them, at leaſt, might be convinced of it, and give a faithful account of all that they knew concerning it.

If the diſciples of Chriſt had really ſtolen his body, in the circumſtances above-mentioned, it is very extraordinary that the Jews ſhould never have pretended to produce, at leaſt, one poſitive evidence of the fact. If it had been poſſible, they would, no doubt, have found ſomebody, who would have declared that they ſaw the diſciples of Chriſt in the act of removing the ſtone, of taking or carrying away the body, or ſomething which they might ſuppoſe to be the body; or that ſome perſons, ſuppoſed to be the diſciples, might have been doing ſomething of this kind, about that time, and near the proper place. We may be ſatisfied, therefore, that there was no circumſtance of this kind of which the Jewiſh rulers could hope to avail themſelves

ſelves, in order to ſtrengthen their aſſertion of the body having been ſtolen.

When the apoſtles, preſently after this, appeared publicly in Jeruſalem, preaching the goſpel, and boldly aſſerting the reſurrection of Chriſt, do the Jewiſh rulers behave to them as men whom they could convict of a notorious cheat? Nay, they were ſo far from venturing to charge them with any ſuch thing, that they only puniſhed and threatened them, inſiſting that they ſhould ſay no more of the matter. Would the orator Tertullus have miſſed ſo fine a topic of declamation, had there been the leaſt colour of truth in this ſtory, when, before King Agrippa, he was bitterly inveighing againſt Paul, who affirmed that Jeſus was alive, when the Jews ſaid that he was dead? Or could Gamaliel, one of the moſt eminent of the Jewiſh doctors, have poſſibly ſuppoſed that the hand of God *might* be with the apoſtles, and have given the advice which he did upon that occaſion, if he had known that a cheat had been diſcovered with reſpect to the reſurrection; or would the whole Sanhedrim have ſo readily followed his advice, upon that ſuppoſition?

Laſtly, it may be obſerved, as a proof of the extreme futility of this ſtory, that the only Evangeliſt who mentions it, makes no attempt to refute it, ſeeming to regard it as a thing that was palpably falſe, and ſufficiently known to be ſo.

Upon the whole, it ſeems to be hardly poſſible, that the circumſtances attending the reſurrection of Chriſt, or the promulgation of the goſpel, which was conſequent upon it, could have been better adapted to gain the full conviction of the world in general, and eſpecially in diſtant ages. The ingenuity of man may fancy a reſurrection, and the promulgation of ſuch a religion as the chriſtian, ſo circumſtanced, as, it *may be thought*, would have produced a greater effect; but it does not ſeem difficult to demonſtrate, that any alteration which has yet been ſuggeſted for this purpoſe would have been unfavourable to the real weight of the evidence.

It has been ſaid that Chriſt ought to have made his appearance to the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jews, in full aſſembly, and have appeared as publicly after, as he had done before his reſurrection. But admitting that this had been the caſe, I doubt not but the ſame obdurate minds, which were not conciliated, but more exaſperated againſt him after their being themſelves witneſſes of the reſurrection of Lazarus, and all the other miracles of Chriſt, would only have been rendered ſtill more inveterate by any other miracles, wrought in favour of a perſon, who would have done no more than he did in a temporal reſpect. Beſides, it is plain, that they actually had *ſufficient* evidence of the reſurrection

rection of Chrift, which is all that can reafonably be required, and yet did not become chriftians.

Admitting, however, that the confequence of Chrift's appearing in this public manner had been the converfion of the body of the Jewifh nation, and of fuch ftrangers as fhould have happened to have been refiding at Jerufalem, or in Judea, at that time; would it not have been faid, by the unbelievers of this remote age, that the rulers of the Jews and the Roman governor were in the fecret; and that, having the management of the whole affair, they could eafily make out the ftory of a refurrection, or any thing elfe, which they might have thought better fuited to anfwer their purpofe; and that all the prophecies which fpeak of a fuffering Meffiah, had been undoubtedly forged by them. Thefe things might eafily have been faid, even in the fame age, and at no greater diftance than Rome, and much more plaufibly than many things that are objected to chriftianity at this day.

Had Chrift himfelf, after fuch an event, made his appearance in Rome, accompanied by a folemn deputation of the Jewifh elders, he would probably have been treated with ridicule, as the people of Rome might have faid that he had never been dead. But let us farther admit, that the Roman emperor, his court, all the chief men in the empire, and the bulk of the people in that age had embraced chriftianity, and confequently that no chriftian had been

been perſecuted to death for his religion, how would the thing have looked at this diſtance? Would it not have been ſaid by ſceptical people, that it had all the marks of a ſcheme of worldly policy, and that all the great men of thoſe times had agreed to frame a better kind of religion, when the old ſyſtems were worn out? They would have ſaid, that there was no body in thoſe times who had properly inquired into the truth of the facts, or that all the contrary evidence had been ſuppreſſed, and that the rapid progreſs of the new religion was the effect of worldly encouragement.

Had the witneſſes of the reſurrection been not the whole Jewiſh nation, but a number of perſons of high rank in life, it might have been ſaid that they had availed themſelves of their power and influence with the people, to gain credit to their ſcheme.

At preſent, the witneſſes of the reſurrection of Chriſt, and of all the great events on which the truth of chriſtianity is founded, are ſuch as ſhew that the wiſdom of God is ſuperior to that of men, being the moſt unexceptionable that could have been thought of. They were men of middling circumſtances, neither deſperate through poverty on the one hand, nor peculiarly within the influence of ambition on the other. They were men of plain underſtandings, neither ſo weak as to have been eaſily impoſed upon, nor ſo cunning and crafty as to have

have had it in their power to impoſe upon others. They were men of ſuch irreproachable characters, as to afford the leaſt poſſible ſuſpicion of ſuch a deſign. They were alſo in ſufficient numbers.

Such men as theſe were induced, by the evidence of what they ſaw and heard, in favour of the doctrines and pretenſions of Chriſt, to act counter to the ſtrongeſt prejudices to which mankind can be ſubject, they riſked every thing that was valuable to them, their eaſe, their honeſt reputation, their little fortunes, and their lives. Having been men of low occupations, and timid natures, they boldly preached the doctrine of their maſter, notwithſtanding the moſt determined oppoſition from all the powers of the world; and, perhaps, what is the hardeſt trial of all, they were every where expoſed to the greateſt ridicule and inſult. In theſe circumſtances was chriſtianity profeſſed through the whole Roman empire, for the ſpace of three hundred years.

What conſiderably ſtrengthens this evidence, with reſpect to the world at large, is that the Jews are ſtill the inveterate enemies of chriſtianity; ſo that they cannot be ſuſpected of having ever acted in concert with chriſtians; but ſhould they be gained over even at preſent, or in any period of time before the goſpel ſhall have been ſufficiently preached through the whole world, it might have an unfavourable aſpect with reſpect to thoſe nations

tions who ſhould not then be converted, or their remote poſterity; ſo important a circumſtance to the evidence of chriſtianity is the general *unbelief of the Jews*; agreeable to the ideas of the apoſtle Paul, *He hath ſhut them up in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.*

On the other hand, when the goſpel ſhall have been ſufficiently preached through the whole world, the general converſion of the Jews, and their reſtoration to their own country, after being ſo long a diſperſed, but a diſtinct people (which is the ſubject of ſo many prophecies) will be ſuch an additional confirmation of the truth of the whole ſyſtem of revelation, as perhaps no force of prejudice will be able to reſiſt. Of ſuch importance to the whole world will be the extraordinary providence which has attended, and which ſtill attends this people.

Laſtly, the very great corruptions of chriſtianity have been the occaſion of many perſons abandoning it, and writing againſt it, in this learned and inquiſitive age; by which means, the evidences of it have ſtood ſuch a teſt as no ſcheme of religion was ever put to before; and yet, inſtead of appearing to diſadvantage under the ſevere ſcrutiny, this trial has been a means of purging it from its many corruptions; men of the greateſt virtue, learning, and diligent inquiry, and even many of thoſe who have the leaſt worldly intereſt in promoting

moting the belief of it, are its ſteadieſt friends; and its enemies are generally ſuch perſons as have manifeſtly never given ſufficient attention to the ſubject, or have not had a competent ſhare of learning to qualify them to judge for themſelves; and it is alſo notorious that very many of them are men of profligate lives and characters, whoſe minds muſt, therefore, be unfavourably diſpoſed with reſpect to the evidences of chriſtianity; ſo that they muſt be exceedingly biaſſed, and conſequently, very incompetent judges in the caſe.

Beſides, the things that modern unbelievers cavil at are, generally, trifling circumſtances, many of which a better tranſlation of an obſcure paſſage in the books of ſcripture ſufficiently obviates; or elſe they are levelled not againſt what chriſtianity really is, but what it has been ſuppoſed to be, in ignorant and corrupt ages; and no unbeliever has pretended to detect the impoſture of chriſtianity in the ſame manner in which other impoſtures have been detected, namely, by ſufficient hiſtorical evidence; nor have they at all accounted for the riſe and propagation of it, on the ſuppoſition of its being falſe.

Upon the whole, it does not appear to me that the wiſdom of man could have deviſed the circumſtances of a miraculous hiſtory, ſo as to make it ſo truly credible as that of the goſpel is. If thoſe who are now the moſt ingenious of its adverſaries

had

had had the choice of the circumſtances, and had preſcribed them *a priori*, it is very probable that they might have been ſo ill adapted to the end, that the belief of it would have failed, in the natural courſe of things, long before this time; whereas, as things are now circumſtanced, the original evidence is ſo admirably adjuſted, as to be ſufficient, without any new revelation, to eſtabliſh the chriſtian faith, perhaps, to the end of the world; and this conſideration certainly furniſhes a ſtrong additional evidence of the truth of chriſtianity, and alſo ſerves to give us a ſtriking idea of the wiſdom of God, and the weakneſs of man.

SECTION V.

Of the credibility of the Old Teſtament hiſtory.

IF I be aſked why I believe the hiſtory of thoſe divine interpoſitions which are recorded in the *Old Teſtament*, I may anſwer, that I am under a neceſſity of admitting this, in conſequence of believing the hiſtory of Chriſt and his apoſtles, as it is written by the Evangeliſts. For we there find that the faith of the Jews was alſo the ſerious belief of Chriſt and his apoſtles, and that one of the arguments which they made uſe of for the proof of his divine miſſion was the fulfilment of the prophecies

ies of the Old Teſtament, in which the character of Chriſt, the principal circumſtances of his hiſtory, and the nature and extent of the kingdom of God under him were particularly pointed out.

