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I N S T I T U T E S
O F
N A T U R A L A N D R E V E A L E D
R E L I G I O N.
I N T W O V O L U M E S.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

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

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F. R. S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

V O L. II.

• Wisdom is the principal Thing. SOLOMON.

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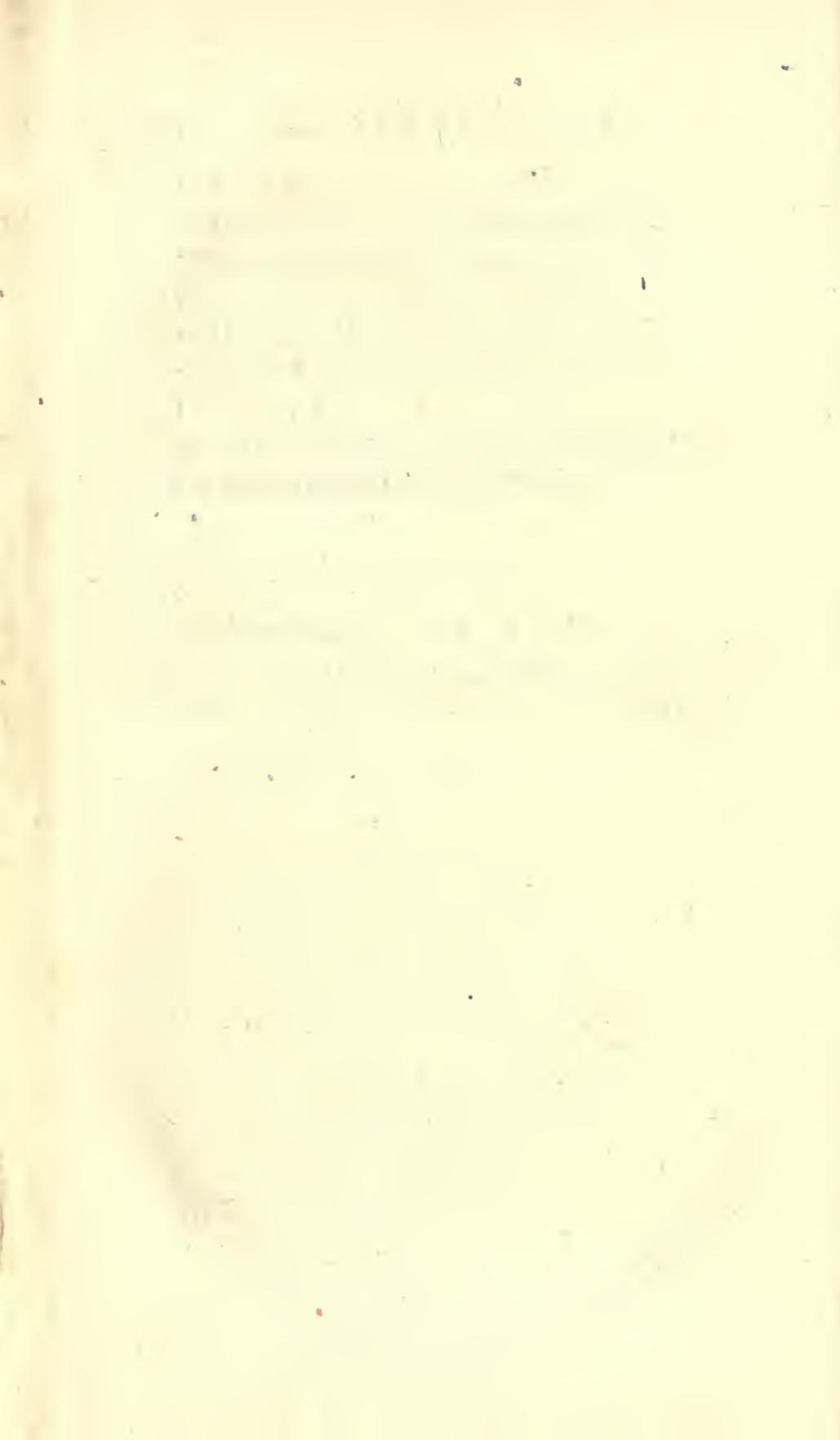
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THE
EVIDENCES
OF
REVEALED RELIGION.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF SEVERAL
MIRACLES WHICH HAVE BEEN SAID TO HAVE
BEEN WROUGHT FOR OTHER PURPOSES THAN
THE CONFIRMATION OF THE JEWISH AND
CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.

WE shall be much confirmed in our belief of
the miracles of Moses and of Christ, and
of the truth of their religions, if we compare the
evidence which has been brought for them, with
that which is alledged in favour of other miracles.
For miracles have been pleaded in favour of hea-
thenism, Mohammedanism, and the church of
Rome; but the evidence which is alledged in their
favour, though it has been boasted of by modern
unbelievers, as equal, and even superior to what
has been pleaded for the miracles of Moses and of
Christ is exceedingly defective, if there be any

propriety in the rules which I have already laid down for ascertaining the value of human testimony.

The number of false miracles which have gained credit in the world, posterior to those of Christ and his apostles, are, in some measure, an evidence of their truth. Mankind are easily led by analogy from one thing to another; so that having been compelled to admit the evidence of some miracles, they would more easily admit that of others, in any respects similar to them (as their being wrought by the same kind of persons, and for similar purposes) upon much more slender evidence; whereas, if nothing had existed of the like nature before them, the evidence of which was indisputable, the later miracles would have gained no credit at all; so that the credit which they have obtained is a kind of proof that something better authenticated had taken place before them. In like manner spurious Gospels, &c. are some proof that there were *genuine ones* prior to them.

It may truly be said of all miracles, not Jewish or Christian, that they were either not published to the world till long after the time in which they were said to have been performed, or not in the places in which they were said to have happened, or they were suffered to pass without examination, because they coincided with the favourite opinions and prejudices of those to whom they were reported; or that it was the interest of priests or magistrates

gistrates to favour the deceit. None of these miracles were performed in places where they must have been the most wanted, viz. in the presence of unbelievers; and besides, they were of such a nature, as could answer no good end whatever, many of them a bad one, and the rest were whimsical and ridiculous, such as, we cannot but think, must have been altogether unworthy of the character of the supreme being. And yet, with respect even to the popish miracles, which are only pretended to have been wrought in countries in which it is highly dangerous not only to make any inquiry into them, but even to hint the least suspicion of their truth; Mr. Chubb scruples not to say, that they are better attested than any that are said to have been wrought in the first century, that is, by Christ and the apostles; and the philosophical Mr. Hume expresses himself in a still stronger manner to the same purpose.

The pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus have been set upon a level with those of Christ by Hierocles and Philostratus among the antients, and by Mr. Blount among the moderns. I shall therefore give a more particular account of them:

This Apollonius was a Pythagorean philosopher, cotemporary with Christ, and remarkable, as it is said, for his temperance and many other virtues. It is affirmed, that he performed many miracles, particularly, transporting himself in the air from

one place to another, and even raising the dead. He is also said to have ascended into heaven, and to have appeared to the emperor Alexander.

But it certainly tends to discredit the story, that Apollonius had been dead, or translated, above a hundred years before Philostratus wrote, and that his history was compiled partly from the commentaries of one Damis, which were never published, but given to this writer by the empress Julia, as *secret memoirs*, without any evidence of their being genuine; and partly from the writings of Maximus Æginensis, and Meragenes, the former of whom only wrote a few particulars; and, according to the character given of him by Philostratus himself, was a very fabulous and romantic writer.

It is, indeed, said, that there were public monuments of some of the Miracles of Apollonius, but they are also said to have been in distant cities of India and Ethiopia, where no writer pretends to have found them. Some letters of Apollonius are mentioned, but Philostratus owns that they did not relate to any of his miracles, but only to the curiosities of the countries through which he travelled.

The manner in which Philostratus writes, gives us but a very indifferent opinion of his own character, and his style is affected and extravagant, full of an ostentation of learning, and shewing a
disposition

disposition to exaggerate every thing that could tend to the reputation of his hero.

Many of the miracles ascribed to Apollonius were said to have been done in secret, or before very few witnesses; some were self-contradictory, and others were evidently vain and foolish; and not a few of them appear to have been borrowed from the history of the Evangelists.

The occasion of Philostratus's writing seems to have been his desire to ingratiate himself with Julia, the wife of Severus, and with Caracalla the succeeding emperor, by detracting from christianity, to which they both had a very great aversion.

Lastly, the story of these miracles presently died away, and the disciples of Apollonius were so few, that there is little reason to believe that he was, in any respect, so extraordinary a person as Philostratus pretended.

As to the *magical rites* of the heathens, nothing could be more wicked or absurd. Nero shewed the most extravagant fondness for this odious and contemptible art, and sent for the most eminent professors of it from all parts of the world; but the issue of it was his own, and a general conviction of the folly of their pretences.

The emperor Vespasian is said to have cured a blind and a lame man at Alexandria; and this, Mr. Hume says, is one of the best attested miracles in all profane history. But it may be easily

collected from the accounts of the two historians, who mention these miracles (neither of whom it is probable believed in them, and one of them evidently did not) that these extraordinary narrations were very convenient, in order to give weight to the authority of Vespasian, who was newly made emperor.

Mohammed himself did not pretend to any miracle, except the Koran itself; and that this was a divine composition, he does not pretend to give any positive proof; but contents himself with appealing to its own excellence; and it was probably superior to the poetical compositions of other Arabians of his time; and this it might very well be, though written by himself, or his confidants. In the translation of Mr. Sale, who is allowed to have been a great master of the Arabic language, and who certainly meant to give it all possible advantage, it is, upon the whole, a very mean performance. The style of the Koran cannot be said to be comparable to that of many parts of the Old Testament, which, however, was never alledged as any proof of its divinity.

It does not appear that this only pretended miracle of Mohammed gained him any followers; the propagation of his religion having been owing chiefly to the sword. Moreover, though the Mohammedan religion be very absurd, and unnaturally harsh in some respects, especially in the absolute

Juste prohibition of wine, it flatters men with the greatest indulgence in others; every man being allowed four wives, and as many concubines as he can keep; and the future rewards of good Musselmen are represented as being of a sensual nature. The great advantage which Mohammedanism had over the corrupt christianity of the times in which it was published, was, that it asserted the great doctrine of the unity of God, against the Trinitarians; but, in other respects, all who profess this religion are slaves to the most abject superstition. And yet Mr. Chubb says, that whether Mohammedanism be a divine revelation, or not, there seems to be a plausible pretence, arising from the circumstance of things, to stamp a divine character upon it.

Of all the Popish miracles, those which have been ascribed to the Abbé Paris are generally allowed to be the most credible. Mr. Hume boasts exceedingly of them, asserting that no where else can there be found such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact; and that nothing can be opposed to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility, or miraculous nature of the events. He even says, that those miracles may be said, with some appearance of reason, to surpass those of Christ in evidence and authority, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 198, &c. Let us now consider a few circumstances which

our philosopher seems to have overlooked, when he gave his judgment in this case.

At the time when these miracles were said to have been performed, there was a strong and numerous party in France, under the conduct of very able and learned men, who were strongly prepossessed in favour of that cause which those miracles were calculated to support; and on the first rumour of them, they were eagerly cried up, and considered as the clear decision of heaven in favour of the Jansenists.

The character of this Abbé was such, as makes it highly improbable that any miracle should have been wrought by him, or in his favour. His whole life was a course of the most absurd and painful superstitions. He abridged himself even of the necessaries of life, and was, in fact, accessory to his own death, by refusing proper assistance, and even better nourishment, when he was manifestly drawing near his end, in consequence of his extreme austerities.

By the manner in which Mr. Hume writes upon this subject, one would imagine that these miracles had never been contradicted, and that the evidence for them had never been disputed; and yet the fact is, that they were always suspected by most persons who heard of them; that the archbishop of Sens considered twenty-two of them as impostures; that the counsellor Montgeron, who undertook

dertook to confute him, gave up seventeen of these pretended cures, and defended only five; that M. Des Voux proved to him that he defended them very ill; that in the judicial proceedings upon the occasion, the falsity of many of these prodigies was demonstrated; that many witnesses absconded to escape examination; that others deposed that their certificates had been falsified, by the addition of circumstances which were not true; that many of the sick persons protested against the account which had been published of their cures; that many of those who had been subject to convulsions, confessed to M. De Heraut, the lieutenant of the police, that their convulsions were artificial; that the cures, true or false, were but gradual, and accomplished by several steps; that they were obliged to go nine times at least, and often more, to the tomb of the Abbé; so that the cures might very possibly be either the work of time, of a lively imagination, or of the medicines which they continued to take; that by far the greatest number of those who applied for a cure were disappointed; that it was very unlikely that the assistance of the divine being should not have been obtained but by means of convulsions, swoonings, violent, and some times very indecent gestures, which those who applied for a cure made use of; and lastly, that these miracles entirely ceased when no credit

was given to them; and instead of drawing the Janfenists out of the low reputation into whcy they were fallen, they only served to make the whole party more ridiculous and contemptible*.

Mr. Hume also mentions after the cardinal De Retz, a miracle which was said to have been wrought in Saragossa; but, by Mr. Hume's own account, the cardinal himself did not believe it.

The last instance I shall mention is one on which Mr. Chubb lays great stress, viz. a miracle said to have been wrought among the Camisards, or the protestants in the South of France, and which he says cannot be distinguished from a real miracle. The principal thing that was exhibited upon this occasion was one Clary, seeming to stand or dance about in the flames unhurt. The account was published by Mr. Lacy, an English gentleman, who joined the French protestants when they took refuge in England, from the depositions of John Cavalier, a brother of the principal leader of the Camisards, but a person of an infamous character, who afterwards turned papist, and enlisted in the French king's guards.

But M. Le Moine, who answered Mr Chubb's treatise on miracles, in which this fact was mentioned, having taken some pains to enquire into it, found, upon the testimony of the most unexcep-

* Lettres de Roussan, p. 85, &c.

tionable witnesses, especially that of one Serres, who had been a member of the privy council of the Camifards, that the whole business was a trick, contrived by themselves, in order to encourage their troops. This person, when near his death, gave a circumstantial account of the manner in which the artifice had been conducted; and the particulars, together with the proofs of the whole discovery, may be seen in M. Le Moine's treatise on miracles, p. 420, &c.



CHAPTER VII.

A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO
THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.

IN the preceding sections I have given a general view of the evidence for the truth of the Jewish and christian revelations, or the reasons which induce me to believe that the divine being has interposed in the affairs of this world, giving mankind laws and admonitions, with such sanctions respecting our future expectations, and especially our expectations after death, as we find an account of in the scriptures; and I presume that such facts have been produced, as cannot be accounted for without supposing that these books contain a true and authentic history.

That testimony so copious, and so particularly circumstanced, given by such numbers of persons, who had the best opportunity of being informed, and who were so far from having any motive to impose upon the world, should, notwithstanding, be given to a fashood, cannot be admitted, without supposing all those persons to have been constituted in a manner quite different from other men. And by whatever method of reasoning we dispute the authenticity

authenticity of the books of scripture, we may question the genuineness of all antient writings, and invalidate the evidence of all history.

Such known facts of other kinds have also been produced, especially respecting the reception which the pretensions to divine communications by Moses, by Christ, and his apostles have met with, from persons who could have had no motive to admit them, except the fullest conviction of their truth, and also respecting the degrees of religious knowledge possessed by the Jews and christians, who were far from having any peculiar natural advantage for the attainment of it, as cannot be accounted for without the supposition of their having had such divine communications as they pretended to.

Lastly, not only have many remarkable events come to pass agreeable to predictions published in those books, but the *present state* of several considerable cities, of whole nations, and of the world in general, is such as was exactly described in them several hundred years ago; so that we cannot but have the greatest reason to expect the full accomplishment of all the other predictions, for which we have the same evidence that they came from God, and especially that which is the great object of the whole scheme of revelation, and to which, if we believe it, it behoves us to have constant respect, viz. that Christ will come again to raise the dead,

to judge the world, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Notwithstanding this direct and plenary evidence for the truth of the Jewish and christian religions, many persons, who have been extremely prejudiced, and consequently averse to receive them, either overlooking some of the more essential particulars of which it consists, or not fully comprehending it, have started several objections. I shall therefore distinctly mention, and briefly reply to the principal of them, especially such as are thought to be the most plausible, and which have the most weight at present.

SECTION I.

Various objections respecting the Old Testament.

SOME of the most plausible objections that have yet been made to the system of revelation above-mentioned affect the Jewish religion only. It is said to represent the divine conduct in such a shape as is inconsistent with his known attributes of light, justice and goodness, particularly his express order to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, without sparing even innocent children, his command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, and his direction to the children of Israel to borrow of the Egyptians
jewels,

jewels, and other valuable things, without any design to return them.

Before I reply to each of these objections, I shall make a few general observations respecting them all.

To these, and all such like objections, the same general answer may be made as to similar objections to the justice and goodness of God in the natural world, where we see many things which we are not able to reconcile to those principles, as they are rules of human conduct, and there is no reason to expect that revealed religion should be more free from these objections than natural religion. On the contrary, we might expect, that, if both the dispensations have the same author, they would be so similarly constituted, as to be attended with similar advantages, and similar difficulties. Now we see that, under the government of the same God, the innocent are frequently involved in the same calamities with the guilty; the laws of nature being so framed, as to be only *in general* favourable to virtue, without making exceptions on account of individuals.

If the vices and follies of a nation, or of its governors, bring war, famine, or pestilence into it, the righteous are not spared; storms, tempests, and earthquakes make no distinction of virtuous or vicious, and innocent children suffer every day in consequence of the profligacy and debauchery of their
their

their parents. If, therefore, it be consistent with the divine attributes to permit war, pestilence, famine, or earthquakes, by which numbers of our race, of all characters, are promiscuously swept away, why might not the same being commission the Israelites utterly to extirpate a nation abandoned, without hope of recovery, to the most abominable idolatries and wickedness. With respect to the divine being, there can be no material difference; and indeed there is very little, in any case, between *appointment* and *permission*, where there is a sufficient power of prevention. Also, as it is alledged, that the inequalities of common providence may be rectified in a future state, the very same may be said with respect to these special providences.

The great object of divine government is the production of happiness; and as we see, in the ordinary dispensations of his providence, that temporal evils are, in many cases, inseparably connected with, and ultimately productive of good, we may presume that every thing to which similar objections may be raised in the course of his extraordinary dispensations, will, in the end, be seen to have the same advantages; and then they will stand perfectly clear of all objections. In the meantime it becomes us (as we are obliged to do with respect to every thing that we have to complain of in the constitution and government of the natural world) to wait with
 patience,

patience, till we can see farther into the nature and uses of things than we can do at present. The reason why the rules of strict justice and veracity are binding upon us, is because it is the only way in which our mutual happiness, as social beings, can be promoted *by ourselves*. We have seen already that the most indispensable moral duties are, in fact, *means* to a certain end; and it is possible that, in some cases, a being of infinite wisdom may gain the same great end by what appears to us to be a deviation from any rules.

However, with respect to the case of the Canaanites, we may, I think, see great wisdom and propriety in their utter extermination, in the manner in which it was accomplished by the Israelites. It might be highly expedient, and even necessary, for the instruction of that age of mankind, that the divine being should make a signal and striking example of a nation so far sunk into idolatry, and corruptions of all kinds, as all the inhabitants of Canaan are said to have been; and the hand of God would not have been so visible in their destruction, and consequently the moral lesson would not have been so striking, and useful, if it had been accomplished by a flood, an earthquake, or any other natural means, as had been already tried in the case of the old world, and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; whereas the hand of God could not but appear when the punishment was executed by
a people

a people who received an express and manifest commission from him for that purpose; and this could not but be evident, when all the passage of the children of Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan was conducted by a series of miracles, and when they were assisted by supernatural power in making their conquests. It was like the regular execution of a commission, by persons who carried their credentials or warrant along with them.

The particular reasons for the extirpation of the Canaanites are clearly and repeatedly expressed in the books of Moses. Thus, in one place, the settlement of the Israelites in the promised land is said to have been deferred, because the iniquity of the inhabitants was not full; and the Israelites are frequently reminded that the extermination of the Canaanites, and their own settlement in the country, were appointed by God, not on account of their goodness, but for the wickedness of those people who were driven out before them. It is remarkable that, in all the other wars in which the Israelites might happen to be engaged with their neighbouring nations, they were expressly enjoined to pursue very different and more humane maxims, sparing all except such as were found bearing arms. In this particular case, only, they were expressly commanded to *exterminate utterly*.

That the Israelites were not influenced by the usual passions of conquerors, but acted under an authority

authority which controuled their natural desires, is manifest from their not sparing even the cattle, and even refraining to appropriate to themselves the treasure which they found in Jericho, which was the first fruits of their conquests, and to be devoted to God. The Israelites have often been compared to barbarous conquerors and cruel murderers; but let other conquerors and assassins be produced, who refrained from plunder as these did. That they were not actuated by mere *rage* and *revenge* is evident from their having received no particular provocation, not indeed, having had any personal intercourse with the inhabitants of Canaan. Their motives, it is evident, must have been of a very different nature from those of common robbers and murderers, and, in the eye of reason, it is the *motive* that determines the nature of the action.

It is also remarkable that, notwithstanding the passion the Israelites may be supposed to have had for war, which would have been inflamed by the rapidity of their conquests, they were forbidden to extend them beyond the boundaries of the land of Canaan; and the constitution of their government was altogether unsuited to extensive empire.

It would be a sufficient reason for the extermination of the Canaanites by the sword of the children of Israel, if, as is very possible, it was the best method of impressing the minds of the Israelites themselves with a just idea of the heinous nature of idolatry,

idolatry, and to make sufficient provision against their being seduced into the same abominable practices. If their living only in the neighbourhood of idolatrous nations was so unsafe for this people, as their history shews it to have been, what danger would they not have been in, if they had spared the old inhabitants of Canaan, and suffered them to live unmolested among them.

I would observe, however, that the order to exterminate utterly in the case of the Canaanites; though expressed in absolute terms, is supposed by some to have been *conditional* in fact, and that their lives were to have been spared upon their submission, and especially on their forsaking idolatry.

This supposition is sufficiently analogous to other threatenings in the scriptures (the nature of which is explained by the prophet Ezekiel xxxiii. 14.) as that of *J*nah against the Ninevites. He was commissioned to say that *in forty years Nineveh should be overthrown*, Jonah iii. 4. and yet we see that, upon repentance, that city was spared.

It is plain in fact, that the Israelites either did not understand the command to be absolute, or they knowingly transgressed it, even in the best and most flourishing state of their affairs; for mention is made of the remains of the Canaanitish nations living in subjection to the Israelites even to the times of the kings. 1 Kings, ix. 20, 21.

All

*All the people that were left, of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which were not of the children of Israel, their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond service unto this day. It is plain from this passage that, though before the days of David and Solomon, the Israelites could not entirely subdue those nations, they were then wholly reduced, and at the mercy of their conquerors; and we no where read of their being blamed for the favour they shewed them, as Saul was in the case of the Amalekites, who were reduced by war. We also read Judges, i. 28. *It came to pass that when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.* And it must be observed that Uriah, one of David's principal heroes was a Hittite.*

Besides the *reason* and *end* for which the order for the extermination of the Canaanites was given, which was, lest the children of Israel should be enticed by them into idolatry, entirely ceased upon their submission, and abandoning their idol worship.

Lastly, it is pretty clearly inferred, that this order was conditional, from finding that if the hearts of the Canaanites had not been hardened to oppose the Israelites, they would not have been cut off. Joshua, xi. 19, 20. *There was not a city that made peace*

peace with the children of Israel save the Hivites. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses, i. e. evidently in case of opposition only. As to the Lord's hardening their hearts, there is nothing peculiar in it in this case, and, it will be explained hereafter.

The orders which the Jews had, not to spare even their nearest relations, if they should attempt to seduce them into idolatry, has been made the foundation of the same charge of cruelty, and has also been censured as a persecution on the account of religious principles. But it should be considered, that the very reason for setting apart the Jewish nation to be the theatre of the extraordinary providence of God, respecting the whole world of mankind, which was at that time universally sinking into idolatry, was to secure the belief of the great and important doctrine of *the divine unity*, and universal moral government; and that this, which was the great object both of the religious constitution, and also of the civil government of the Hebrews, would have been defeated, if the most effectual provision had not been made for securing to the one true God the allegiance of this one nation, and their adherence to the purity of his worship.