In ſhort, it is manifeſt, from the whole tenor of the New Teſtament, that Chriſtianity is only a part of one grand diſpenſation of religion, and that it is the completion and proper ſequel of Judaiſm; for we there find it every where taken for granted, that God revealed his will in a more imperfect manner to Moſes, and the ſucceeding prophets, before the more perfect revelation of it by Chriſt and his apoſtles.

But, independent of this kind of evidence which ought to have the greateſt weight with all Chriſtians, there is not wanting ſufficient reaſon to believe that the Jewiſh religion is true and divine, admitting what has been already proved, viz. the authenticity of the books of the Old Teſtament. That the divine being interpoſed in a miraculous manner in the affairs of the Jewiſh nation, and, more eſpecially, that he dictated the law which Moſes communicated to the children of Iſrael, we have the teſtimony not only of Moſes himſelf, and of all the prophets who wrote the books of the Old Teſtament; but we have, in fact, the teſtimony of all the Jewiſh nation, who were in circumſtances in which they cannot be imagined to have

have been impoſed upon themſelves, or to have had any motive to impoſe upon others.

That the hiſtory of the Jews, and of the miraculous interpoſitions of God in their favour, ſhould, from the earlieſt accounts of them, have been firmly believed by the whole body of that nation, and that, even in their preſent diſperſed and calamitous ſituation, which has continued for ſeventeen hundred years, they ſhould retain the ſame belief, cannot but be admitted to have the greateſt weight.

Suppoſing the hiſtory of the departure from Egypt, and all the miraculous circumſtances attending it, to have been a mere fiction, it muſt have been ſo *notoriouſly* falſe, that it could not but have been rejected, whenever it had been publiſhed. For things of ſo extraordinary a nature, on which the authority of all their laws, their moſt ſolemn cuſtoms, and religious rites, entirely depended, could not but have gained univerſal attention. The fabulous hiſtories of other nations were always invented very late; and as nothing depended upon them, they may eaſily be ſuppoſed to have been introduced *gradually*, without much notice or alarm. Beſides, none of them have ſtood the teſt of a rigid ſcrutiny, but have fallen into univerſal contempt.

It is true that the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament ſets the Jewiſh nation in general in a very favour-

favourable point of light, and, on that account, it may be ſuppoſed that they would the more readily acquieſce in it, and wiſh to have it paſs for true with their neighbours; but in other reſpects, alſo, it repreſents them, and their moſt diſtinguiſhed anceſtors, in a very unfavourable light, leaving them under the imputation of ſo many cruel and baſe actions, as no deſcendant of theirs would have wiſhed them to lie under. Among theſe is the hiſtory of Abraham and Iſaac denying their wives, the deceit of Jacob, and the abominable treachery of two of his ſons, together with the very great faults, and even aggravated crimes of David, and others of their moſt illuſtrious heroes and princes.

The fabulous hiſtories of the Greeks and Romans are written in a manner very different from this. Even Joſephus, the Jewiſh hiſtorian, who had the Old Teſtament to write from, and who had it not in his power to forge or alter much, endeavours to give the whole hiſtory as favourable a turn as poſſible; intirely ſuppreſſing the ſtory of the golden calf, and others which might tend to give foreigners a diſadvantageous idea of his anceſtors and nation. What kind of a hiſtory may we ſuppoſe that ſuch a writer as this would have *invented*, if he had been fairly at liberty to do it; and what does a hiſtory written upon ſo very different a plan, as that of the Old Teſtament, exhibit,

hibit, but the *face of truth*, however diſagreeable and mortifying.

All the moſt diſtinguiſhed rites and cuſtoms of the Jews are intimately connected with, and founded upon the moſt diſtinguiſhed miraculous facts in their hiſtory; and ſome of them, are ſuch as we cannot ſuppoſe that any nation would voluntarily impoſe upon themſelves, being exceedingly burthenſome, and ſeemingly hazardous. Among theſe we may reckon the rite of circumciſion, which was probably borrowed by ſome other nations from them; a weekly day of reſt from labour, not plowing their fields, or tilling their grounds, every ſeventh year, and the appearance of all their males three times in a year at one particular place, when the borders of their country muſt have been left defenceleſs, and they could have no dependence but upon an extraordinary providence for their ſecurity, which was promiſed in their law. Add to this that they were ſurrounded by powerful and enterpriſing nations, who entertained an inveterate antipathy againſt them, and conſequently could not be expected to neglect the fair opportunities which their feſtival ſolemnities afforded to attack their borders, had they not been reſtrained by a ſuperior influence. Yet their whole hiſtory affords not a ſingle inſtance of any inroad being made upon them at thoſe times.

To

To this may be added their being forbidden to have any foreign commerce, or to have many horſes, which was the great pride of their neighbours in time of peace, and a great advantage to them in time of war.

It has often been ſaid that Moſes himſelf, without any divine inſtruction, might have formed the body of laws recorded in his writings, and have given all the other directions which he pretended to have received from God. But, beſides, that this ſuppoſition can never account for the whole nation having always believed that they had been led through the red ſea, been fed with manna forty years, heard a ſupernatural voice delivering the ten commandments from mount Sinai, and having croſſed the river Jordan without either boat or bridge, &c. &c. &c. all which facts we find recognized in the moſt ſolemn offices of their ſtated public worſhip, many centuries after the time of Moſes, it is in itſelf very improbable.

Moſes appears, from many circumſtances in his hiſtory, to have been a man of the greateſt meekneſs, modeſty, and diffidence. He was exceedingly averſe to aſſume any public character; he was eaſily governed by the advice of others; and what is particularly worthy of conſideration, he wanted thoſe talents which are peculiarly requiſite for the part he is is ſuppoſed to have acted, viz. thoſe of an *Orator* and a *Warrior*. He had ſuch

ſuch an impediment in his ſpeech, that he was obliged to take his brother Aaron to ſpeak for him before Pharaoh, and the Iſraelites. The whole hiſtory of their march through the wilderneſs ſhews that he had nothing of a military turn, without which more eſpecially no man could have expected to do any thing at the head of a people juſt revolted from the Egyptians. For it is obſervable, that in the engagements which they had with thoſe people who oppoſed their paſſage, Moſes never headed them himſelf, but left the whole command to Joſhua, and others, while he was praying for them at a diſtance.

It has been ſaid that Moſes was a man of excellent underſtanding and judgment, but his own hiſtory by no means favours that ſuppoſition. For, excepting thoſe orders and inſtitutions which he publiſhed as from God, almoſt every thing elſe that is recorded by him ſhows him to have been a weak man, and of groſs underſtanding. His behaviour with reſpect to the killing of the Egyptian, and his embarraſſment with a multiplicity of buſineſs, till he was relieved by the ſenſible advice of Jethro, and many other circumſtances might be alledged in ſupport of this opinion. Theſe things ſufficiently demonſtrate that Moſes, perſonally conſidered, was by no means a man capable of deviſing ſuch a ſyſtem of laws as his books contain, or of conducting that moſt intractable nation,

nation, as they were conducted, forty years through the wilderness.

Besides, if Moses had such a capacity, and had been of such a disposition as would have prompted him to act such an imposture as this, he would certainly have made some better provision than he did for his own family and tribe. He had children of his own, and yet they did not succeed him in his extraordinary offices and power, nor do we find them possessed of any peculiar privilege or advantage whatever. They were not even of the higher order of priests, who yet enjoyed no privilege worth coveting; and the tribe of Levi in general, to which he belonged, was worse provided for than any other of the twelve; and, what is particularly disgraceful, Moses himself relates that the posterity of Levi were dispersed among the rest of the tribes as a punishment for the basenefs and cruelty of their ancestor, in the affair of the Shechemie

The tribe for which the greatest honours were reserved, in the prophecies of both Jacob and Moses, was that of Judah, with which Moses had no particular connection. This was the tribe which was marked out as the seat of pre-eminence and power, and especially as the tribe from which the Messiah was to arise.

Besides, if Moses had meant to do any great thing for himself, it is not likely that he would

have detained the Iſraelites ſo long in the wilderneſs. Forty years exceeds the whole term of the active part of a man's life, according to the common courſe of it; and a ſhort time would have been ſufficient to inſtruct the people in the uſe of weapons, and the art of war, as it was practiſed in thoſe rude times. Indeed, we do not find that much attention was given to this buſineſs, but that, on the contrary, almoſt their whole time was taken up with inſtructions on the ſubjects of legiſlation, religion, and morals.

Though the Jewiſh hiſtory is far more antient than that of any other nation in the world, and therefore we cannot expect to find it confirmed by any other accounts of ſuch early tranſactions, yet, from the time that the Greeks and other nations began to write hiſtory, their accounts are ſufficiently agreeable to the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, allowance being made for the uncertainty there muſt have been in the communication of intelligence, in an age in which remote nations had very little intercourſe. However, all the leading facts of the Jewiſh hiſtory, even thoſe which reſpect Moſes himſelf, the deliverance of the Iſraelites out of the power of the Egyptians, and many particulars in their ſubſequent hiſtory, are related by hiſtorians of other nations, with ſuch a mixture of fable and miſtake, as might be expected from

from people who had no better means of being informed concerning them.

As to the hiſtory of the *fall of man*, and other particulars preceding the time of Moſes, and the memory of his immediate anceſtors, it may be allowed that there is a mixture of fable, or allegory in it, without affecting the hiſtory that is properly *Moſaic*, and conſequently the truth of the Jewiſh religion. It ſhould be conſidered, however, that Moſes relates only ſuch of the more remarkable tranſactions of the times preceding his own, and of his remote anceſtors, as it may well be ſuppoſed that their deſcendants would carefully, and might eaſily tranſmit to their poſterity; and only eight generations intervened between Moſes and Noah.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, DERIVED FROM PRESENT APPEARANCES.

SECTION I.

Arguments from the existence, propagation, and good effects of the Jewish and Christian religions.

HAVING considered the evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations, as far as it depends upon the testimony of those who received them, and especially of those who have written the history of them, I shall now proceed to lay before my readers some evidence of a different kind, the facts from which it arises being either the subject of universal observation, or recorded in general histories, of universally allowed credit.

The very existence and reception of such systems of religion as the Jewish and christian, are remarkable facts of this kind. That other religions, such as the different species of heathenism, and that of Mohammed, should have been established, and gained credit, may be accounted for without supposing

posing them to be true; but the Jewish and christian religions were so circumstanced, at their institution, that it seems impossible to account either for their existence, or the credit which they are known to have obtained, without supposing them to be true and divine.

The faith of Jews and christians respecting God, as one being, the maker, governor, and righteous judge of all; concerning moral duty, and a future state, are so agreeable to reason, and yet so much more just and sublime than the moral and religious systems of other nations, especially about the time when these two religions were severally established (in which both the religion and morals of all their neighbouring nations were remarkably corrupt) that, considering the situation of the Jews and primitive christians, with respect to study and inquiry, we cannot but conclude that they must have had sources of information which other nations had not. Indeed, the writings of the Jews and christians bear no traces of their religious knowledge being the deduction of any extraordinary sagacity or reasoning of their own; and men who attain to superior knowledge by their own reasoning, and superior powers, are generally ready enough to make a shew of their reason, and are willing to secure to themselves whatever reputation can accrue from it. But here we find admirable systems of religious and moral knowledge

publiſhed by perſons who diſclaim all merit with reſpect to them, and who do not pretend to have diſcovered them by their own powers.

The great object of theſe two religions, eſpecially as fully revealed in the chriſtian, which was the completion of the whole ſcheme, is ſo ſublime and excellent, that it could hardly have had any other ſource than the univerſal parent of good. This object is no leſs than to teach univerſal impartial virtue, and a ſuperiority of mind to this world, in a firm faith of another and a better after death; and this truly catholic religion is not calculated for the uſe of any one people only, or made ſubſervient to any particular form of civil government, but is deſigned to unite and bleſs all the nations of the world, under one ſpiritual head, Chriſt Jeſus.

Theſe obſervations relate to the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions jointly, I ſhall now mention a few others which relate to them ſeverally.

The religious poems and other compoſitions of the Jews, contain ſentiments ſo admirably juſt and ſublime, that the ſlighteſt compariſon of them with the religious hymns of other nations, even in the moſt enlightened ages, cannot but lead us to ſuſpect that the Jews were poſſeſſed of advantages for religious knowledge far ſuperior to thoſe of any other people.

While

While all the neighbouring nations were running faſt into idolatry, and eſpecially the worſhip of the ſun, moon, and ſtars, parcelling out the world into a great number of principalities, and aſſigning a ſeparate divinity for each, Moſes teaches a religion which begins with aſſerting that *one God*, by the word of his own power, and without the aſſiſtance or inſtrumentality of any inferior intelligent being, created the heavens and the earth, and even the ſun, moon, and ſtars themſelves, and appointed the proper uſes of them all; which ſtruck at the very foundation of the religious ſyſtems of all other nations. That great principle which was abandoned by all other nations, namely, the worſhip of one God, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth, and who fills both heaven and earth with his preſence, was even the fundamental maxim of the Jewiſh ſtate, and the great foundation of their civil, as well as religious government.

While the reſt of the world were practiſing the moſt abominable impure and cruel rites, as acts of religious worſhip, and thought to recommend themſelves to the favour of their gods, by the moſt abſurd and unmeaning ceremonies, without ever having recourſe to moral virtue for that purpoſe, Moſes indeed inſtituted a ceremonial worſhip; but both he and all the Jewiſh prophets, repeatedly, and in the ſtrongeſt terms, aſſert the perfect moral character of the ſupreme being, the infinitely

greater importance of purity of heart, and integrity of life, and the utter insignificance of any rites, ceremonies, or offerings without them.

While other nations were addicted to the most wretched superstitions, having recourse to various divinations, and arts of witchcraft, whenever they wanted to get intelligence concerning future events, or the assistance of superior powers, the Jewish people were taught to hold all these things in deserved contempt and abhorrence. They were instructed to expect no information concerning future events, or assistance in any undertaking, but from the one living and true God; and they were commanded to punish all those who pretended to the abominable arts of divination and witchcraft with death. It is to be observed, also, that the Jewish prophets delivered themselves with gravity and seriousness, worthy of the majesty of him that sent them, and did not use those violent convulsions, foamings at the mouth, and extravagant gestures, which the heathen diviners had recourse to, in order to dazzle and impose upon those who consulted them.

So far is there from being any pretence for saying that the Jews were naturally more intelligent than their neighbours, and attained those just notions of religion and morality by their own reason and good sense, that their own history always represents them as stiff necked, and slow of understanding;

ſtanding; and to this very day their enemies have conſtantly reproached them as being the moſt ſtupid of mankind. Beſides, their hiſtory ſhews that the Jews were naturally as prone to idolatry and ſuperſtition as any other people could be, and their frequent relapſes into the idolatry of their neighbours, notwithſtanding the moſt expreſs warnings, and awful judgments, demonſtrate that, had it not been for divine inſtructions, inculcated again and again, they would have been far from ſhewing an example of a purer religion, or more rational worſhip than ſuch as prevailed in other countries. It muſt alſo be obſerved, that the rigorous adherence of the Jews to their religion at preſent, and which has continued for ages, under the greateſt external diſcouragements, is ſuch, as conſidering their former proneneſs to deſert it, demonſtrates that they muſt have received the moſt convincing proof of its truth and divinity.

While the philoſophers of other nations taught an exceedingly confined morality, treating thoſe of their own nation only as brethren, and the reſt of mankind as enemies, Moſes inculcates the principles of the greateſt humanity and tenderneſs in the treatment of ſtrangers, reminding them that they themſelves had been ſtrangers in the land of Egypt, and that they knew the heart of a ſtranger.

Upon the whole, it cannot be ſaid that the religion and morality of the books of Moſes was ſuch

as might have been expected from the time in which he lived. Was it ſimilar to any thing he could have learned in Egypt, or in any of the neighbouring countries? On the contrary, it was in almoſt every reſpect moſt remarkably the reverſe of the opinions and practices of thoſe times, and therefore muſt have had ſome other origin.

The form of a free and equal government, which was particularly recommended to the Jews, and under which they lived for a conſiderable time, was one of which there is no other example in the Eaſt, where kingly and arbitrary governments only are known even to this day. Such eſpecially was the government of Egypt, where they had reſided above two hundred years, and to the inſtitutions of which it appears that they were remarkably prone, notwithſtanding what they had ſuffered in that country; and all the land of Canaan was under the dominion of a great number of petty kings or tyrants; whereas, it is obſerved of the Iſraelites, before the times of Saul (by whoſe appointment to be king they made an infringement in their original conſtitution) that every man did what was right in his own eyes. Indeed, the civil government of the Hebrews was ſo exceedingly favourable to liberty, virtue, and domeſtic happineſs, as, conſidering the many abſurd and iniquitous conſtitutions of other nations, furniſhes a very ſtrong argument for its being of divine appointment.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, I ſhall obſerve, that the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, which have been exactly fulfilled, ſome of them long ſince the books which contain them were tranſlated into other languages, and diſperſed all over the world, fully prove that the writers of them had divine communications. But this argument I reſerve for a diſtinct conſideration, in favour of the whole ſyſtem of Jewiſh and chriſtian revelation, as one.

The very pretenſions of Jeſus Chriſt, are a ſufficient proof that there was ſomething ſupernatural in his caſe. Before his time the Jews had had no prophets for ſeveral hundred years, nor do they ſeem to have expected any before the appearance of the Meſſiah, or his fore-runner; and no Jew had any idea of extending the proper *kingdom of God* to thoſe who did not conform to the inſtitutions of Moſes. How then ſhould it ever have come into the head of any Jew, and eſpecially a perſon ſo obſcurely born, and ſo privately educated as Jeſus was, to aſſume more power than any of their former prophets, more than even Moſes himſelf had pretended to, and to act and ſpeak from God by a more conſtant and intimate kind of inſpiration than any before him? How can it be ſuppoſed that any Jew ſhould have formed the *idea*, or the *wiſh*, to ſay nothing of the *power* of effecting a thing ſo fundamentally contrary to any notion that was ever

entertained by a Jew, whether, with respect to his character, he was virtuous or vicious.

When the wisest of the heathen philosophers entertained great doubts with respect to a future state, when the belief of it was almost worn out in the world, how can we account for Christ's preaching, with such steadiness and assurance as he did, the doctrine not only of a future state, but of a *resurrection*, of which nothing in nature could have given any man the least idea, and yet to this resurrection Christ referred all the hopes of his followers, and gave the fullest proof of his own entire persuasion concerning it, by calmly yielding himself up to death, in full confidence of rising again from the dead in a very few days, as a proof of the divinity of his doctrine and mission, and a pattern of a future and general resurrection. How, I say, can we account for these extraordinary views, or this constancy in the pursuit of them, but upon the supposition that Christ was inspired, and authorized by God in preaching and acting as he did?

The rise of so remarkable a religion as the christian, in the circumstances in which it made its first appearance, and also the invincible patience and fortitude of the primitive christians, in persevering in the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the ridicule and severe persecution to which they were thereby exposed, both from the

Jews

Jews and the reſt of the world, and the readineſs with which ſuch numbers of them died martyrs to their profeſſion, are eaſily accounted for on the ſuppoſition that chriſtianity is true; but they muſt certainly be puzzling facts to an unbeliever, who conſiders the uniformity of human nature, how ſtrong a conviction the conduct of the primitive chriſtians implies, and what proofs are neceſſary to produce that conviction; and this not in the caſe of a ſingle perſon, for which no reaſon would have been required, but of great numbers, not of Jews only, but of all nations of the world, and ſome the moſt learned and inquiſitive of their age.

The time and manner in which the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations were promulgated, were ſo admirably adapted to the ſtate and circumſtances of the world, and were ſuch a ſeaſonable check upon the diſorders of it, as makes it exceedingly probable that a ſcheme ſo truly excellent, and ſo ſeaſonably applied, could only proceed from the *father of lights*, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*.

Abraham and his poſterity began to be diſtinguiſhed by God at the very time that the primitive religion of mankind began to degenerate into idolatry; ſo that, for many ages, they bore their teſtimony to the unity, the ſupremacy, moral character, and government of God; and being ſituated in the very center of the then civilized part of the world, they muſt have been ſome check upon the pre-

prevailing idolatry, and the wickedneſs which accompanied it. And, bad as the ſtate of things was in the heathen world, it is very probable that, without this proviſion, it would have been much worſe; and it is remarkable, that the idolatry and wickedneſs of the great civilized nations, in the neighbourhood of Judea, far exceeded that of the more uncivilized part of the world. The ſyſtems of idolatry which now ſubſiſt in Aſia, Africa, or America, are innocent things compared with the horrid ſyſtems of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Canaanites, or Tyrians, or even than the religions of Greece, of Rome, and that of all this weſtern part of the world.