Besides,

Besides, it being absolutely necessary to the great purposes of the Jewish dispensations, that a special and extraordinary providence should constantly attend that people, making them prosperous and flourishing so long as they preserved the purity of their religion, and involving them in national calamity and distress whenever they departed from it, the Israelites themselves would not have been fairly dealt with, if every possible avenue had not been guarded against the introduction of so destructive an evil. And, after all, we see that, even these seemingly rigorous methods, were not quite sufficient for the purpose; and that the divine being was obliged, as we may say, to teach his useful lessons to the world by the *punishment*, as well as *prosperity* of his favourite people; but in either of these cases, their *example* was of the same benefit to the world at large.

It should also be considered, that the idolatry of the antient Gentile world, and especially that of the inhabitants of Canaan, was by no means a system of merely speculative *opinions*; but a course of the most atrocious and abominable *practices*, enjoining the cruel murder of numberless innocent children, as well as other human victims, and the most shocking lewdness, together with other vices of the most unnatural and detestable nature. And surely it becomes a wise legislator, to restrain the commission of such destructive vices as these.

As

As to the case of Abraham, with respect to the command he received to offer his son Isaac, it cannot, I think, be denied, that he who gave life had a right to take it away, and in whatever manner his infinite wisdom should see fit; and if, for the trial of his obedience in so tender a point, he chose to make Abraham himself the instrument of it, instead of a disease, or what we usually call an accident, I do not know that it is inconsistent with any thing that we already know of the divine conduct. Abraham, who had had frequent communications with God, could have no doubt concerning the authority from which the order came; and knowing the divine power and justice, he might be satisfied that, notwithstanding all appearances, neither himself nor his son would be losers by their obedience.

Paul says, that Abraham knew that God was even able to raise Isaac from the dead, and indeed it is probable that this was the very thing that Abraham expected; for the promise that was made to him, of being *the father of many nations*, chiefly respected Isaac, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*. If, therefore, Abraham believed this promise, he must have fully expected, either that God would not permit him to put his son to death, or that he would raise him from the dead; and if he had not firmly believed the former promise, much less would he have regarded this harsh command.

It

It may also be observed, in order to lessen the difficulty which arises from this part of the scripture history, that the Gentile world was, probably, about this time, falling into the horrid custom of human sacrifices; and that the divine being might chuse to shew, in this instance, that though he had a right to demand such offerings, they were not pleasing to him, and he would not accept of them. Upon all other occasions he is represented as expressing the greatest abhorrence of such cruel rights, and his highest displeasure against all those nations who practised them. See Lev. xviii. 21. Deut. xviii. 10. Jer. vii. 31. Ez. xvi. 21. xx. 26. 31.

I would observe farther, that, with respect to ideas of *right* and *equity*, the sentiments of those people who observed any particular fact, and who were to be instructed by it, should be chiefly considered. Now it cannot be pretended that any objection was ever made to God's requiring the sacrifice of Isaac, for the trial of Abraham's faith and obedience, till the present age, which is above four thousand years since the event; nor can it be made to appear that any bad consequence ever flowed from it.

Though the Israelites left Egypt loaded with the treasures of the country, the ungrateful usage they had met with, and the cruel and unjust servitude to which they had been reduced, and the

recompense they were fairly intitled to should be considered, in order to lessen the difficulty which might arise from the account of the method which they took to recover their right. But the word which we render *borrow*, also signifies to *require*, or *demand*; and in the situation in which the Egyptians are represented to have been, willing to get rid of the Israelites at any rate, *lest they should all be dead men*, it may easily be imagined, that they would have been as ready to *give*, as to *lend* them, whatever they should have asked.

It is also said, that when they left the country, it was on a promise to return; but certainly that promise must have been cancelled by the hostile manner in which they were pursued by the Egyptians. Besides the use of stratagems, in order to free men from unjust servitude, is not considered as liable to much objection in the history of human affairs.

It is also objected to this part of the history, that God is said to have *hardened the heart* of Pharaoh, in order that he might do the very things for which he is expressly said to have been punished. But in the language of scripture, God is often said *to do*, whatever comes to pass according to the ordinary course of nature and providence; and therefore God's not interposing to soften the heart of Pharaoh, may be all that is meant when he is said to harden it.

Besides,

Besides, it is sufficiently intimated, in the course of the narration, that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, not by any proper act of God, but in consequence of its own depravity, and the circumstances he was in. For when the frogs were removed, we read, *Exod. viii. 15, that when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.* Pharaoh does not seem to have been more infatuated than the rulers of the Jews were, with respect to the murder of Christ; and yet nobody supposes that they did not, in that case act, naturally, or as their own evil dispositions prompted them.

It is said that, by the account of Moses himself, miracles were wrought by the Egyptian magicians, as well as by himself and Aaron; and therefore that his miracles were no proof of a divine mission. But all that Moses really says, is that the Egyptians did (by which he could not possibly mean more than that they *seemed*, or *pretended to do*) by their arts and tricks, what he performed by the finger and power of God. The word which we render *so*, only means a *general similitude*, and by no means, necessarily, a *perfect sameness*, respecting both the effect and the cause. Nay, this very word is applied when the magicians failed of success. *Exod. viii. 18. They did so, to bring forth lice, but they could not,* that is, they practised the

same arts, but in vain. Also the words which we render *enchantments*, &c. only signify *covered arts*, and *secret sleights*, in which the Egyptians are known to have excelled.

If the Egyptian magicians were really possessed of supernatural power, why did they not employ it to defeat the purposes of Moses's miracles, and relieve their country? More especially, why did they not guard themselves from the boils which are expressly said to have been upon the magicians, as well as upon Pharaoh, and the rest of the Egyptians; and why did they fail in the case of the lice? The reason of this failure plainly appears, from the history, to have been, that, with respect to this miracle, they had no notice beforehand what they were to do, and therefore could not prepare themselves as before.

Pharaoh himself would naturally imagine, that the miracles of Moses were only such tricks as his own magicians excelled in, and therefore very properly called them in, to see whether they could do the same, and detect the imposition; and so long as they could contrive to seem to do any thing like what Moses performed, it is no wonder that, circumstanced and prejudiced as he was, he shut his eyes to the evidence of the divine power which accompanied Moses.

In fact, the Egyptian magicians themselves seem to have confessed, that there was nothing above the
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the art and power of man in what they did, when, upon their failing to produce lice, they acknowledged that the *finger of God*, or, as it might be rendered, the *finger of a God*, or something supernatural, was in it.

It has been said that, in several respects, the present state of the world, and of mankind, does not correspond to what is said of the history of them in the books of Moses. But the more we understand of natural and civil history, the less weight there appears to be in all objections of this kind.

It has been said, that the peopling of America is inconsistent with the supposition of the derivation of the whole race of mankind from one pair. But it is now almost certain, that America was, in fact, peopled from the continent of Europe and Asia, and especially from the North Eastern parts of the latter, which is found to be very near, and may perhaps have been joined to it. This is argued from a similarity in features, customs, vegetable, and animal productions, &c.

Objections have been made to the Mosaic account of the *creation*, and the general *deluge*. But even in these cases the history of Moses is found to supply a more probable hypothesis, to account for the present state of things, than any other that has yet been proposed; and improvements in philoso-

phy do, upon the whole, rather strengthen than weaken this conclusion.

It is alledged, that the origin of the *Blacks* cannot be accounted for on the principles of the Mosaic history. But there are several ways by which this fact may be reconciled with what Moses has advanced concerning Adam and Noah. If natural means be not thought sufficient to produce this effect, on a few individuals, in some early age, that change may have been produced supernaturally, though not mentioned by Moses; and the propagation of Blacks from Blacks, whenever that variety in the species took place, is allowed to be according to the common course of nature. The copper colour of the Americans, and the low stature of the Laplanders and Esquimaux, have also been alledged by unbelievers, but to as little purpose.

The objection to the Mosaic history of the *long lives of the Antediluvians*, and the gigantic stature of some of the inhabitants of Palestine, may be easily passed without any answer; because there is no contradiction in supposing it to be true, nor is it so very improbable that the state of mankind may have been very different in former times from what it is at present.

The history of the *fall of man* is said to have much the appearance of a fable. But it is sufficient

cient for the purpose of revelation, if it be true in general, that the evils of the present state were not introduced till the sins of mankind made this state of labour and death appear to be the fittest for them. The fabulous circumstances may possibly have been introduced by the hieroglyphical manner in which that early history might be first written. But even the literal account may, in most particulars, have been true.

As to the history of transactions so much older than Moses, so general an account as he has given of them might very well have been transmitted through the few generations which preceded him, or it might have been communicated to him by revelation. This, however, is not very probable, since Moses nowhere asserts it; and he seems to be exceedingly exact in distinguishing all that he received from God, from what he relates of his own knowledge, or the information of others.

SECTION II.

Of the Objection to revelation from the supposed Inspiration of the scriptures, and others of a similar nature.

SOME objections to the Jewish and christian revelations are founded on small inconsistencies, and mistakes in the canonical books of scripture. But such objections as these do not by any means affect the divinity of the system of religion which they contain; because the contents of those books may be true *in the main*, notwithstanding such inconsistencies and mistakes. All historians, even those of the most approved credit, have been subject to small inadvertencies and errors. No history of Rome or England was ever written without them; but, do we therefore say, that there is *no* truth in them. Nay, the discovery of such small mistakes is never imagined to affect the credit of the important facts.

Allowing, therefore, that, in the books of Kings, a prince is said to have reigned one number of years, and in the books of Chronicles another; that one of the Evangelists speaks of *both the thieves* reviling Christ, whereas another says, that only *one* of them did it; that in one of the Gospels
Christ

Christ is represented as purging the temple on the day that he arrived at Jerusalem, and that in another he is not said to have done it till the day following (and unbelievers do not pretend to have found any mistakes of more consequence than these) how do they invalidate the truth of the general history? In reality, all such inconsistencies as these are so far from making it probable that the whole story is a fiction, that, according to the most established methods of estimating the value of testimony, they give the greater air of truth to every particular of importance, in which they all agree. We see, in fact, that true history has always been written in the same manner, and without particular contrivance and combination, and consequently without a very strong suspicion of falsehood, histories of the same period, and the same transactions, could not be written otherwise.

Admitting, therefore, that the Evangelists were misinformed with respect to a variety of incidental circumstances, or even that they overlooked, or did not sufficiently attend to, some of such particulars above-mentioned as might have fallen under their own observation, are these things of such a nature, as to dispose any person to call in question the reality of the principal miracles, or their history of the death and resurrection of Christ? And without this, the *proper evidence of christianity* is not in the least affected; because, if these important

facts be true, we have still abundant reason to believe, that Christ will come again to raise the dead, and judge the world, which is the great object and end of our christian faith.

The evidence for the truth of all the facts which are related by the same historian is by no means equal; because it will necessarily happen, that he will have a better opportunity of procuring authentic information concerning some of them than others. For this reason, the history of the infancy and childhood of Christ cannot be said to be as unexceptionable as the history of his most important miracles; and unless these leading facts be disproved, the religion of Jesus Christ stands unshaken.

As I think this consideration of some consequence to the evidence of christianity, I shall exemplify my meaning, by referring my reader to the history of the *wise men*, who are said to have come from the East, in order to pay their respects to the newborn Jesus, directed by a miraculous light, in the form of a star, and also to the history of the death and resurrection of Christ. Both these histories are related by the same Evangelist, Matthew; but the evidence of their truth is certainly very different, though both of them may be strictly true. The former of them is related by Matthew only, who does not say that he could attest it from his own knowledge, or so much as intimate that he

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was an eye-witness to any part of the transaction; so that it is probable, that he had it from the report of others, and of how many others, perhaps, in succession, we cannot tell.

On the other hand, the history of the death and resurrection of Christ is related by three other Evangelists, as well as by Matthew himself; and from the circumstances of the facts, it appears that they must have been known to all the disciples of Christ, and to almost the whole body of the Jewish nation; and, moreover, a great number of incontestable miracles were wrought by all the apostles, and other primitive Christians, expressly in confirmation of the power and authority which was conferred upon Christ, and evidenced his resurrection. When, therefore, the evidence for the history of the wise men is so very small in comparison of the evidence for the history of the death and resurrection of Christ, the former may be given up (though it is by no means necessary to do it) without in the least invalidating the evidence of the other.

When this manifest difference in point of evidence, with respect to facts related by the same Evangelists, shall be sufficiently attended to, our faith in the great and leading facts in the history of Christ, from whence we are led to believe him to be a teacher sent from God, and to expect his coming to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works, will stand much firmer,

and will not be liable to be shaken by the exceptions which unbelievers are apt to make to some inconsiderable circumstances in the history of the Old or New Testament, the credibility of which is, in reality, of no moment whatever to the proper evidence of the Jewish and christian revelations.