When the Jews were infected by the religious cuſtoms of their neighbours, and were brought back to the worſhip of the one true God (as they always were) by very ſevere judgments, in which the hand of God was very conſpicuous, particularly when they were brought back from a ſtate of captivity among other nations, it could not but be an uſeful leſſon to their neighbours, as well as to themſelves; and many facts in the Jewiſh hiſtory make it evident, that their religion, and their prophets were much revered in the neighbouring ſtates. This we ſee particularly in the hiſtory of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites, and of the application made to the prophet Eliſha by Naaman, and Hazael perſons of diſtinguiſhed rank in the court

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of the king of Syria. The decrees of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon alſo, and thoſe of the firſt kings of Perſia, which were publiſhed through all the provinces of thoſe extenſive empires, muſt have made the Jews and their religion generally known and reſpected.

In later times, after the conqueſt of Alexander the Great, we both find great numbers of ſtrangers reſiding in Judea, on the account of religion, and alſo that the Jews themſelves were diſperſed in a moſt remarkable manner, into every part of the civilized world, there being no city, or place of note, without them. Their aſſiduity in making proſelytes is ſufficiently known, and the effects of it are manifeſt in the number of *devout Gentiles*, who were brought over to the worſhip of the true God, though it is probable they did not chooſe to be initiated into all the rights of the Jewiſh religion.

That the benefit of the Jewiſh religion was not to be confined to that nation, but was alſo to have a conſiderable influence on the minds even of diſtant nations, is evident from many paſſages of the books of Moſes; as when it is ſaid that God would be glorified by their means in the ſight of all the heathen, &c. See Deut. iv. 6. Pſ. xvi. 23.

The chriſtian religion has evidently effected a reformation of the idolatry, and abominable cuſtoms of the Gentile world; an effect which all the wiſdom and philoſophy of mankind would never have produced.

produced. There are numerous teſtimonies of the heathens in favour of the good morals of the primitive chriſtians. Celſus owns that there were among them many temperate, modeſt, and underſtanding perſons; and the emperor Julian recommends to the heathen pontiffs the example of the chriſtians, for their kindneſs and humanity to ſtrangers, and not only to thoſe of their own religion, but to the heathens, and for their ſeeming ſanctity of life; and to this he aſcribes the progreſs that chriſtianity had made in the world.

Chriſtianity has alſo bettered the ſtate of the world in a civil and political reſpect, giving men a juſt idea of their mutual relations and natural rights, and thereby gradually aboliſhing ſlavery, with the ſervile ideas which introduced it, and alſo many cruel and barbarous cuſtoms. The generous principles of chriſtianity have greatly contributed to render thoſe European governments, which are nominally arbitrary, more favourable to ſecurity and happineſs than the freeſt antient heathen ſtates. The corruption of chriſtianity has, no doubt, greatly leſſened its good effects; but ſtill, as it may be clearly proved, that the very worſt ſtate of Chriſtendom, with reſpect to religion, and the influence of it, was preferable to heatheniſm, at the time of the promulgation of chriſtianity, it may be hoped that, with the reſtoration of genuine chriſtianity,

tianity, we ſhall ſee the revival of all the happy effects of it.

The time of the promulgation of chriſtianity was the moſt ſeaſonable that could have been choſen, both with reſpect to its evidence, and its ſalutary effects. It is unqueſtionable, that the heathen world was then moſt deplorably corrupt, without the leaſt hope of a remedy by any natural means; and even the generality of the Jews had greatly departed from the genuine moral principles of their own divine religion, and a very conſiderable ſect of them had abandoned the doctrine of a future ſtate.

At this remarkable period almoſt all the civilized part of the world compoſed one immenſe empire, by which means the knowledge of chriſtianity was readily communicated from one country to another; and the apoſtles had the eaſier acceſs to every place of note by means of the Jews, who were previouſly ſettled there, in whoſe ſynagogues they had an opportunity of preaching both to the Jews, and alſo to the Gentile inhabitants.

It was, alſo, a circumſtance of great moment to the evidence of Chriſtianity, that it was promulgated in the moſt learned and inquiſitive age in all antiquity; ſo that great numbers of perſons would have both the inclination, and ability to enquire into it, and ſatisfy themſelves concerning it.

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All these circumstances put together, certainly give us the idea of a wise and kind parent, interposing in favour of his offspring, at a time when they stood in most need of it, adapting his relief to their real occasions, and applying it in the most seasonable and judicious manner.

SECTION II.

Arguments from standing Customs, *&c. in favour of the Jewish and christian religions.*

THERE are several religious customs which have been constantly observed by Jews and Christians, concerning which no probable conjecture can be formed, except that which is alledged in the history of those revelations, as the observance of one day in seven for the purpose of rest from labour, in commemoration of God's having rested or ceased from his work after the six days of creation; the *Passover*, in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites when all the first born of the Egyptians were destroyed; the feast of *Pentecost*, which was designed to perpetuate the memory of the giving of the law from mount Sinai; and the feast of *Tabernacles*, to remind them of their having lived in tents in their passage through the wilderness. Of this kind also, is the celebration

celebration of the *Lord's Supper* among christians, in order to commemorate the death of Christ, which it cannot be supposed that they would have done, if he had not likewise risen from the dead, as he himself had foretold.

Now *solemn customs* are universally acknowledged to be, in many cases, the best memorials of important events; because they suppose a whole people repeating their testimony to them as often as the rite is celebrated; and this being continued from generation to generation, the original evidence has all the strength that it could possibly have, when transmitted to us by succession.

It will be said that we find in the heathen world religious customs, which are said to have been instituted in commemoration of such remarkable events as suppose the truths of their religions, as Eleusinian mysteries, in which were represented the rape of Proserpine, and the introduction of corn among the Athenians by her mother Ceres. But there is this essential difference between the religious customs of the Jews or christians ,and such as these among the heathens. The Jews and christians have *written histories* of all their religious institutions of equal antiquity with the institutions themselves; and in these histories both the origin of the custom is recorded, and the manner in which every thing relating to it is to be performed, is particularly described. On the contrary,

trary, the Greek and Roman writers of later ages, finding a practice in uſe, before the invention of letters, might eaſily add to the traditional account of it, and ſo embelliſh the narration, that, in time, the uſe of the cuſtom, which had ſome foundation in hiſtory, might be eſſentially changed.

Thus I make no doubt but that, with reſpect to Eleuſinian myſteries, there was a woman called Ceres, who, or her ſon Triptolemus, taught the Athenians the uſe of corn, that ſhe had a daughter called Proſerpine, who was ſtolen from her by ſome perſon whoſe name was Pluto. But that this Pluto was God of the infernal regions, and carried his wife thither, and that Ceres lighted a torch at mount Etna, and went in queſt of her all over the world, was, moſt probably, an embelliſhment of the poets, and no neceſſary inference from the cuſtom.

Cuſtoms with merely traditional explanations are very apt to vary in different places, ſo that, in a courſe of many years, there being no written hiſtory to rectify any miſtake, both the practice itſelf, and the account of it may eaſily become, by means of ſucceſſive innovations, quite unlike what they were originally. If we had not hiſtories of England to have recourſe to, how differently might our cuſtoms of wearing oak on the twenty-ninth of May, and making bon-fires on the fifth of November have been repreſented? Nay, we have many

cuſtoms

cuſtoms which have no doubt, been kept up, without interruption from the time of heatheniſm, the origin of which is merely conjectural, even among the learned, and altogether unknown to the common people who practice them.

On the ſubject of this part of my work I muſt obſerve, that the earth itſelf bears ſeveral indelible marks of the tranſactions which are recorded in the hiſtories of the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions. At leaſt, they are ſuch as are eaſily and clearly accounted for, on the ſuppoſition that thoſe hiſtories are true, and they are not eaſily accounted for on the ſuppoſition that they are falſe.

That there has been ſome ſuch convulſion in the earth, as muſt have been produced by the general deluge, is acknowledged by many naturaliſts even thoſe who are not believers in revelation. The dead ſea is very likely to have been occaſioned by ſuch a deſtruction of an inhabited country as is related in the Moſaic hiſtory of Sodom and Gomorrah. Travellers of unqueſtionable authority ſay, that it is almoſt poſſible to trace the progreſs of the children of Iſrael through the wilderneſs. More eſpecially, ſeveral of them have given drawings of the rock at Rephidim, and they are unanimous in their opinion that the holes and channels which are worn in it muſt have been made by water, and yet that it is in a place where it is not at all probable that there ſhould ever have been any natural ſpring or river,

and

and where there is far from being any water at present. Matthew says that the *rocks were rent* at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus; and travellers say that there is, at this day, a most remarkable cleft in the rocks of mount Calvary, such as cannot well be supposed to have been produced by any natural earthquake, not having separated the *strata*, but divided them all perpendicularly.

These last-mentioned cirumstances are far from amounting to a demonstration of the truth of the Jewish and christian histories, but they agree so remarkably with them, as must add to their credibility; and all the facts which have been recited in this part put together, certainly represent the known state of things to be such, as cannot be accounted for without supposing those histories to be true. Admitting the truth of those histories, the present state of things has arisen easily, and naturally from the preceding; but on the contrary supposition, we can see no connection between them, so that what is known to all the world, and is the subject of every day's observation, is altogether inexplicable.

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SECTION III.

Various internal evidences *of the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory.*

BESIDES the *direct* evidences, which may be drawn from the canonical books of the New Teſtament, in favour of the truth of chriſtianity, an attentive reader of them cannot but obſerve ſeveral internal characters, which bear the ſtrongeſt marks of genuineneſs and truth, on account of their perfect reſemblance to other genuine and true hiſtories. Some of theſe circumſtances, intermixed, as they neceſſarily are, with others of a different nature, I ſhall take notice of in this place. Every thing of this nature is plainly a *ſtanding evidence* of the truth of the chriſtian hiſtory, independent of any teſtimony in its favour.

The whole of the ſcripture hiſtory abounds with ſo many particulars concerning times, places, and perſons, as are ſtrong internal marks of authenticity, and make it look exceedingly unlike any fiction. Beſides, it is hardly poſſible to imagine any reaſon or motive for contriving ſuch a hiſtory as that of the Old Teſtament, and endeavouring to impoſe it upon the Jewiſh nation, as the genuine

hiſtory

hiſtory of their anceſtors, and the only authentic ſtandard of their laws and cuſtoms.

The Jewiſh hiſtory is alſo very unlike the accounts which the writers of all other nations have given of their antiquities, and has much more the appearance of truth, with reſpect to the times aſſigned for *generations of men*, and *ſucceſſions of Kings.* Thoſe of the Jewiſh hiſtory, from before the time of Moſes, are agreeable to the preſent ſtate of things, and the preſent condition of human life, whereas the antient hiſtories of Egypt, Aſſyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, repreſent the term of human life, and the ſtate of human affairs, as in a condition much unlike what it is now, and ſuch as it is ſtill more improbable that it ſhould have been then. The reigns of Kings do not, at a medium, exceed nineteen years. This Sir Iſaac Newton has ſhewn from the hiſtories of all nations which are certainly known to us.

Now thoſe of the Kings of Judah and Iſrael do not exceed, but fall ſhort of this number; whereas, thoſe of the ſtates above-mentioned, are ſaid to have reigned, one with another, ſome thirty, and others forty years a-piece, and this in times of great confuſion, when many of them died violent deaths. In like manner, the generations of men, at a medium, are found, by Sir Iſaac Newton, to have had an interval of about thirty years, and ſuch they will be found to have been in the Jewiſh

hiſtory,

hiſtory, which is, therefore, probable; but in thoſe of ſome other nations, this interval muſt have been fifty or ſixty years, which is altogether improbable.

The different accounts of the ſame tranſaction, written by different Evangeliſts, agree in all the principal things, which ſhews that they had equally attended to them, and had the ſame ideas of them; but they relate their hiſtories in a different order and manner, and with many variations in ſmall circumſtances; which ſhews that they did not write in concert, as they muſt have done to have agreed ſo well as they do, if they had not written from their memories, which were equally impreſſed with the idea of all the principal tranſactions.

The traces of a moſt *excellent character*, eſpecially of great humility, integrity, benevolence and devotion, which are apparent in the authors of the New Teſtament, ſupply a very ſtrong internal proof, that they have not endeavoured to impoſe upon mankind. Whether a man himſelf may intend to do it or not, it will be impoſſible for him either to ſpeak or write much, without giving to an attentive obſerver, ſome idea of his own moral character, eſpecially if the ſubject be of a moral nature, and have the moſt diſtant relation to religion. In this caſe, the greateſt artifice, attention, and addreſs, will not be ſufficient to conceal every

circumſtance that has a connection with *feelings*, and *diſpoſitions of mind.*

Now the writers of the New Teſtament were very evidently men of no art or cunning whatever. Except St. Paul, they muſt have been men of very plain underſtandings; and though not illiterate, yet ſome of them were barely capable of expreſsing themſelves with propriety upon neceſſary occaſions. Now, that men of this character ſhould even think of, or attempt, and much leſs ſhould actually carry on, and ſucceed in a ſcheme of ſuch complicated impoſture as the hiſtory of Chriſt and of the apoſtles muſt be, if it were not founded in truth, is altogether incredible. In fact, this would be more miraculous than any thing that theſe writers relate concerning themſelves or their maſter.

On the contrary, we cannot but ſee, in the writings of the Evangeliſts, the plaineſt marks of a genuine love of truth, and of a diſpoſition the fartheſt in the world from a deſign to deceive and impoſe upon others, even for their good. It is hardly poſſible to read their writings with attention, without imbibing ſomething of their excellent ſpirit, feeling ſomething of their ardent love of virtue, their zeal to promote the beſt intereſts of mankind, their ſtrong attachment to their lord and maſter, their reverence for God, and devotedneſs to his will.

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The writers of the New Teſtament have not had the art, nor do they ſeem to have had the diſpoſition to conceal their own failings, or the objections that were made to the character or pretenſions of their maſter; but they relate incidents of this kind with as little diſguiſe, and as great ſimplicity, as they do any other parts of their hiſtory. Can it be thought that any friend of the Apoſtle Peter would have invented the diſgraceful ſtory of his cowardly deſertion of his maſter, or that any friend of James and John would have mentioned their ambitious views, and the mortifying reproof which was given them by Jeſus on that account?

There is not in any of the Evangeliſts one direct encomium on any of the apoſtles, or even on their maſter himſelf. The very high opinion which we cannot help forming of his character, from the peruſal of their writings, is collected intirely from *facts*, *diſcourſes*, and *incidents* indirectly mentioned; and men who had been much ſolicitous about their character and reputation in the world, would hardly have truſted to this. Nothing is more common in antient heathen writers than direct encomiums on their friends, their patrons, and even on themſelves. This is even the caſe with writers of the greateſt ingenuity, and the beſt underſtanding, who might have been thought to have perceived the folly of ſuch exceſſive vanity. But the whole narrative of the evangelical hiſtorians ſhews them to

have been men altogether void of art or design, men who wrote from their memory only, and who were, indeed, little capable of framing *a cunningly devised fable.* Upon the whole, there are no writings in the world that have so many internal characters of truth.

The very *character of Jesus Christ* is so exceedingly unlike any other character whatever in the whole history of mankind, there is something in it so remarkably great and extraordinary, especially such an amazing mixture of dignity and condescension, that we cannot suppose that such men as the Evangelists should have conceived it, or have supported it so uniformly as they have done, on a great variety of occasions. The *fact* demonstrates that they must have had an *original* to copy after. In this case they must have written from their memories, and not from imagination.

I would not scruple to appeal to any person, whose moral sentiments have not been perverted, whether he can possibly reconcile the character of Christ, the doctrines which he taught, and his general conduct, with that of an enthusiast or an impostor, and consequently whether his history does not on this account bear internal marks of truth. He taught and laboriously inculcated the precepts of the purest morality. He did not puzzle his hearers with subtle distinctions in morals, but insisted chiefly upon great and general principles,

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as the love of God, the love of mankind, and universal purity of heart, which are calculated to form a complete character, adapted to every station and condition in life; and he more especially enforced those virtues which are the least ostentatious, but the most essential to true greatness and excellence of character, viz. the forgiveness of injuries, humility, contentment, and resignation to the will of God.

He never consulted his own ease or pleasure, but constantly laboured and felt for others, going about doing good to the souls and bodies of men. He spared neither the faults of his friends, nor the vices of his enemies, though the former were ever so dear to him, and the latter ever so powerful and inveterate. He discovered the most astonishing wisdom and presence of mind whenever ensnaring questions were put to him. He sought no worldly emoluments or honours, but persisted in a course of life which rendered him in the highest degree obnoxious to those who were in power; and when he deemed the great purpose of his useful life to be accomplished, he no longer secreted himself from the malice of his persecutors, but in a firm belief, and with a peremptory declaration, that he should rise to the most distinguished greatness, and that he should raise all his disciples and friends to similar honours in a future life, he submitted, with ini-

mitable calmneſs and compoſure, to a moſt cruel and ignominious death.

If there be any truth in hiſtory, all this, and much more than this, was unqueſtionably *fact*. Now, what is there in human nature, or in the hiſtory of mankind, that can lead us to imagine that the man who could act this part ſhould ſolemnly aſſert that he was commiſſioned by God to do it, without really having ſuch a commiſſion. A good man will immediately ſay, if divine interpoſitions be poſſible in themſelves, and if God has ever ſpoken by man, Jeſus Chriſt muſt certainly have been the man; and an intelligent perſon may perceive that the time in which he lived was the moſt proper time for his appearance. The man whoſe life and converſation is agreeable to the goſpel, and who feels that he enjoys the advantages of his being and condition to the greateſt perfection in conſequence of it, muſt feel what will be to him the moſt irreſiſtible evidence that the goſpel proceeds from the giver of every good and perfect gift. *He has the witneſs in himſelf*, and has *peace and joy in believing*.

The diſcourſes of our Lord before his death are certainly altogether unaccountable upon the ſuppoſition of his being an impoſtor. They diſcover the greateſt ſenſe of perſonal dignity and importance, the moſt perfect goodneſs and benevolence of heart, the moſt tender affection to his immediate

followers,

followers, and the ſtrongeſt ſympathy with them under a proſpect of the conſternation into which they would be thrown by his approaching death; and yet, though he endeavoured to ſuggeſt the moſt proper and effectual conſiderations to encourage and ſupport them under ſo ſevere a trial, he is careful to give them no hopes of any advancement or happineſs in this world, but only in thoſe manſions which he was going to prepare for them, after they ſhould be ſo hated of all men, that he who killed them ſhould think that he did God ſervice. With what view could an impoſtor be ſuppoſed to talk in this ſtrain, or what could a few illiterate men expect to gain by ſupporting the pretenſions of a man who wanted to impoſe upon all the world, and who, after being proſecuted as a criminal, was condemned and crucified?

In the diſcourſes of Chriſt we perceive a character and manner, in ſeveral reſpects, peculiar to himſelf, even much more ſo than that of Socrates in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. It is even conſidererably different from that of Moſes, or any of the antient prophets, which a Jew, who had invented, would probably have imitated. This ſtyle and manner being ſo truly original, has, certainly, the appearance of being copied from real life. Beſides, the diſcourſes of Chriſt are not general declamations on the ſubject of virtue and vice, but are accompanied with many circumſtances re-

lating to particular perſons, times, and places, which a perſon who wrote from imagination would never have thought of, or at leaſt would not have hazarded.

The manner in which Chriſt and his apoſtles propoſed and enforced the evidences of their miſſion, affords a very ſtrong preſumptive argument that they were no impoſtors. They generally exhibited their proofs without the leaſt comment upon them, leaving them to produce their own natural effect upon the mind of the unprejudiced obſerver. At other times they plainly and peremptorily aſſert their commiſſion from God, ſimply appealing to the miracles which they wrought, or to antient allowed prophecies in favour of their pretenſions; never reaſoning about the force of them, or of their own accord ſtarting and obviating objections, though they never declined giving plain and ſatisfactory anſwers to all that were propoſed to them.

On the other hand, impoſtors, conſcious of their having no ſatisfactory proof of what they pretend to be, never fail to make a great parade of the little ſeeming evidence which they can venture to alledge; they are quick-ſighted to foreſee, and ready to obviate every objection to which they can make any plauſible reply, and they artfully evade ſuch as they cannot anſwer. Such was the conduct of Mohammed, as a perſon of any tolerable dif-

diſcernment may perceive in reading the Koran; and the very reverſe was the conduct of Chriſt and his apoſtles, as muſt be obvious to any perſon who reads the Goſpels and the book of Acts.

Upon the whole, we cannot but conclude, that the Evangelical hiſtory has all the *air* and the uſual *characteriſtics* of truth; and that men circumſtanced as the writers of the New Teſtament were, ſhould have written as they have done, without writing from known facts, is altogether incredible, and the whole hiſtory of mankind can exhibit nothing parallel to it.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION FROM PROPHECY.