Christian divines having maintained the absolute inspiration of every word of the canonical books of scripture, has been attended with very bad consequences, by laying the system of revelation open to so many insignificant, but plausible objections; and this kind of inspiration is as needless, as it is impossible to be maintained. Besides, the inspiration of the original writers would have answered no end, unless every transcriber, and every translator of the books of scripture had been inspired also; because a failure of inspiration in either of these cases, would still have been a source of error and mistake. Small errors, and mistakes of various kinds, are unavoidable in all writings; but since they are of no material consequence, there was no reason for guarding against them, even in the first instance.

Let us, therefore, read the canonical books of scripture without expecting to find them perfectly unexceptionable in all the minutiae of things. Let us consider them as the productions of honest and faithful men, well informed concerning all the great things of which they write, but not equally informed

informed with respect to every punctilio they mention. Let us consider the great truths which they deliver, as from God, to be divine, and worthy of our highest regard; but when they *argue* and *reason*, either from facts or revealed doctrines, advancing opinions which are plainly their own, and for which they do not pretend to have the authority of revelation, let us consider them as the reasonings and opinions of men in their situation, and with their means of information, which were in general very ample and sufficient, but still left them fallible, and treat them accordingly. St. Paul says expressly, that some of the things which he advanced were not from the Lord, but from himself only; and in other cases the nature of the things will help us to distinguish between them.

Many of the objections which have been made to revelation, have arisen from their ignorance of the manners and customs of the Jews, and other Asiatic nations; and others from an ignorance of the climate and geography of the country; but as the ancient manners and customs of the East have continued, with little or no change, to the present times, the travels which have of late been made into Judea, and the neighbouring countries, have been the means of bringing us better acquainted with them, and of removing the objections. Many happy illustrations of passages of scripture from travels into the East may be found in an excellent work, in-
titled

titled, *Observations on divers passages of scripture from voyages and travels into the East.*

Some objections to revelation are founded upon an ignorance of the *language* of the scriptures, and of the phraseology which is almost peculiar to the oriental nations; and some unbelievers have been so exceedingly rash and precipitate in their censures, as not to have looked beyond the very words, or verses to which they have objected, when otherwise a child would have seen no difficulty.

M. Voltaire, in more than one of his pieces, represents the Jews as cannibals, and pretends to prove from Ez. xxxix. 17—20. that God encourages them with the promise of feeding on the flesh of their enemies*. But if he had read so much as the verse preceding, he must have seen that the whole passage was a fine apostrophe, addressed to the birds and beasts of prey, and was intended to express, in a very emphatical manner, a very great overthrow of the enemies of the Jews. *And thou son of man, Thus saith the Lord God, Speak thou unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice, that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of*

* *Traité sur la Tolérance*, p. 118.

bullocks,

bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.

When, afterwards, this author acknowledges his mistake, as he does in a postscript to the above-mentioned treatise, he says, by way of apology for it, but contrary to all common sense, that two of the verses which I have recited might have been addressed to the Jews, as well as to the birds and beasts. What can we think of the fairness and competency of judgment in this most distinguished of modern unbelievers, when he is capable of writing in this very absurd and unguarded manner.

SECTION III.

Some objections which more nearly affect the proper evidence of revelation, especially respecting the antient and present state of the belief of it.

IT has been said by some modern unbelievers, that the books which were written by the early adversaries of christianity have been suppressed by the friends of it, so that we cannot at this day tell what was written against, or objected to christianity,

ity, at the first promulgation of it. But this is an assertion destitute of all proof, or probability; for then all christian writers must have carefully avoided the mention of such books, in their own writings, which are come down to us; whereas, they have been so far from doing any thing like this, that it is the opinion of critics, that almost the whole of Celsus's treatise against christianity is transcribed into Origen's answer to it, and a great part of Julian's into that of Cyril. Eusebius has also preserved large extracts from the writings of Porphyry; and the same has been the conduct of other christian apologists, with respect to other opponents of christianity.

No persons more sincerely regret the loss of these writings than learned christians of the present age; but in the same undistinguishing ravages of time, have perished what we regret more, namely, the writings of many early christians, and ancient historians. Besides, how could it, in reason, be expected, that christians should take any peculiar care of the writings of their adversaries. If those supposed writings had contained any thing *desistive* against christianity, they would certainly (considering the very great advantages under which they were written, for the space of three hundred years) have effectually prevented the spread of christianity, and would have preserved themselves; whereas the
universal

universal neglect into which they fell is, if any thing, an argument of their futility, and furnishes a reason why we should comfort ourselves for the loss of them.

It has been said, that if Christ worked so many miracles as the evangelical history represents, healing all the diseased that applied to him, and in three instances raising the dead, he must necessarily have converted the whole Jewish nation, and all the strangers in the country; as it could not but be concluded, that a man who controlled the course of nature must have the concurrence and assistance of the God of nature, and consequently a sufficient testimony of a divine mission.

To this it is replied, that the preaching of Christ seems to have had all the effect that it could be supposed to have had, admitting his divine mission. Great numbers of those who were of an ingenuous disposition, on whom evidence could produce its proper effect, did become the disciples of Christ, notwithstanding he persisted in disclaiming all worldly honours, and that character which they imagined to be inseparable from the promised Messiah; an effect which nothing but the fullest and best grounded conviction can be supposed to have produced.

With respect to the rest of the Jews, and especially the chief priests and rulers, it should be considered how incredulous strong prejudices, and especially

especially those which arise from vicious habits, usually make men. It was with the bulk of the Jews a fixed, though an erroneous persuasion, that the Messiah would assume temporal power, and deliver his country from the yoke of the Romans. This they imagined to be the specific character of the Messiah, as deduced from prophecies which they were convinced came from God. To the evidence of miracles, therefore, they would oppose that of the scriptures, and, consequently, the miracles of Moses and the prophets, with which they seemed to be irreconcilable; and this, joined to their vicious habits, which rendered them extremely averse to the pure doctrines of the gospel, (having no idea that repentance was at all necessary to their being intitled to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, which they thought belonged to all the children of Abraham) must have rendered them extremely obdurate, with respect to the evidence of the divine mission of Christ; so that it is not to be wondered that so many of them persisted in their hatred and opposition to him, notwithstanding all his miracles.

Unhappily, also, the Jews were at that time infected with the notion of the power of demons, and evil spirits, and thought it possible, that by a confederacy with them, Christ might heal those diseases which were usually ascribed to their power over mankind; and they had probably some
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similar method of accounting for the rest of his miracles.

After the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews had observed how thoroughly exasperated Jesus was against them, how he exposed all their pride and hypocrisy, and how little disposed he was to shew them any favour, it is no wonder that they were determined to reject him *in any character*, thinking the Romans better masters than such a Messiah as he would be with respect to them. Thus their fears and their interest together would lead them to oppose Jesus at all events, whether he was the Messiah or not. The more reasonable and considerate among them might, however, be satisfied that God could not contradict himself, and that it was more probable that they had misinterpreted the scriptures, than that the undeniable miracles of Jesus were not proofs of an authority to which they ought to submit.

With the modern Jews it should be a sufficient answer to this objection, that their ancestors frequently opposed Moses and the prophets, even persecuting and killing some of them, notwithstanding their allowed character of messengers from God.

To assist us to form a right judgment in this case, let us consider what would be the probable effect of preaching against popery, even with the power of working miracles, in Spain or Portugal,
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for the space of a year and a few months, which appears to me to have been the period of Christ's public ministry. In these circumstances, I should think, that to expect the immediate reformation of the whole country, strongly prejudiced as the people are known to be, would be to expect more than a just knowledge of human nature, and of the history of mankind would warrant. How many would there be who, not being in the way of the preacher, and not seeing the miracles themselves, would give no attention whatever to any reports concerning them; and who, being satisfied within themselves that the reports could not possibly be true, would obstinately persist in rejecting all evidence in their favour; and if these persons, as would probably be the case, were men of rank, and distinguished for their knowledge, it could not but have great influence upon the common people.

Upon the whole, it will hardly be thought improbable, that after such a person had opposed the superstition of an ignorant and vicious people, and had laboured to throw down the false foundation of their hopes of future happiness, they would endeavour to do by him as the Jews did by Christ. At most, his success could not be supposed to be much greater in proportion.

As to the miracles of the apostles, the same motives, whatever they were, that led the Jews to oppose those of Christ, would lead them to oppose theirs

theirs also; and the more, as they were now irritated by *opposition*, though the power of truth would make its way by degrees.

It is evident, that many of the most intelligent of the *Heathens*, especially Marcus Antoninus, would not give any proper attention to any accounts of miracles, so many things of this kind having been reported, which, upon examination, appeared to be tricks or illusions; though, had these men been satisfied that the course of nature had really been controlled, it cannot be supposed but that they must have been convinced of the interposition of the divine power and providence. Many of the Greeks and Romans, however, had a great opinion of the power of Magic, and, without considering the nature and circumstances of the christian miracles, supposed them to have been performed by some such means.

If we consider the state of the Gentile world, and of christianity in early times, we may very well account for the general rejection of it, without any impeachment of its truth.

The Gentiles in general could not reconcile the idea of the ignominious death of Christ with the great power which his disciples ascribed to him. The more opulent and politer part of them were also disgusted, because the first proselytes to christianity were generally of the lower sort, and many of them slaves, whom they held in extreme contempt,

tempt, and with whom they could not bear the thought of associating. The Greek philosophers were exceedingly fond of their knowledge and eloquence, and disdained to receive instruction from such illiterate persons as the apostles and the primitive christians in general were. They were also exceedingly offended at the spirit of christianity, as being at enmity with all other religions; they being of opinion that different modes of worship, and different religions, were even pleasing to the Gods.

The leading men in all the heathen states had a very high idea of the authority of the civil magistrate, and had always considered the business of religion as intirely subject to his controul; and therefore thought that the mere *obstinacy* of the christians, in refusing to submit to the laws, was, of itself, deserving of capital punishment. In this manner Trajan reasons in his answer to Pliny. Many of the Gentiles confounded the christians with the sects among the Jews, whom they held in contempt; and, therefore, they would not so much as give any attention to their preaching or miracles. The common people considered all those who were enemies to their superstitions as *atheists*, and to this term the greatest odium was ever annexed; and there are several proofs of their regarding the Epicureans, and the christians in the same light. Besides, Paganism had the advantage, which is
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common to every thing that has been long established, the sanction of *antiquity*; whereas christianity was despised as a novel, and upstart thing.

We are not, however, to suppose that all the impression which the evidences of christianity made on the minds of men, is to be estimated by the numbers of the declared converts to it, since many both of Jews and Gentiles entertained a favourable opinion of the gospel, but were unwilling to own it for fear of censure, ridicule, and persecution, and hoped that God would overlook it, provided they did nothing in direct opposition to christianity, and did not themselves join in the persecution of christians.

It staggers some persons, that there should be so many unbelievers in the *present* age; but those who know the world, and the circumstances in which infidelity gains ground, will see nothing in it that is, in fact, unfavourable to the evidences of christianity. It would be unjust to unbelievers to rank them all in the same class. I shall, therefore, endeavour to point out the different sources of infidelity in the present age.

A great number of those who profess to reject christianity, are not only such persons as have never considered the subject, or indeed have a sufficient stock of knowledge to examine it with proper attention, but they are also known to be, in
general,

general, men of profligate lives and characters; and surely it cannot weigh much, with reasonable and thinking men, that a thing is not believed by those who are so circumstanced, that they must necessarily be exceedingly prepossessed against the belief of it, and who are known, for that very reason, to have taken no pains to inform themselves concerning it. I do not think that I shall be deemed uncharitable in concluding, that a very great majority of modern unbelievers are of this class. Many, however, I readily acknowledge, are of a different character; but these, I dare say, will agree with me in my censure of the rest.

Others are men of fair and reputable characters, many of them men of taste and science, especially in Popish countries, who, taking it for granted, that what passes for christianity is really so, or who from a cursory inspection of the books of scripture, conceive that some of the things related of God are unworthy of him, think it superfluous to attend to any discussion of its historical evidence. They also see that the writers of the books of scripture have fallen into some inaccuracies, that their narration is not, in all respects, perfectly coherent with itself, or that the different accounts of the same transaction are not altogether consistent with each other.

These men of genius may discover some things that are frivolous or weak in the discourses of
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the sacred writers, and some things inconclusive in their reasoning, especially in their quotations from, and their application of the Old Testament; and taking it for granted that (as indeed the professors of christianity have too generally and incautiously boasted) the books which contain the history of our religion are as perfect as the religion itself, hastily conclude, that because the books of scripture were written by men, and bear the marks of human imperfection, therefore the scheme in which they were engaged was wholly of men, and had nothing supernatural in it; without reflecting that those very imperfections in the books of scripture, at which they are so much offended, demonstrate that the writers of them were incapable of contriving such a scheme, or of procuring credit to it; and also without reflecting that, on the very same grounds, they might reject the whole current of antient history, no part of which has been written with perfect accuracy, uniformity, or even consistency. For here, as in the scripture history, different historians agree in their accounts of the principal things only; but as certainly differ in their accounts of lesser circumstances.

Men of taste and science are also exceedingly apt to be struck with the idea of what appears, on the first view, to be *rational* and *liberal* in their sentiments, and remote from *vulgar prejudices*; and because the bulk of mankind are, in many respects,

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credulous,

credulous, and often think very absurdly, these gentlemen, though they will not avow it, and indeed may not be sensible of it, are secretly disposed to reject what others admit, and to pride themselves in their singularity in this respect; thinking it more great, noble, and philosophical, to err on the side of incredulity; whereas they ought to consider that the understandings of all mankind being naturally similar, even the lowest of the vulgar, when lying under no prejudice (and men of letters are subject to their peculiar prejudices as well as the illiterate) must be as capable of judging concerning *truth*, and especially concerning *facts*, as themselves; that their opinions, if they are not true, are founded upon something analogous to truth, though the analogy may be faulty; and therefore are not to be rejected at random, but are themselves an object worthy of philosophical investigation. A true philosopher will no more satisfy himself without endeavouring to trace the rise and progress of prevailing opinions, than without understanding the cause of any other *general appearance* in nature.

The opinion of men of letters, however, and of speculative persons of all kinds, will always have great weight with many who do not pretend to speculation. As they will not take the pains to think for themselves, they chuse to think with *philosophers* rather than with the *vulgar*; not considering that men of learning and genius, who are
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ever so capable of determining justly, have no advantage over the rest of mankind, unless they will carefully *attend* to a subject, and make themselves masters of it; and that a politician might as well be expected to be an astronomer, or an astronomer a politician, as that a mere philosopher should be a competent judge of the evidence of christianity, when his attention to them has been very superficial, if he have attended to them at all.

I will not deny that some unbelievers are *serious* and *inquisitive* men; they even wish to find christianity to be true, and have some secret hope that it may be so; but they cannot fully satisfy themselves with respect to many objections which they have heard made to it; so that the arguments in favour of it do not, at least they do not always preponderate with them. Were a very great number of persons in this situation, it would be a circumstance, I readily own, that might afford a reasonable foundation for doubt, or at least for suspence; but considering how very few these serious and inquisitive unbelievers are, in comparison with the numbers who are profligate and thoughtless among them, I think that no conclusion can be drawn from the consideration of it, unfavourable to the evidences of christianity. For what cause is there so good and so clear, as that *every person* can be brought to join in it.

Some of the persons above-mentioned may have been much in the way of sensible and subtile unbelievers, to whose objections, through want of presence of mind, or of a sufficiently comprehensive acquaintance with the subject, they have not been able readily to reply; or, being persons of weak and timid dispositions, they may have been led by their extreme anxiety to give more attention to the objections which have been thrown in their way than to the plain and solid arguments in favour of christianity; on which account only the former may have made more impression upon their minds than the latter; whereas if they had been more conversant with christians and christian writers, and less with unbelievers and their writings, they would have thought as well of the evidences of christianity as of christianity itself; objections which have been swelled into mountains in their imaginations, would have appeared no greater than mole-hills; and doubt and anxiety would never have invaded them. Besides, it is true, I believe, in general, that the things at which well-disposed minds stumble the most, are such as ought to give them no offence, being quite foreign to christianity, though unhappily they have been generally deemed to belong to it.

Having considered *who*, and *how many* of the present age are unbelievers, let it likewise be considered

sidered if not how many, at least *who* are the believers.

With respect to the *ministers*, or professed teachers of christianity, I am well aware, it will be said, that, besides the prejudices of education in favour of their religion, in common with the bulk of the people, they are *gainers* by the system, and therefore that they must be set aside as of no weight in the case. I am very ready to own that, in these circumstances, their mere *profession* of christianity has no weight, because it is consistent with real infidelity; but allowing them to be men of sense, study, and inquiry, and withal men of fair moral characters, their *sincere belief*, of christianity certainly has *some* weight, especially in cases in which the gains of the profession do not place them much above the common level of their fellow citizens.

Study and inquiry cannot but be allowed to be, in some measure, a balance to the prejudices of education; besides that, in numberless cases, this prejudice is much more than balanced by an opposite one, which is peculiarly incident to studious and learned men, viz. the affectation of being thought wiser than our ancestors, and free from vulgar prejudices. As to the emoluments of the christian ministry, they are not so great as to be sufficient, in other cases, to induce an equal number of men, in similar circumstances, to wish to ac-

quire them by the habitual and constant profession of a falshood.

Setting aside the great dignitaries in the church of Rome or of England, many clergymen, in the latter of these establishments especially, who have had no great preferment in the church, men of reading and understanding, have written very able defences of christianity.

If it be said, that these men, though but poorly provided for at the time in which they wrote, might have considerable *expectations*, and that several of them did, in fact, attain to great preferment in the church, in consequence of their defences of christianity, this cannot be said of those *dissenting ministers* who have defended the same cause with equal zeal, and not less ability. What advantage did Foster, Leland, or Lardner gain by the important services which they rendered the christian cause? The two former, if I have been rightly informed, died poor, and the last, besides almost the whole of a very long life, spent a considerable part of his own independent fortune in the publication of his works.

If the evidence of such men as these must be set aside, nothing, surely, worth replying to, can be objected to the belief and defence of christianity by such men as Locke, Newton, or Hartley; all men of sober minds, in no other respect the dupes of vulgar prejudice, least of all those of education; all
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of them men of strict virtue and integrity, all of them men of the first-rate abilities, the two latter of them especially, infinitely superior to any of the advocates for infidelity. These men gave the closest attention to the subject, and they were masters of all the previous knowledge that is requisite to form a competent judgment in the case. They certainly could have no views of interest in their profession or defences of christianity; and, as men of letters, would probably have gained, rather than have lost any thing, in point of general estimation, by espousing the cause of infidelity. For it can hardly be denied, that the works of such men as Mr. Hume and Voltaire, have been much more read and admired in consequence of their being unbelievers, than they would otherwise have been.

It is not easy, for want of a sufficient knowledge of antient and distant countries, to compare the state of the belief of Judaism and of christianity with that of any system of heathenism or Mohammedanism, which are deemed to be false both by believers and unbelievers of christianity; but as far as we are able to make this comparison, all the conclusion that can be drawn from it is certainly in favour of the Jewish and christian religions. It will not be pretended that so much as one philosopher, or man of letters, was a serious believer of any *pagan system*, notwithstanding their opposition

to christianity at its first promulgation. In Mohammedan countries there is at present very little reading or study, and if we be not misinformed by some late travellers, those who are addicted to study, or who have any thing of a speculative turn, are generally supposed to be unbelievers. However, nothing written against their religion was ever read or heard of in any Mohammedan country.

Upon the whole, I think we may conclude, at least fairly presume, that no imposture has ever stood such a test as christianity has already stood, without being exploded; and notwithstanding the spread of infidelity at present, yet, considering among whom it spreads, and who they are that oppose the spread of it, it can hardly be doubted, by an indifferent spectator, but that the belief of christianity, so far from being in any danger of becoming extinct, will maintain its ground, and continue to be the serious belief of the virtuous, the sober-minded, and the learned of the present and future ages; and this will be an omen of its finally triumphing over all opposition, and of the belief of its coming at length to be universal, and undisputed.

Sincere christians have no more reason to be shocked at the prevalence of infidelity in the present age, than at the prevalence of *evils* in general, or of *vice* in particular. There can be no doubt
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but that evils of every kind answer the best of purposes in the system of God's moral government, and that they are a very important part of that most admirable *discipline*, by which mankind are training up to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue. Nor do I think that it requires any great depth of judgment, or knowledge of human nature, to perceive this.

Supposing it to be the intention of any person to form a proper number of truly great, excellent, and generous minds, he must place them in a world not less abounding with calamity, and even with vice, than this. There could be no dependence either upon the *genuineness*, or the *stability* of that virtue which had not been formed, and exercised, in such circumstances.

In like manner, the most rational and the most steady believer in christianity, is the man who has heard and considered all the serious objections that unbelievers can make to it, and who has also been exposed to the ridicule with which it is treated by those who have the reputation of men of sense, and of being free from vulgar prejudices. The man who has passed through this trial, whose faith has not been shaken, but has been more firmly established by the reasonings of unbelievers; who has not been made ashamed of his profession by the ridicule and contempt to which it has exposed him, but who can be content to be ranked among the

fools and narrow minded by the celebrated free-thinkers of the age, in a firm belief of, and patient waiting for that day, which shall *confound the wisdom of the now reputed wise*, is a christian of a higher rank, and greater value, and is more to be depended upon for acting a truly christian part (which requires superiority of mind to this world, and to the vain pursuits and transitory emoluments of it) than the man who has only been taught to take the system for granted, and who is unacquainted with the proper evidence on which his faith rests.

Moreover, as those who believe in the perfect moral government of God entertain no doubt, but that all calamity and vice will be made to cease, when they have answered the purposes for which they were permitted to exist; so the christian looks forward with joy to that time, when the religion of Christ shall triumph over all opposition, when the firm belief of it will be universal, and when, in consequence of this, being more deeply rooted in men's hearts, it will bring forth the proper fruits of it in their lives and conversation.

When these things are duly considered, I hope that the present state of the belief of christianity will afford no just foundation for any objection to it, but that it will rather supply an argument in favour of it.

SECTION IV.

Miscellaneous objections to the system of revelation.

THE want of universality can be no objection to the truth of christianity; but upon the supposition of the knowledge of it being absolutely necessary to the final happiness of men, which is denied by all rational christians, who believe that all men will be judged according to the advantages which they have severally enjoyed, for attaining to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue; and consequently that the most ignorant and idolatrous heathen may meet with more favour from his judge than many professing christians, whose conduct, though, to outward appearance, it has been much better, yet not in proportion to their greater advantages.

It is greatly favourable to christianity, and indeed almost peculiar to it, that it shews no favour to christians as such. The bigotted Jews and the Mohammedans denounce anathemas against unbelievers as such, and suppose that the wicked among them will be more respected by God hereafter than the rest of mankind, whereas the gospel speaks quite another language. To those who say *Lord, Lord*, without submitting to the laws of Christ, he

will reply at the last, *Verily, verily, I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* It is also one of his maxims, that *he who knows his Lord's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* To the same purpose, likewise, do the apostles write.

Some persons have objected to the evidences of christianity, but certainly without sufficient reason, the *differences of opinion* among christians, since the very same objection may be made to natural religion, and indeed to every thing that has ever been imagined of so much *importance*, as to engage much of the *attention* of mankind, the consequence of which has always been different conceptions concerning it. Were not the disciples of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, divided among themselves? Are there not as many sects among the Moham-medans, as among the christians? And are there not almost as many different opinions among the Papists, as among the Protestants, notwithstanding they profess to be possessed of an infallible judge in all controversies of faith? Do not even our ablest lawyers give different opinions concerning the sense of acts of parliament, which were intended to convey the most determinate meaning, so as to obviate all cavils? Nay, have we not equal reason to expect that unbelievers should agree in the same system of unbelief? If they say to us, Agree first among yourselves, and tell us what christianity is, and we will tell you what we have

to object to it; we have a right to reply, Do you agree first with respect to what you suppose to be wrong in it, tell us what you object to, and we will then consider of the proper answer.

In fact, every unbeliever must read the New Testament for himself. If, when he is uninfluenced by any criminal prejudice, he really cannot give his assent to what he believes to be the religion of those books, he will be justified in his unbelief; but if he have taken up his notions of christianity from others, or from an examination of his own, inadequate to the importance of the subject, he certainly cannot be justified. I, for my own part, can only exhibit what appears to me the true idea of christianity, and the most rational defence of it. If any other person, believer or unbeliever, think it to be exceptionable, he must look out for another, that to himself shall appear less so, and I also shall think myself at liberty to relinquish my notions, and adopt his.