THE laſt courſe of arguments which I ſhall produce in favour of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations is that which is derived from prophecy, which is of a mixed nature, depending in part upon the teſtimony of the friends of revelation that ſuch prophecies were delivered, and upon credible hiſtory that they have been fulfilled. In ſome caſes, however, it is a matter of public notoriety, that the books which contain the prophecies were extant long before the events to which it is aſſerted that they correſpond; ſo that this argument borrows no aid from the teſtimony of the friends of revelation only.

It muſt be acknowledged that God only can foreſee, and with certainty foretel future events, at leaſt ſuch as are very remote, and which depend upon cauſes which did not exiſt, or which could not be known by man to exiſt, at the time when they were foretold. It is not neceſſary, however, that the event ſhould correſpond to the prophecy ſo exactly, as that it might have been diſtinctly deſcribed before it came to paſs. For in how dark and

and obſcure a manner ſoever the prophecy be expreſſed, it will be ſufficiently manifeſt that it came from God, if, after the event, the correſpondence between them be ſo great, that human foreſight could not have deſcribed it in ſuch a manner, and if it be highly improbable, or impoſſible, that it ſhould have been deſcribed in ſuch a manner at random. But many prophecies recorded in the ſcriptures were as intelligible before as after the event, and yet they did not at all contribute to their own accompliſhment, by inducing the friends of revelation to exert themſelves, in order to bring about the thing foretold; the event being produced by natural and foreign cauſes.

Of the many prophecies which are recorded in the books of ſcripture, I ſhall only mention a few of the more conſiderable, reciting in the firſt place, the words of the prediction, and then relating from hiſtory the correſponding events.

SECTION I.

Prophecies relating to various nations *which had connections with the Jews.*

THE prophecies concerning the poſterity of Abraham by ISHMAEL, have been remarkably fulfilled; and the preſent ſtate of the Arabs, who

are chiefly defcended from Ifhmael, is an atteftation of their truth and divinity.

Several of thefe predictions imply, that the pofterity of Ifhmael fhould be numerous; as Gen. xvi. 6.—12. *And the angel of the Lord faid unto Hagar, I will multiply thy feed exceedingly, and it fhall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord faid unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and fhalt bear a fon, and fhalt call his name Ifhmael, and he will be a wild man; his hand will be againft every man, and every man's hand againft him, and he fhall dwell in the prefence of all his brethren.* To Abraham alfo God faid, Gen. xxi. 13. *And alfo of the fon of the bond woman will I make a nation, becaufe he is of thy feed.* In feveral other places the prophecy concerning Ifhmael being a great nation is repeated; as Gen. xxi. 20. with the additional circumftances of his begetting *twelve princes.*

Now all thefe particulars have been remarkably fulfilled. The defcendants of Ifhmael were a confiderable nation in very early times, and under Mohammed and his fucceffors, the Arabs extended their conquefts over a great part of the world. All the northern coafts of Africa abound with Arabs, Paleftine is now almoft entirely occupied by them; they alfo ftill retain their antient feats, and are as numerous there as ever.

It was faid that Ifhmael fhould be a *wild man*, and the Arabs are wild and intractable even to a proverb.

verb. It was ſaid that *his hand ſhould be againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt him*, and it is well known that the Arabs, and, probably, *the Arabs only*, of all the nations of the world, have conſtantly lived in a ſtate of hoſtility with all mankind; many of them ſubſiſting by plundering their neighbours, and the travellers and caravans which are obliged to paſs through any part of their country; and beſides this, their different clans and chiefs are almoſt always at war with one another.

It ſeems to be intimated, by Iſhmael's *dwelling in the midſt of all his brethen*, that his poſterity ſhould *continue* to dwell among them, and to ſubſiſt as a ſeparate nation, notwithſtanding this ſtate of conſtant hoſtility; and it is truly remarkable, that, though the conqueſt of Arabia has been attempted by almoſt all the great empires which have bordered upon them, it has never yet been ſubdued; and no nation ever made the attempt without repenting of it; having met with nothing but diſgrace and loſs. This was moſt remarkably the caſe in the time of Trajan, the moſt warlike of all the Roman emperors, and, when the empire was in its greateſt ſtrength.

The deſtruction of NINEVEH, the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing city in the world while it ſtood, and the capital of the Aſſyrian empire, which ſubdued the ten tribes, and carried them captive, was diſtinctly and peremptorily foretold by the prophet Nahum,

Nahum, probably about the time of the captivity of the ten tribes by the Aſſyrians; and in about ſeventy years after that great empire was conquered, and the capital of it deſtroyed by the Medes and Babylonians.

BABYLON ſucceeded Nineveh in power and ſplendor, and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon conquered the Jews, and carried them into captivity; yet long before this event, and even before the Babylonians made any great figure among the nations, the utter ruin of their city and empire was foretold. The prophecies concerning it are long and circumſtantial, and the deſcription that is given of the condition to which it ſhould be reduced correſponds moſt exactly to ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages of it; and the whole prophecy is completely verified at this day.

The deſtruction of Babylon is foretold in general terms by Iſaiah xxi. 9. and by Jeremiah l. 17, 18. and li. 8. The time of this event was fixed by Jeremiah, who wrote at the time that the Babylonian empire was in its greateſt ſtrength and glory, Jer. xxv. 11, 12. *Thoſe nations ſhall ſerve the king of Babylon ſeventy years, and it ſhall come to paſs, that when ſeventy years are accompliſhed, I will puniſh the king of Babylon, and that nation, ſays the Lord.*

The conqueſts of Cyrus, who beſieged and took Babylon, were diſtinctly foretold by Iſaiah; and that great conqueror is even mentioned by name,

Iſ. xlv.

Is. xlv. 1. &c. We have also an account of both those nations which joined in the conquest of Babylon, Is. xxi. 2. *Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media*; and also in Jeremiah, li, 11. *The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it.*

The very manner in which the city was taken seems to have been alluded to in Isaiah, xliv. 27. *That says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.* Also in Jeremiah, l. 28. *A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up*; and again, li. 36. *I will dry up her seas, and make her springs dry.* For the stratagem that Cyrus made use of to take the place was to divert the course of the river, and make his army enter the city, through the midst of which it had flowed, by its channel, which was then left dry.

The prophecies in which the utter destruction of Babylon is foretold are remarkably emphatical, and the accomplishment of them has been no less remarkably exact. Is. xiii. 19.—22. And *Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there, but wild beasts of the deserts shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall*

dance

dance there; and the wild beasts of the island shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

Also 14, 22, 23. *For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts.* Jer. l. 9. &c. *For lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the North country, and they shall set themselves in array against her. From thence she shall be taken. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited; but it shall be wholly desolate. Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. For it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore, the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the island* (that is, foreign wild beasts, not natives of the country) *shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein, and it shall be no more inhabited for ever, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.*

History shews the full accomplishment of these and many other very circumstantial prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon. This great city never recovered the blow which it received from Cyrus; for the river never returned to its old channel;

nel; and the neighbouring country becoming marſhy, it ſoon became a very diſagreeable ſituation, and in time not habitable. The deſtruction of the *idols of Babylon* had been very particularly foretold, and it was fully accompliſhed by Xerxes, who returned defeated, and diſappointed from Greece, wreaked his vengeance upon Babylon, taking its treaſures, and deſtroying all its idols, which the Perſians held in abhorrence. Iſ. xxi. 9. *Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her Gods he has broken to the ground*, xlvi. 1. *Bel boweth down, Nebo ſtoopeth, their idols were upon the beaſts, and upon the cattle.* Jer. l. 2. *Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.* li. 44. &c. *And I will puniſh Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he has ſwallowed up.* The ſame circumſtance is repeated afterwards, and it was fulfilled when Cyrus reſtored to the Jews the veſſels of gold and ſilver, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jeruſalem, and had lodged in the temple of Bel.

The *gradual deſolation* of Babylon, till it came to that ſtate of utter deſtruction, which is deſcribed by the prophets, is truly remarkable. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote a little before the time of Chriſt, ſays that the buildings were then ruined and decayed, a ſmall part of it only being inhabited, and the reſt of the incloſure employed in tillage. Pliny, who

who wrote in the firſt century after Chriſt, ſays that Babylon was reduced to ſolitude; being exhauſted by the neighbourhood of Selucia, which had been built upon the Tygris, not very far from it. Pauſanias, who wrote about the middle of the ſecond century, ſays that of Babylon, the greateſt city that the ſun ever ſaw, there was nothing remaining but the walls; and Lucian who wrote about the ſame time, ſays that in a little time it would be ſought for and not be found, like Nineveh. In the time of Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, the whole incloſure of the walls of Babylon was actually converted into a chace for keeping wild beaſts, and was uſed for that, and no other purpoſe, by many of the kings of Perſia. At length even the walls of Babylon, ſo much celebrated for their height and ſtrength, were demoliſhed; but whether by the Saracens, who conquered that country, is not known.

We find no mention made of Babylon for many centuries after this; but Benjamin, a Jew of Tudela, who travelled into that country, about ſeven hundred years ago, ſays that there then remained ſome of the ruins of Babylon, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, but that people were afraid to go into the place, on account of the ſerpents and ſcorpions with which it ſwarmed. At preſent, it is not agreed among travellers where the great city of Babylon ſtood.

The

The prophecies concerning TYRE were, likewise, exceedingly numerous, referring to several successive periods in the history of that great commercial city; and they have all been remarkably fulfilled. I shall only mention the last of them, as it corresponds to the present state of Tyre. It was delivered by Ezekiel, who prophecied during the time of the Babylonish captivity. Ez. xxvi. 3. &c. *Thus says the Lord God, Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up, and they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it saith the Lord God.* The same circumstance is repeated afterwards, v. 14. *I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God*; and again v. 21. *I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more. Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.*

If we trace the history of this great city, we shall find that it suffered so much in consequence of several conquests, that there is not now the least trace of the antient city; and that which was afterwards built upon an island, and was called the *new city*, is now a heap of ruins, and is only visited by

by a few fiſhermen. Parvillerius, a Jeſuit, whom Huetius, who was acquainted with him, calls a very candid man, and who reſided ten years in Syria, ſaid, that when he approached the ruins of Tyre, and beheld the rocks ſtretched forth to the ſea, and the great ſtones ſcattered up and down on the ſhore, made clean and ſmooth by the ſun, the waves, and the winds, and of no uſe but for the drying of fiſhermen's nets, many of which happened to be at that time ſpread upon them, the proſpect brought to his mind the prophecies of Ezekiel above-mentioned.