It is highly unreasonable to object to christianity the various *mischiefs* which it has indirectly occasioned in the world, since there is nothing useful or excellent that has not had similar consequences. By this method of reasoning, it might be concluded with certainty, that our *passions* and affections were not the gift of God, for they are daily the cause of great and serious evils. In fact, the more important any thing is, and the more extensive and happy

are its consequences, the greater, in general, are the evils which it occasionally produces.

This is remarkably the case with *civil government*. It is certainly far preferable to a state of anarchy, and yet it gives occasion to a multitude of crimes, and such horrid excesses of all the passions as cannot be known in uncivilized countries.

The persecution of christians by christians, has not been worse than the persecution of christians by such heathen emperors as Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, not to mention Nero or Diocletian; and has, besides, most evidently arisen from a gross perversion of the genuine spirit of christianity, which breathes nothing but forbearance and love. There is also a view in which all these evils may be considered as highly favourable to the evidences of christianity, since they were distinctly foreseen and foretold by Christ and the apostles. Besides, when we consider the havock that has been made by christian persecutors, we should also consider the laudable zeal of the many who favoured and sheltered those who were persecuted.

To make a juster estimate of the moral influence of christianity, let us consider with impartiality the character of the present times. Was Europe less corrupt a century ago, when there were fewer unbelievers, than it is now, that they are more numerous? It is plain from experience and observation, that the most vicious and abandoned of the present

present age are professed unbelievers, and that the most strictly virtuous, those who are the most strenuous in their opposition to the progress of vice, are professing and zealous christians. Let it also be considered whether any more humane and enlarged sentiments were entertained before the promulgation of christianity in heathen countries: Now, whatever may be said in favour of the virtuous and humane sentiments of the heathen philosophers, it cannot be pretended that they exerted their eloquence in favour of toleration for the poor persecuted christians. On the contrary, they generally exerted their influence to make them ridiculous and odious. The moderation of the present times is certainly owing both to the unbelievers and the Protestants, and both were perhaps led into it by the consideration of their own circumstances, as the weaker party.

It is plain from fact, that it was not the intention of the divine being, by means of natural or revealed religion, of any kind of knowledge, or any other advantage of which we are possessed, to establish a state of universal virtue and happiness in the present world. In all the divine dispensations we are treated as accountable or improveable creatures; but it is evidently necessary to such a state, that we be capable of growing worse as well as better, by every species of discipline; and the very same circumstances may produce both these different

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rent effects on the minds of different persons. The same prosperity that excites sentiments of gratitude, and a liberal beneficent disposition in some, inspires others with insolence, rapaciousness, and cruelty; adversity also may be the parent either of industry, or fraud; so that neither of them has necessarily and invariably a good effect upon the mind. The dispensation of the gospel, therefore, may be similar to this, without any impeachment of its divine original.

The evidence of truth may also come under the same rules with the means of virtue, and thus the arguments in favour of divine revelation may be sufficient to convince the candid, impartial, and well-disposed, at the same time that they may afford those who are of a different disposition handles enow for cavilling, such as, in their state of mind, will justify their rejection of it to themselves. To this our Lord might possibly allude when he said, John ix. 39. *For judgment I am come into this world: that they who see not, might see; and that they who see, might be made blind;* and, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* To the same purpose is the prophecy of Simeon, Luke ii. 34. *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.*

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It is often taken for granted that the design of revelation in general, and of christianity in particular, was simply *to reform the world*, and that end not having been completely answered by it, it has been objected by unbelievers, that it could not have been from God, who would certainly have chosen sufficient means to gain all his ends. But, considering that men are accountable creatures, and capable of abusing every advantage of which they are possessed, both reason and revelation do, in fact, in all cases, answer the end for which they were given, whether they be abused or improved, whether, as the apostle Paul says, they be *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death*.

I shall conclude these observations on the difficulties which attend the Jewish and christian revelations, with remarking, that the question is not whether any of the particulars I have mentioned, separately taken, be likely or unlikely to come from God, but whether *the whole system*, attended with such difficulties, may be divine. If it were possible that any person should be asked, *a priori*, whether it was probable that, under the government of a wise and good being, an innocent child should inherit the diseases, poverty, and vices of its parent, or whether no distinction would be made between the righteous and the wicked in war, pestilence, famine, or earthquakes, he would certainly answer it was not probable; though when
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he should come to know, and attentively consider the whole system, of which such events make a part, he might be satisfied that it was the result of perfect wisdom, directed by infinite goodness; and even that a scheme more favourable to happiness or virtue could not have been formed; and the time may come, when we shall know and acknowledge the same with respect to the *extraordinary* that we do with respect to the *ordinary* dispensations of the divine being.

The advantage which christianity derives from the objections of unbelievers, is various and considerable. This circumstance has been the means of purging it from what was foreign and indefensible, and also of setting its evidences in a clearer and stronger light; so that many persons who before took their religion upon trust, do now adhere to it upon a rational conviction of its truth and excellence, and hold it in greater purity than they would otherwise have done. And as the heathen philosophy contributed to discredit the popular religions of the Gentile world, which served as a preparation for the promulgation of the gospel, so the writings and discourses of unbelievers in the present age seem to be sapping the foundations of the Popish corruptions of christianity, and preparing the way for the establishment of the pure religion of Christ in their place.

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Christianity, after having stood such a trial as this, will no more be exposed to such virulent attacks as before, but will acquire such a *fixed character of truth*, as it could never have obtained without the opposition which it has met with. Such has been the fate of all the branches of true philosophy, of the Copernican system, the Newtonian theory of light and colours, and the Franklinian theory of electricity.



THE CONCLUSION.

IT is in vain to say any thing by way of address to persons who will not read or think upon a subject. To the profligate and unthinking among the unbelievers I shall, therefore, say nothing, because they will not give themselves the trouble to read what I might be disposed to say to them ; but to the more *moral, speculative, and thoughtful* unbelievers, into whose hands this treatise may possibly fall, I would observe, and they must agree with me in it, that, in justice to themselves and to the subject, they should give it the most serious and deliberate examination. To men of reason and reflection the evidences of christianity must appear the most interesting of all subjects of inquiry. For what can be more so than fully to ascertain, that the present state is not the whole of our existence, but that Jesus Christ, by the appointment of God his father, will come again to raise all the dead to a future endless life, and to give to every man according to his works. This is the great object and end of christian faith; and those who believe this important doctrine receive it on the authority of Jesus Christ, whose divine mission was attested, as they believe, by such miracles

acles as no man could have performed, without the presence and concurrence of God.

Now before any person seriously rejects christianity, containing such important doctrines, he should certainly endeavour to satisfy himself, at least on what foundation it is that he founds his dissent; and that such persons may more easily and effectually interrogate themselves upon the subject, I shall briefly propose a few leading questions, which may perhaps assist them to ascertain the state of their own minds, and lead them to such reflections, or disquisitions, as may be of most use to them with respect to it; at the same time that they may serve as a kind of *recapitulation* of a few of the principal arguments in favour of christianity.

Is it not an indisputed fact, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate in Judea?

Is it not also a well known fact, that he had some followers when living, but, notwithstanding his ignominious sufferings, which disconcerted and dispersed all his adherents, many more after his death; and that he was even acknowledged by them to be the Messiah, foretold by their antient prophets, though he sustained a character the very reverse of what was expected by all the Jews, the good as well as the bad?

Are not the *gospels*, and the book of *Acts*, which contain the history of the life of Christ, and of the propa-

propagation of his religion in the world, authentic writings? Were they not considered in all the early ages, both by the friends and enemies of christianity, as the genuine productions of the early disciples of Christ?

Can this be admitted, without admitting also, that what they relate concerning Christ and his apostles is, in the main, true, at least that they did something above the power of man; especially, that Christ did actually rise from the dead, as he had foretold, and as a proof that what he taught he had by commission from God?

Is it probable that such men as the apostles were, should have been able to shake off the strongest Jewish prejudices, which no other Jews, whether, with respect to morality, they were good or bad men, were ever able to do? Can they be supposed capable of inventing such a story, and especially of making it gain credit with the world, in such an age as that in which they lived, and circumstanced as they were for that purpose?

Admitting this to be possible, can any sufficient *motive* be assigned, to induce so many of them, not only to enter into a scheme of this nature, but, what is much more, to carry it on, with a perseverance unknown to the professors of any scheme of religion before them, in the face of all difficulties that could be thrown in their way, and to die
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with all the marks of joy and confidence, without ever confessing the imposture?

If the leading facts above-mentioned cannot be disputed, except upon such principles as must invalidate all antient history, and set aside all human testimony, every argument *a priori*, such as those which arise from the consideration of the sufficiency of the light of nature, the natural incredibility of miracles, &c. will certainly not deserve a hearing. How specious soever they may be represented, their influence will not be felt.

It will be clearly perceived that, whether it might have been reasonable to expect it, or not, God who made the world has *actually* interposed at various times in the government of it; giving some of his creatures, at least, such information respecting their conduct here, and their expectations hereafter, as he judged to be useful and convenient for them; and whatever difficulties may attend the speculative consideration of a future life, it will not be doubted but that we shall *in fact* live again, give an account of ourselves to God, and receive according to our works.

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C O N T A I N I N G

A N E S S A Y

O N T H E

Analogy between the methods by which the perfection and happiness of men are promoted, according to the dispensations of natural and revealed religion.

THE perfection of intelligent beings consists in *comprehension of mind*, or that principle whereby ideas of the past and the future mix with those of the present, and excite one common sensation; in which the good and evil so perfectly coalesce, and are so intimately united, that the *medium* only is perceived. Consequently, if happiness be apprehended to prevail, in that portion of time of which we have this perfect comprehension, and every part of which may be said to be *present to us*, we are conscious of pleasure only in the contemplation of it, the pain being lost, and absorbed, together with so much pleasure as was

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equivalent to it. By this means happiness comes to be of a more stable nature; and it is less in the power of single accidents to produce a sense of misery.

If we have any reason to think that our existence will, upon the whole, be comfortable and happy; since (man being immortal) our happiness must be infinite upon the whole, though it be limited and finite at any particular time, the thought is so great and so glorious, that the full apprehension of it must contribute still more to overpower the sense of any present evils, and give such an intenseness to all pleasurable feelings, as cannot fail to make our present state unspeakably more eligible than it could otherwise have been.

Such is the constitution of human nature, and such are the influences to which we are exposed in this world, that this comprehension of mind must necessarily be enlarged with the experience of every day. Infants are sensible of nothing but what passes in the present moment. The instant that the impression of actual pain is removed, they are perfectly easy in mind, not being disturbed either with the remembrance of the passed, or the apprehension of the future. By degrees, ideas, which have frequently been present to the perceptive power at the same time, begin to be associated; so that one of them cannot occur without introducing the other, and so making the perception complex. By
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this means *expectation* begins to awake in the infant mind; but still, from the moment that, by the intervention of an associated circumstance, the idea of any pleasure is conceived, the child is impatient till it be enjoyed. Indeed, it is generally several months before children show the least sign of patience in waiting for any thing. The most evident signs of preparing to give them food, serve only to quicken their appetite, and their impatience to get it satisfied; nor are they easy, till the meat be actually in their mouths.

In this state, therefore, or at our entrance upon life, we are influenced almost wholly by sensation, or the actual impression of external objects upon our senses. But when traces of these impressions, i. e. *ideas* are left in the sensorium, which may be excited by other ideas associated with them, so that notices of things may be had without the presence of real objects, we are capable of being influenced by them, as well as by the objects themselves. And since the stock of our ideas increases without limits, and is accumulating through the whole course of our lives, we must be continually more and more actuated by them; and there will be less occasion for the presence of external objects, either to rouse us to action, or to give us the sense of pleasure or pain; that is, we grow more intellectual, and less sensual every day.

When our stock of ideas is become considerable, and, consequently, their mutual associations are pretty extensive and intimate; if the circumstances that have always been found to precede any gratification be perceived, the gratification itself is immediately anticipated; we look upon it as certain, and have a real enjoyment of it, though it be not present. In this case, when the gratification actually comes, it makes but little alteration in what we feel, and is but a small addition to our previous happiness; which now depends chiefly upon ideas, which are continually increasing, and to which external sensations bear, every day, a less and less proportion.

The probable expectation of happiness hath a similar effect: and hence the great power of mere *hope* to lessen the evils of life, and make us bear up under great difficulties and trials. If any pleasure hath been absolutely depended upon, for a long space of time, the happiness we have experienced in the frequent contemplation of it, may far exceed that of the enjoyment, which is single and momentary, and, moreover, accompanied with the disagreeable idea of its being so. For the same reason, the fear of evil may, in time, be far more distressing and grievous than the evil itself. The man who loses a limb by a sudden accident is to be envied, in comparison of him who hath been sentenced to that loss, as a punishment, some months before the operation,

operation. In like manner, if two persons be confined in prison, and one of them be released without any previous expectation of so agreeable an event, while the other knew that he was to be confined only for the same limited time; the former will feel more tumultuous joy upon the occasion, but the latter will have had the idea of it present to his mind, during the whole time of his confinement, sweetening all the bitterness of it, and will never have known the distress of uncertainty, or the agony of despair.

When ideas only are concerned, and not both ideas and sensations, the influence of hope and fear is much more distinctly perceived, and the nature of this comprehension of mind will be better understood by it. Instead, then, of putting a case in which we ourselves are concerned, let us put the case of a wife, a child, or any other near relation, or friend, with whom we can truly sympathise, taking part in all their joys and sorrows. If we see them in prison, and, after apprehending that their confinement will be for life, have private information that they will be released, and placed in very agreeable circumstances in a few days, weeks, or months; we can see them in the mean time, even though we are not allowed to communicate our intelligence to them, with joy almost unmixed; because the future is realized, and the agreeableness of it heightened in our ideas by its contrast with the present;

which, being temporary, is overlooked by us, as nothing, and has not power to damp our satisfaction.

If my child be peevish and obstinate, and I be sensible that pain and mortification will do him good, I can, without the help of much anger, have a kind of satisfaction in inflicting it, and have little or no sympathy with what he suffers; though, for a time, he be in agony of distress, and think very unkindly of me. On the other hand, if I foresaw that he would lose a limb in a few days, weeks, or months, I should look upon him in the mean time with a most painful compassion, notwithstanding he himself should be ever so happy, and enjoy himself ever so much; nay, the want of apprehension and feeling in him, would sharpen their painful effects in me.

The effect is nearly the same if, with respect to ourselves, impressions from the external senses be left out of the question, and a case be put, that is purely intellectual. Suppose, for instance, my character be unjustly traduced, and, for a time, I be reckoned a most infamous scoundrel; yet, if I be certain, that in a few days my innocence will be effectually cleared, so that no person whatever will entertain the least doubt of it, shall I, in the mean time, be affected and mortified, with the sense of my disgrace? No, I shall hardly feel it at all;

all ; but shall rather secretly exult in the future triumph of my innocence, and shall show an unabashed and chearful countenance, till the present load of infamy be removed. It must be owned, however, that the sense of infamy, in this case, will be felt more or less, according to the degree of comprehension of mind to which we are arrived, and also that we shall be able to bear unjust scandal for a longer or shorter space of time in the same proportion.

The same observation may also be made with respect to all the cases mentioned above. Thus it is that, by this power of comprehension, we are able to balance one idea or sensation with another, whether they be of the same, or of different kinds. With this resource, a good man, conscious of his own integrity, grows every day less sensible to the censures of men, consoling himself with the approbation of his own mind, and the persuasion that he enjoys the favour of his maker ; till, after sufficient experience, this just sense of things will make him almost wholly indifferent, on his own account, to every thing that the world can think or say of him.

A certain degree of this comprehension of mind, employed about proper objects, is sufficient to make a man virtuous through the whole course of his life. To arrive at this, nothing is wanting, but a distinct and ready apprehension of all the ill conse-

quences of vice, and of all the good effects of virtue. For, as soon as, by this extended power of association, we perceive vice, with all that accompanies and follows it, as *one undivided thing*, and the virtues, with all their train, as one undivided thing likewise, the superiority of the latter, upon the whole, is so great, that no man could hesitate a moment which to prefer. It is only by partial views of things that we are imposed upon, are bewildered, and confounded in our choice. When, in consequence of acting for some time with this clear and steady view of things, virtuous conduct is become habitual, the pains and difficulties of a virtuous course absolutely vanish, and are absorbed in the sense of the infinitely greater good we hereby insure to ourselves. In this case, even the pleasures of vice would be shunned with abhorrence, because we could never separate from them the idea of the infinitely greater pains, with which they are closely connected.

In matters to which we are much accustomed, this comprehension of mind, and coalescence of ideas, is remarkably ready and complete. A person who has been much conversant in business and accounts, and who every day meets with gains or losses, is affected just as the balance of the profits would have affected him, if he had never heard of the particulars. A person who is less conversant
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in these things would feel his mind as it were, vibrate between both, and would longer perceive their separate effects.

The power of habit, in promoting a perfect coalescence of associated ideas, is most remarkable in cases where the external senses are concerned. The moon, when near the horizon, seems to be considerably larger than it does when it is near the meridian; but this can be owing to nothing but the effect of habit, in consequence of having frequently compared its apparent magnitude with those of the intermediate objects: for its picture upon the retina is well known to be of the same dimensions, and therefore a child, or a person wholly without experience, could not imagine any difference in them. Nay, it is evident, from the laws of optics, that originally all objects appear to be in the same plane, and that it is from experience, or habit, that we first get the idea of distance, or of any dimension besides length and breadth.

Again, it is probable, that all objects appear double to every person, till, by experience, we find the mistake, and then learn to conceive of impressions, made upon two corresponding points of the retina, as referring but to one object. However, so absolutely fixed is our *judgment*, (for such only it evidently is originally) that the moon is larger near the horizon, and that the appearance of two objects is, in reality, no more than that of one, that

we are now even puzzled to account for the fact. Perhaps like observations might be made concerning our other senses.

All these cases are remarkable instances of the power of association, and demonstrate a possibility, not only that an *idea*, but even a *sensation* may cease to appear to be what it originally was; yea, that it may be so intimately connected with, and absolutely lost in associated ideas only, as to be no longer capable of being resolved back again into its former state.

Another thing worthy of our notice in these facts is, that this amazing effect is accomplished in a limited time, even pretty early in life; for no person can remember the time when objects appeared to him otherwise than they do now.

Do not these plain, but striking facts, teach us to conceive, how possible it is, that any ideas whatever may be so entirely coalesced by association, that the component parts of the whole image shall absolutely disappear, and never more be seen in the same light in which they were originally viewed. Thus, all ideas of pain may, at length, perfectly unite with those of the pleasures which they have accompanied, or to which they have been subservient; and when once the general association, founded on the connection of good and evil, pleasure and pain, observed through all nature, is firmly established

established (like the fixing of the corresponding points in the retina) not even the most sudden appearance of evil will be able to affect the mind with the idea of any thing but what is right and desirable upon the whole, any more than two images, one in each eye, though ever so unexpectedly impressed, are not able, even for a moment, or by surprise, to give us the idea of two objects; though this was always the case in our infancy, and would be so still without association of ideas. If ever our minds should arrive at the perfect state here hinted at, all the works of God, and all the events of divine providence, will constantly appear to us as they do to the divine being himself, i. e. perfectly and infinitely good, without the least perceivable mixture of evil.

In what time it is even possible to effect all this, cannot, with the least certainty, be so much as conjectured: for though we cannot remember objects appearing to us in any other manner than they now do; yet as these associations of visible ideas must have been impressed every time we opened our eyes, from the time that we began to take notice of things; we must conclude, that this operation cannot but require a very long and steady application of mind. Temporary pains and evils of all kinds, must be very clearly and satisfactorily seen to be, in all cases, productive of happiness in the issue, under the government of an infinitely good God; and

the conviction must be repeated and *felt* again and again, before the ideas will entirely, universally, and readily coalesce; so that, by reason of the necessary avocation of mind, and the unsteady and imperfect views of things we can gain in this state, little can be done towards it here, and it must be referred to the attainments of a better world.

The above-mentioned facts, however, shew, in the strongest light, what is the natural progress and effect of association of ideas in the human mind. We see the course that things are evidently in, and it doth not appear, that any bounds can be set to it. We must, therefore, in favourable circumstances (such as we shall, no doubt, find ourselves in, in a future world) approximate to this perfection of comprehension with the experience of every day; in this way, time only is requisite, to make a mere man arrive at a pitch of excellence and happiness, of which we are able, at present, to form but very imperfect conceptions. With these lights, though, as yet, we are able to apply them but very imperfectly, how may we stand amazed in the contemplation of our future selves!

By the help of these considerations, we may form some idea wherein consists the superiority of beings of higher orders, whose intellectual powers exceed ours. The association of their ideas may be more extensive, and associated ideas may unite and
coalesce

coalesce more readily, and perfectly in their minds, than they do in ours; the consequence of which will be, that ideas collected from a greater space, both before and after the present moment, will be co-existent in their minds; which will make the influence of ideas still greater, and that of sensation (or what may be in them analogous to sensation in us) still less than it is with us; so that their natures will be more purely intellectual than ours.

Hence, also, if we may presume to indulge a conjecture on such a subject, may we form a faint idea of the incomprehensible greatness and perfection of the divine being. For since there is a real connection of all things, in the whole system of nature, how distant soever the parts of it may be, in point of time or place; this connection may at once be so completely seen by him who planned, and who directs the whole, that it may be said, there is nothing past or future in his ideas; but that to him, the whole compass of duration is, to every real purpose, without distinction, present. To him, therefore, *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*; the two extremes, being so perfectly united, and so equally present, that the intervals, how different soever, vanish alike in both cases.

We see, then, the course which the divine being has pointed out for the improvement of intelligent beings, whereby we may make approaches
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to the excellence and happiness of the divine nature. We are to be influenced less by sensation, and more by associated ideas perpetually. The association of all connected ideas is to grow more perfect, and more extensive continually, till things past, present, and to come shall, to greater and greater distances, become the subject of our contemplation, and the source of our happiness. Provision is made for the continuance of this progress, in the structure of our minds, and in all the influences to which we are exposed. All the objects about which we are conversant, and all the events to which we are liable, are contrived to favour it.

Let us now consider whether any thing similar to this may be observed in the scheme of revelation; and since both the ordinary and extraordinary course of divine providence have the same object with respect to us, both being designed and calculated to raise, improve, and bless the human race; let us consider whether they be conducted in a manner analogous to one another; so that we may trace the same hand in both, and hence derive a presumptive argument in favour of revelation.

To me, I own, there seems to be, in this respect, a very great analogy between both these dispensations of God to mankind, and the argument that may thence be deduced in favour of revelation strikes me very much. For in those extraordinary dispensations of God to mankind, of which

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we are informed in the books of scripture, we see a most glorious apparatus for accomplishing this great end, for enlarging the comprehension of the human mind, and raising us to the highest pitch of perfection and excellence.

To have the mind impressed with the idea of its being in a state of moral government, and that our actions have great and distant consequences, is of admirable use in this respect; and this, we find, was the situation of Adam presently after he came from the hands of his maker. He was permitted the free use of all the trees in the garden of Eden except one, which he was forbidden to meddle with under severe penalties. In these circumstances he was under a necessity of looking before him, and attending to the distant consequences of what he was doing. He saw (as is generally understood) an immortal existence before him in case of obedience, and of prudence and regularity in the gratification of his appetites; and death (of the meaning of which he was, no doubt, informed) in case of disobedience and irregular indulgence.

If we consider the importance of having enlarged views, and of the attention being engaged upon objects, beyond the present moment, we must see how vastly superior this situation was, with respect to the improvement of his faculties, to a state in which he should have been left to the random indulgence of his appetites, without any intimation
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of the consequence, except what he could learn by slow experience. The more we think upon this subject, the greater will this advantage appear to be. Mankind might, for ages, have been little more than brutes, without some provision and assistance of this kind.

If the object of this trial, viz. the abstaining from the fruit of a tree, appear trifling, we should consider the infantile state of the first man, and the only dangerous excesses that, in his situation, he could be guilty of; and we may see the greatest propriety in this very circumstance. Would it not have been much more absurd to have forbidden him to steal, to commit adultery, or, indeed, to have enjoined him the observance of any of the ten commandments of the moral law. What is more natural, or common with ourselves, than to forbid children to eat of certain kinds of food, or to meddle with things that are most in their way, by which they are liable to do harm to themselves or others. They are not capable of offending in any other respects, or of understanding any higher precepts. We are not made acquainted with all the restrictions under which our first parents were laid; but it cannot be doubted, but that they must have been of a salutary nature, whether they themselves might be aware of it or not. We do not always give our children the reason of the restrictions we lay them under, because they are not always capable

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ble of understanding them. The prohibition to eat of a particular fruit is the only one that is mentioned by Moses, because that was the case in which Adam transgressed; but, for any thing we know, he might have been as expressly forbidden to jump from a precipice, or to plunge into a pit of water; and the forbidden fruit might have been as naturally hurtful to him as either of them.