The fulfilment of prophecies concerning EGYPT is alſo very remarkable. They correſponded to ſeveral ſucceſſive periods of its hiſtory, and the laſt of them is completely verified in the preſent ſtate of that once great and noble, but now enſlaved and miſerable country. After the deſolation of that land, and the captivity of the people by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel prophecied (xxix. 14. 15.) that it ſhould be *a baſe kingdom. It ſhall be the baſeſt of kingdoms, neither ſhall it exalt itſelf any more above the nations; for I will diminiſh them, that they ſhall no more rule over the nations.* xxx. 12, 13. *I will ſell the land into the hand of the wicked, aud I will make the land woſte, and all that is therein by the hand of ſtrangers; and there ſhall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt.*

Hiſtory

Hiſtory ſhews that, from that time to the preſent, Egypt has never had a prince of its own; but has been ſucceſſively under the power of the Babylonians, Perſians, Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, Mamluks, and Turks.

SECTION II.

Prophecies relating to the MESSIAH.

ALMOST the whole of the JEWISH HISTORY was the ſubject of exceedingly clear and diſtinct prophecies. The multitudes that ſhould deſcend from Abraham were repeatedly foretold to that patriarch; the different fates of Eſau and Jacob were foretold to Iſaac; and the condition of each of the twelve tribes was the ſubject of the prophecy of Jacob when he lay on his death-bed, and alſo of that of Moſes. The duration of their ſtate of bondage in Egypt was made known to Abraham, and a great number of particular events were foretold by ſeveral prophets in every period of their hiſtory to the Babyloniſh captivity, which Jeremiah foretold would laſt ſeventy years, and ſo long, and no longer, it did continue, from the firſt captivity under Jehoiakim, to the return of the Jews under Cyrus, or from the deſtruction of the

the temple by Nebuchadnezzar to the rebuilding of it under Darius.

But thoſe prophecies in which we are moſt interefted as chriſtians, are thoſe which relate to the MESSIAH; whoſe coming was kept in view from the firſt of the communications of God to mankind, to the ſuſpenſion of prophecy under Malachi.

As Chriſt and his apoſtles aſſert that all theſe prophecies are fulfilled, or to be fulfilled in him, it becomes us the more to ſtudy them, and to trace the correſpondence between the prophecies and the events. I ſhall therefore collect into one view the principal circumſtances relating to the Meſſiah, which are referred to by the prophets of the Old Teſtament, and which are known to correſpond to the hiſtory of Chriſt.

We learn from theſe prophecies, that the Jews had reaſon to expect the appearance of a very glorious perſon, by means of whom both themſelves and the reſt of the world would receive very great advantages, of a ſpiritual nature; that he would make his appearance in mean circumſtances, and that though he ſhould lead a humble and exemplary life, working benevolent miracles, he ſhould be rejected, and put to death; but that his death would be a principal means of promoting the great end of his coming, namely, the putting away of ſin, or the reformation of the world; that after this

this ſtate of humiliation and ſuffering, he ſhould triumph over all his enemies, and eſtabliſh a kingdom, which ſhould extend over the whole world, and laſt to the end of time. This perſon, who, in the prophecies, is called *Shiloh* and *Meſſiah*, was to be a deſcendant of Abraham and David, to be born at Bethlehem, and to be preceded by a perſon reſembling Elijah, to prepare his way. Laſtly, he was to make his appearance while the ſecond temple of the Jews was ſtanding, and about five hundred years after the time of Ezra.

The following paſſages from the Old Teſtament ſcriptures, among many others, ſeem to deſcribe, or allude to, ſuch a perſon as this; ſome of them referring to one circumſtance, ſome to another, and ſome to ſeveral of them at the ſame time.

Gen. xlix. 10. *The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and to him ſhall the gathering of the people be.* Here is an evident prophecy of ſome perſon, to whom the people ſhould be gathered, and who was to make his appearance when the ſcepter had departed, or was departing from Judah. Now Chriſt was born about the time when the Jews became ſubject to the Romans, their country being reduced into the form of a province of the empire; ſo that they loſt the power of inflicting the puniſhment of death, of which they had not been deprived

prived before, or, at leaſt, for any length of time, though they had been tributary to ſeveral other nations. But after the death of Herod, they loſt it entirely, and finally. This prophecy may alſo have a reference to the ſovereignty departing from the *other tribes* before that period.

Iſ. xi. 1. *And there ſhall come forth a rod out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots, and the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of council and might, the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord, &c. and he ſhall ſmite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips ſhall he ſlay the wicked, v.* 10. *And in that day there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign of the people. To it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glorious.* In this prophecy there is evidently announced to us a perſon who was to deſcend from Jeſſe, or David, whoſe authority was to extend not only over the Jews, but over the Gentiles alſo.

That the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, ſhould derive great advantage from the coming of the Meſſiah, was not only the meaning of the promiſe of God to Abraham, that *in his ſeed ſhould all the families of the earth be bleſſed*; but it ſeems to be more eſpecially alluded to in Pſ. ii. 7, 8. which was always underſtood by the Jews as referring to the

Meſſiah.

Meſſiah. *The Lord hath ſaid unto me, Thou art my ſon, this day have I begotten thee. Aſk of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion.* The converſion of the Gentiles is more eſpecially promiſed, Iſ. xlix. 6. *And he ſaid it is a light thing that thou ſhouldeſt be my ſervant, to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael, I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the end of the earth.*

The following prophecy of Jeremiah contains a clear prediction of the Meſſiah, as to deſcend from David, though it probably refers to ſome more glorious diſplay of his power than has yet been exhibited, xxiii. 5. *Behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous branch, and a king ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute judgment and juſtice in the earth. In his days Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafely; and this is his name whereby he ſhall be called,* THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The ſame thing is alſo repeated Jer. xxxiii. 14. &c. *Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promiſed unto the houſe of Iſrael, and to the houſe of Judah. In thoſe days. and at that time, will I cauſe the branch of righteouſneſs to grow up unto David, and he ſhall execute judgment and righteouſneſs in the land. In thoſe days ſhall Judah be ſaved, and Jeruſalem ſhall dwell ſafely; and this is the name wherewith*

ſhe ſhall be called, The Lord our righteouſneſs. For thus ſaith the Lord, David ſhall never want a man to ſit upon the throne of the houſe of Iſrael.

Micah, v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Iſrael, whoſe goings forth have been from of old from everlaſting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that ſhe who travelleth hath brought forth. Then the remnant of his brethren ſhall return unto the children of Iſrael. And he ſhall ſtand, and feed in the ſtrength of the Lord, in the majeſty of the name of the Lord his God; and they ſhall abide. For now ſhall he be great unto the ends of the earth.* This prophecy led all the Jews to expect that the Meſſiah was to be born in Bethlehem; and this was exactly accompliſhed, for Mary was delivered of Jeſus at that place, to which ſhe and her family had repaired, in order to be enrolled, though her habitation was at Nazareth in Galilee.

That Chriſt ſhould reſide chiefly in Galilee ſeems, alſo, to have been the ſubject of a prophecy. For at a time when that country was grievouſly harraſſed by the king of Aſſyria, juſt before the captivity of the ten Tribes, Iſaiah delivered the following prophecy, ix. 1. *Though he lightly afflicted the land of Zabulun, and the land of Naphtali, he ſhall greatly honour her, by the way of the ſea, beyond Jordan, Gallilee of the Gentiles. The people that walked*

walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For thus, as the learned Joseph Mede has shewn, this passage ought to have been translated.

The character and humiliation of Christ, with several circumstances relating to his life and death, are plainly alluded to by Isaiah, in the following passages, lii. 13. *Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which hath not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider*, liii. 1. &c. *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised, and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*

All we like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, i. e. probably, as upon the *ſcapegoat* under the law, which was not hurt, but diſmiſſed into the wilderneſs, to repreſent the entire removal, or forgiveneſs of their ſins. *He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from judgment, and who ſhall declare his generation; for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, becauſe he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him; he hath put him to grief. When thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin; he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travel of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied; by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many, for he ſhall bear* (or take away) *their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he ſhall divide the ſpoil with the ſtrong; becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death, and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and he bare* (or took away) *the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors.*

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It is impoſſible to find any character, or hiſtory, to which this prophecy correſponds, but that of Chriſt; and in him the whole of it was completely fulfilled; though there are difficulties with reſpect to ſome particular paſſages, which are variouſly rendered by different tranſlators.

The proſperity of the Jews under ſome future king was clearly foretold by the prophet Zechariah, ix. 9, and even the circumſtance of his riding upon an aſs was probably alluded to by him. *Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem. Behold, thy king cometh unto thee. He is juſt, and having ſalvation; lowly, and riding upon an aſs, and upon a colt, the ſole of an aſs.*

When the ſecond temple was built by thoſe who returned from the Babyloniſh captivity, the old men, who remembered the temple of Solomon, wept, to ſee the difference; the latter temple being ſo mean in compariſon of the former. But to comfort them, the prophet Haggai ſays, ii. 4. *Be ſtrong, O Zerubbabel, ſaith the Lord, and be ſtrong all ye people of the land; for I am with you, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. It is yet a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land; and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. The ſilver is mine, and the gold is mine. The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than*

that of the former; and in this place will I give peace, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.

This prophecy limits the coming of Chriſt, whoſe preſence made the ſecond temple more truly glorious than that of Solomon, to ſome time before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans, when that temple was levelled with the ground.

But the time in which the Meſſiah ſhould make his appearance was moſt diſtinctly foretold by the prophet Daniel, who limited it to ſeventy weeks after the decree of the kings of Perſia to rebuild Jeruſalem, ix. 24, &c. *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and to ſeal up the viſion, and prophecy, and to anoint the moſt holy. Know, therefore, and underſtand; that from the going forth of the commandment to reſtore and to build Jeruſalem, unto the Meſſiah the prince, ſhall be ſeven weeks, and threeſcore and two weeks; the ſtreets ſhall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

Though there are ſeveral methods of computing theſe *ſeventy weeks* (every day of which is agreed to ſtand for a year) yet it is plain, that, according to any of them, that term muſt have expired about the time of Chriſt. Accordingly we find that there was, in fact, about that time, a general expectation among the Jews, and through all the

Eaſt,

East, of the appearance of some great prince, and reformer of religion.

That some person would be sent to *prepare the way for the Messiah*, seems to have been foretold with sufficient clearness, in the following prophecies. We also see in them, that he was to resemble the prophet *Elias*; and it appears, that such a person was expected by the Jews about the same time.

Isaiah xl. 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill 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.*

This prophecy immediately follows another, concerning the captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians, and is introduced by the following animated consolation, which was, no doubt, written under a prospect of the happy state of things which was to be introduced by the Messiah, v. 1, 2. *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, &c.

Mal. iii. 1, &c. *Behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple: even the meſſenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts,* iv. 2. *Unto you that fear my name ſhall the ſun of righteouſneſs ariſe, with healing in his wings, &c.* v. 5. 6. *Behold, I will ſend you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he ſhall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, leſt I come and ſmite the earth with a curſe.*

Theſe are but a ſmall part of the prophecies which pretty plainly refer to Chriſt in the Old Teſtament; and though ſome of them, I doubt not, are to have a much more complete accompliſhment than they have hitherto received, yet ſo many of the particulars are already fulfilled, as abundantly prove, that thoſe prophets wrote by inſpiration; no other than God being able to deſcribe ſo diſtant an event with ſuch exactneſs. Theſe prophecies ought certainly to excite our cloſeſt attention to a character ſo diſtinguiſhed before hand, and rendered ſo conſpicuous, as we may ſay, even before he made his appearance in the world; and it ſhould concur with other proofs, to ſtrengthen our faith in the divine miſſion of Chriſt, and the divinity of his religion.

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SECTION III.

Prophecies in the New Teſtament.

THE ſame ſpirit of prophecy which attended every ſtage of the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, has no leſs diſtinguiſhed the *Chriſtian*, which is to be conſidered as the continuation, and completion of the ſame general ſcheme.

The entire overthrow of the Jewiſh nation, and the complete deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, with many remarkable circumſtances preceding and attending them, were expreſsly foretold by Chriſt. So diſtinct was his fore-knowledge of the great calamities that were to come upon his nation, that he was exceedingly moved and affected with the conſideration of them, and he always expreſſed himſelf with the greateſt tenderneſs and compaſſion whenever he mentioned them; as Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your houſe is left unto you deſolate.*

Upon his approaching Jeruſalem for the laſt time it is ſaid, Luke xix. 41, &c. that *when he came*

near,

near, he beheld the city, and wept over it; ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground; and thy children within thee; and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another, becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation.

When he was going to be crucified, the expectation even of his own immediate ſuffering did not ſo far engroſs his thoughts, but that he felt the moſt lively compaſſion on the proſpect of the future miſeries of his countrymen. For, being followed by a great company of people, Luke xxiii. 27, &c. *and, of women, who bewailed and lamented him; Jeſus, turning unto them ſaid, Daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they ſhall ſay, Bleſſed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave ſuck. Then ſhall they begin to ſay to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do theſe things in a green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?*

But the moſt circumſtantial of the prophecies of our Lord, concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, was delivered to his diſciples, when they deſired him to attend to the magnificence of that celebrated ſtructure, as they were ſitting in the

the full view of it, on the mount of Olives. He immediately replied, Mat. xxiv. 2. *See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*; and this was even literally fulfilled about forty years after, when the city was taken by Titus, to the great regret of that Roman general, who would gladly have preserved so glorious a structure.

Several things that preceded and accompanied this dreadful overthrow of the Jews were distinctly recited by our Lord, as signals to his disciples to flee from the place, in order to escape the impending calamities. For when they asked him *when those things should be*, he replied, Mat. xxiv. 4. *Take heed, that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.* Now, according to the testimony of Josephus, and other historians, all these things did, in a very remarkable manner, precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Indeed the whole of that work of Josephus, concerning *the wars of the Jews*, is the clearest, and most unexceptionable evidence of the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecies. The particulars of the prophecies and the event have been compared

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by ſeveral chriſtian writers, but more eſpecially by biſhop Newton, Dr. Lardner, and Mr. Jortin.

Our Lord alſo mentions the perſecution of his followers, as what would precede that event, Mat. xxiv. 9. *Then ſhall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and ſhall kill you: and ye ſhall be hated of all nations for my name's ſake. And then ſhall many be offended, and ſhall betray one another, and ſhall hate one another. But he that ſhall endure unto the end, the ſame ſhall be ſaved.*

In connection with this perſecution and diſperſion of his diſciples, our Lord foretold that his religion would be preached in all the *world*, meaning, probably, the Roman empire, before this great cataſtrophe; and this appears from hiſtory to have been accompliſhed. Mat. xxiv. 14. *And this goſpel of the kingdom ſhall be preached in all the world, for a witneſs unto all nations, and then ſhall the end come.*

The more immediate ſignal for the chriſtians to flee out of the country was the appearance of Roman armies, with their ſtandards, and images (which were held in abomination by the Jews) in the holy land of Judea and in Jeruſalem, Mat. xxiv. 15. *When ye, therefore, ſhall ſee the abomimation of deſolation ſpoken of by Daniel the prophet, ſtanding in the holy place (whoſo readeth, let him underſtand) then let him who be in Judea, flee unto the mountains. Let him who is on the houſe-top, not come down to take any thing out*

of

of his houſe: neither let him who is in the field, return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give ſuck in thoſe days. But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the ſabbath-day: for then ſhall be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever ſhall be.

The obſcurity which there is in the terms of the firſt part of this prediction in Matthew, is, in a great meaſure, removed by the plainer expreſſions, correſponding to them in Luke xxi. 20. '*And when ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh. Then let them who are in Judea, flee to the mountains; and let them who are in the midſt of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give ſuck in thoſe days: for there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations: and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

In theſe laſt words it is intimated, that the calamities of the Jews are to have an end, and that they are to be once more reſtored to the poſſeſſion of Jeruſalem. And from this, and other prophecies to the ſame purpoſe, we learn that this great event is

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to take place, when the gospel shall have been preached throughout the whole world, and when some, at least, of all nations, shall be converted to the profession of it. The apostle Paul says, Rom. xi. 25, *I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

At the time that our Saviour delivered this prophecy, there was far from being any appearance of its being accomplished. The Jews had been a long time in subjection to the Romans, whose empire then extended over almost all the known world, and was in its greatest strength; so that it could not have been imagined that so inconsiderable a people as the Jews were, would ever think of opposing them, and much less that they should hold out, till they were reduced to such extreme distress as our Lord has described. Still less would any man, not conscious of divine inspiration, have ventured to foretel such a circumstance, as the circumvallation of Jerusalem, when, if they were reduced by the Romans, the conquest might have been effected by many methods more compendious than this.

Besides, there was not in our Saviour's time any example of a country being reduced to so great desolation

desolation by the Romans, and of so complete a dispersion of the inhabitants, as that which befel the Jews. The Romans, were, in general, merciful conquerors, so that the state of almost all the countries that were subject to them was considerably improved by that means.

Still less was it likely that so noble a structure as the *temple*, which was probably the most sumptuous and magnificent building in the world, would have been demolished, either by the Romans, who would have been proud of such a monument of their victory, or by the Jews, who had the most superstitious veneration for it; and it was so situated, as to be in no danger of being destroyed by a casual fire, or any other accident. But, notwithstanding this, our Lord, peremptorily pronounced, that these things, improbable as they must have appeared, would not fail to come to pass in that very generation, Mat. xxiv. 34, &c. *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

The successful propagation of the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition it was to meet with, and the grievous persecutions of those who adhered to it; also the deplorable corruption of christianity, and the restoration of it after that corruption, in a very distant age, were all the subjects of prophecy by our Lord and his apostles; and most of them

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were events, which no man could have foreſeen or expected, at the time in which the predictions were delivered.

The ſucceſs of the goſpel is certainly to be underſtood by what is ſaid in the antient Jewiſh prophecies concerning the great extent and glory of the Meſſiah's kingdom; but our Lord himſelf muſt have had a more particular view to it in ſeveral of his parables, as in that concerning the ſmall grain of *muſtard-ſeed*, which grew into a great tree; the ſmall quantity of *leaven*, which leavened the whole lump; and many others, by which he profeſſedly repreſents the wonderful ſpread of his goſpel; and it muſt have been with the fulleſt aſſurance of this event, that he ſolemnly commiſſioned his diſciples to *go and preach the goſpel to every creature.*

It is not improbable, but that our Lord might ſpeak prophetically, when he called himſelf the *light of the world*, and ſaid, *No man cometh to the Father, but by me. No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son ſhall reveal him, &c.* If theſe declarations were meant to extent beyond the time and country in which they were delivered, the hiſtory of mankind affords a ſtriking proof of the fulfilment of them; and the preſent ſtate of the world makes it exceedingly probable, that no people will ever attain to juſt and uſeful conceptions of God, &c. but by the goſpel, and that by this

this means all nations will, in due time, acquire them.

That there was to be a great *corruption of christianity* was expresly foretold not only in the book of Revelation, in which the rise, progress, and utter destruction of some great antichristian power are most certainly described, but also in other writings of the apostles, and especially those of Paul, as 2 Thess. ii. 1, &c. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above 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.*

The coming of this antichristian power, he farther says, v. 9. is *after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.*

This apostle represents this corruption as having begun even in his time, though that monstrous antichristian power could not receive its full estab-

liſhment till ſome other power, which was then in the way (by which he probably meant the Roman empire) ſhould be removed. But whenever it ſhould be eſtabliſhed, he expreſsly foretels its utter deſtruction, v. 6, &c. *And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the myſtery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then ſhall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord ſhall conſume with the ſpirit of his mouth, and ſhall deſtroy with the brightneſs of his coming.*

The particulars of this great corruption of chriſtianity are more diſtinctly expreſſed by the apoſtle Paul, in his firſt epiſtle to Timothy, iv. 1. *Now the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that, in the latter times, ſome ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of dæmons; ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy, having their conſcience ſeared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats which God hath created to be received with thankſgiving, of them who believe and know the truth.*

It is impoſſible not to perceive in theſe prophecies, eſpecially if they be compared with others in the book of Daniel, and of the Revelation, the plain characters of the *church of Rome*; allowing for the obſcurity of many of the phraſes by which the Papal uſurpations on the rights of God and man are here expreſſed. Theſe prophecies have been fully accompliſhed, the Popiſh corruptions

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and uſurpations having proceeded almoſt without interruption, for more than fourteen hundred years.

That ſo ſimple a religion as the chriſtian ſhould have been ſubject to ſuch dreadful corruption, muſt have appeared improbable, at the time of its firſt promulgation; the like not having happened to the Jewiſh religion, or, indeed, to any other religion under heaven. And yet when the corruption was eſtabliſhed, and had been ſupported by all the temporal powers under heaven, for the ſpace of many centuries, and was intimately incorporated with the civil conſtitutions of thoſe ſtates, its general reſtoration to its primitive purity muſt have appeared much more improbable; and yet ſuch progreſs has been already made in this great work, that there can be no doubt but that, in due time, the whole prophecy will be completed, and chriſtianity be once more what it originally was.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.