It is by no means improbable, but that something of *fable* may have mixed with so antient a history as that of the *Fall*; and the present condition of man was, no doubt, both *foreseen* and *intended* by our all-wise creator, as the best for us upon the whole; but I think we cannot reasonably object to the leading circumstances in Moses's account of the manner in which we came into it. And as it represents man as entering upon existence under a sense of *moral government*, it is far more agreeable to the ideas we conceive of the wisdom and goodness of God, more favourable to the human race, and more consonant to the natural provision he has made for enlarging the comprehension of the human mind, and thereby perfecting our natures, and advancing our happiness; and therefore far superior to the condition in which Lucretius, and the rest of the Epicureans, represent the introduction of man into the world, i. e. with no greater advantage for looking before him,
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enlarging his views, and increasing his happiness, than the lowest of the animal creation.

In the sentence passed upon man after the fall, we see an opportunity is taken of carrying the views of the human mind to objects still more remote; and encouraging, though obscure views are opened to him, in the promise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.*

In the patriarchal ages, the intercourse between the divine being and the human race is continued; but without his assuming a higher character than men in those times were capable of having intercourse with. Consequently, their apprehensions of moral government would be growing more clear and determinate, and their ideas of duty and obligation (together with their expectation of consequences corresponding to their actions) more definite and certain; so as to induce them to be less influenced by prospects of immediate pleasure or gain than before.

The fate of men's children and posterity is always an interesting object to them, and must have been peculiarly so in the early ages of the world, when the whole earth was before them, and every man had the chance of being the founder of great and mighty nations. These, therefore, were the views with which the divine being thought proper, at that time, to engage the attention of the patriarchs, and enforce the obligation of virtue.

Abra-

Abraham had the promise of becoming the *father of many nations*, and that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*. With these prospects, we find his mind so much enlarged, and his faith in futurity so strong, that he leaves his native land; content and happy in being a sojourner in the country which his posterity were to possess.

In the whole course of the Jewish history, repeated miracles and prophecies would constantly tend to keep up the views of that people to great and remote objects. And this, together with the *distinct ideas* they had of the origin of the world, and the early history of it, their knowledge of the rise of their own nation, and of the frequent interpositions of the divine being in their favour, would give a dignity to their conceptions, and a grandeur to their prospects, to which the heathen nations must have been strangers. There was a majesty and dignity in the Jewish ritual, in their temple, and the service of it, which far exceeded any thing in the heathen world; and being accompanied with just and sublime ideas of the one true God, it must have given a sublimity to their sentiments, and a warmth and fervour to their religious impressions, to which other nations could not have attained. Accordingly, in all the compositions of the heathen poets, in honour of their gods, there are no traces of any thing like that spirit

spirit of manly devotion, which animates the psalms of David.

In the frequent relapses of the Jews into idolatry, the prophets are continually sent of God, to remind them of the allegiance they owed to their maker, to hold out to them the expectation of his favour or resentment, and thereby preserve upon their minds the influence of great and remote objects.

When they were effectually cured of their proneness to idolatry, by the Babylonish captivity; and, therefore, such frequent interpositions of the divine being were less necessary, their minds were prepared for that long interruption of miracles which ensued, by the remarkably distinct prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, and Malachi, concerning future and glorious times under the Messiah. The very year of his appearance was fixed by Daniel, and though it was not done in such a manner as to enable them to make it out with perfect exactness, yet it was sufficient to keep up their attention to it; and, in fact, they were not so far out in their calculations, but that, at the time of our Saviour, and not long before, we find a general and most ardent expectation raised in the whole body of the Jewish nation of some approaching deliverer.

In this interval, therefore, between the captivity and the birth of Christ, far greater views and prospects were present to the mind of a Jew, than
people

people of other nations could have any idea of. So great was the actual influence of these ideas, that, in the time of the Maccabees, they shewed a heroism and magnanimity in the defence of their religion, and in suffering for it, which must have astonished their heathen persecutors. And our Saviour found among them such notions of a future state, and of a resurrection, as (however they came by them, and how imperfect and obscure soever they were) could not fail to make numbers of them to think and act in a manner far superior to the most admired of the Greek and Roman philosophers.

If the attention of the Jews was kept awake to great and distant objects, how much more is this the case with christians, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. Christianity is the last dispensation of God to mankind, and it doth not seem possible, that more ample provision should be made to enlarge the views and comprehension of the human mind, in order to fix its attention upon great and remote objects, and raise it above the influence of present and temporary things.

A true christian, like his great master, is *not of this world*, but a citizen of heaven. He considers himself as a *stranger and pilgrim here below, and lives by faith, and not by sight*. Let him be ever so poor and despised here, he looks upon himself as an heir

heir of immortal glory and felicity, of an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him*. He may see his body decaying with old age, wasting with a disorder, or mangled with torture, and every way at the mercy of his enraged persecutors; but he rejoices in the firm belief and expectation of its rising again *incorruptible at the last day; and that when Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory*.

What an elevation of thought and sentiment is here! How must this faith make us *overcome the world*, and render us superior to its allurements or its threats. With this enlarged comprehension of mind, which brings the future consequences of his actions into immediate prospect, it is impossible that a sincere christian should live addicted to vicious gratifications and pursuits, which he must see to be destructive of these his animating hopes; and he must necessarily grow more in love with that temper and conduct which is, with the greatest propriety, called *christian*, and which ensures to him these glorious expectations. *As he who has called him to these great privileges is holy, so will he also be holy in all manner of conversation*. It will be his daily endeavour to *cultivate that holiness of heart and life, without which, he is sensible, no man can see the Lord*. With this hope set before him, all the afflictions of this present life will seem light, trifling,

trifling, and not worthy to be named with, but will be absolutely lost in the consideration of, that *eternal weight of glory* which awaits his patient continuance in well doing.

This superiority to present and temporary things, which is attained by truly christian principles, is of the most rational nature, being of the same kind with that which is acquired by experience, and which necessarily results from the structure of our minds, and the circumstances in which divine providence has placed us in this world : for it is only perfecting the association of those ideas which have a real connection, and uniting in our minds the several parts of one whole, and things which nothing but time separates. If it be compared with that kind of superiority which might be acquired by other principles, those of the *Stoics*, for instance, its advantage will appear to be exceedingly great.

The Stoic affects to despise pain, because, according to his arbitrary definition of things, it cannot be called an *evil*, and does not depend upon himself. Having imagined, though without any ground, that every man's happiness must, in any case, arise from himself (in exclusion even of the divine being) he thinks it absurd to complain of any thing which he could not help. Complaint implies a sense of unhappiness ; and this, according to his hypothesis, can never take place without
his

his own consent. If his wife or child be in the most dreadful agonies, he looks, or affects to look on their condition with the greatest tranquillity, and the most unfeeling indifference; satisfied that sickness and pain are not in his catalogue of *things within his power*, and that the sufferers themselves are not unhappy, since misfortunes are unavoidable, and he knew that his wife or child were not naturally exempt from them. When he dies, he expects that his soul, being a particle detached from the Universal Mind, will be absorbed in it again, and that his separate consciousness will be lost for ever.

These are the great outlines of the famous philosophical system of Zeno, which is said to have made so many great men; but it has certainly no foundation in nature. The principles of it can never have been really felt, and all the boasted effects of it must have arisen from conceit and obstinacy.

How differently, and how much more naturally, does the christian think and act in the cases above-mentioned! He does not pretend to deny the evidence of his senses, nor has recourse to whimsical distinctions; and not having maintained that *pain is no evil*, he finds himself under no necessity of behaving as if he was unaffected by it. He owns that present sufferings are *not joyous, but grievous*; but he still thinks them nothing in comparison with *the glory*

glory that shall be revealed, and therefore he endures patiently for righteousness sake, in a firm belief of being more than recompensed for them at the resurrection of the just. If his friends be in distress, he has no principles that lead him to check, but, on the other hand, such as encourage him freely to indulge his natural sympathy with them; and these feelings will certainly prompt him to exert himself to the utmost in their favour. At the same time, he will not fail to exhort his friends to the duties of christian patience and fortitude; inculcating the great christian doctrine of the transitoriness of this world, and its subserviency to another. When he dies, he indulges no extravagant, but really uncomfortable conceit, about being absorbed in the divine mind; but believes that he shall, in his own person, rise again from the dead, when he shall resume, and retain his own separate consciousness, live again under the government of that God whose goodness he has experienced, and whose friendship he has secured, know all his virtuous friends once more, and rejoice with them through all eternity.

If we consider the *principles of morals* in the heathen world, we shall see the manifest advantage there is over it in the plan of revelation. The views of the heathens upon this subject were exceedingly confined, and did not require that comprehension of mind, which is necessary to the practice of those duties that were enjoined both in the Jewish

and christian systems. The great duties of piety, consisting in the fear and love of God, and a cheerful reliance on his providence, were, in a manner, unknown in antient times beyond the boundaries of Judea. And what can more evidently tend to enlarge the comprehension and faculties of the human mind, than the regards which are due to the maker and governor of the world?

While the attention of the heathens was wholly engrossed by sensible things, those who were favoured with divine revelation, even in its most imperfect state, were engaged in the contemplation of their invisible author. They considered the enjoyments of life as the effects of his bounty, and all the events of it as taking place according to the wise appointment of his providence. Thus was the power of association enabled to present to their minds the ideas of great and remote objects, by which their sentiments were influenced, and their conduct directed. By this means, limited as were the views of the ancient patriarchs, their conceptions were far more enlarged and consequently their minds more intellectual, than those of the Gentile world.

It is true that all the heathens were prone to superstition, and that a great number of their actions were influenced by regards to invisible agents; but (not to say, what is very probable, that their religion was, in this respect, a corruption, of the patriarchal) all the Gods, they had

had any idea of, at least all with whom they maintained any intercourse, were *local* and *territorial* divinities, liable to the influence of low and vulgar passions, and limited in their powers and operations. It was not possible, therefore, that their theology should suggest such sublime ideas, as must have been conceived by the Jews, from the perusal of the books of Moses; in which we find the idea of one God, the creator and lord of heaven and earth, who established, and who controuls the laws of nature, and who superintends the affairs of the whole world, giving the kingdoms of it to whomsoever he pleases; a being of unspotted purity, and a friend and protector of all good men. So far were the notions which the Gentiles entertained of their Gods below the conceptions of the Jews, concerning the Jehovah, the lord of heaven and earth, *who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*, destroying their enemies in the Red Sea, and feeding them with bread from heaven for the space of forty years; that they could hardly have had any ideas to some of the finest expressions which occur in the sacred books of the Jews; as, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, and many others, which express sentiments of the most pure and exalted devotion.

If any people have exalted and sublime ideas, they are sure to be found in their poetry; but how

poor and low is the sacred poetry of the heathens in comparison with the Psalms of David ! The poems of Homer, of Hesiod, or of Callimachus, in honour of the Grecian gods, can hardly be read without laughter ; but the book of Psalms (the greatest part of which were written long before the works of any of those Grecian poets, and by persons who had travelled and seen far less than they had done) cannot be read without the greatest seriousness, and are still capable of exciting sentiments of the warmest and most exalted, and yet the most perfectly rational devotion. They give us the most sublime ideas of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God. This difference between the poetry of the Jews and the Greeks, in favour of the former, is so great, that I think it cannot be accounted for without the supposition of divine communications. In point of genius, the Greeks seem to have been evidently superior, and they were evidently superior, and they were certainly possessed of the art of composition in much greater perfection.

Whence, then could arise so manifest an inferiority in this respect? It must have been because the Jewish theology gave that nation ideas of a being infinitely superior to themselves, the contemplation of which, with that of his works, and of his providence, would tend to improve and exalt their faculties ; whereas the heathen theology gave them no ideas of beings much superior to the
race

race of man. In general the gods of the Greeks and Romans were supposed to have been mere men, beings of the same rank and condition with themselves; and though their powers were supposed to be enlarged upon their deification, their passions and morals were not at all improved, but continued just the same as before; so that their greater powers were employed about the gratification of the lowest appetites. This theology, therefore, could not infuse that noble enthusiasm which was inspired by the Jewish religion, but must rather have tended to debase their faculties.

That extensive and perfect *benevolence*, which is so strongly inculcated in the New Testament, implies more enlarged sentiments, and greater perfection of the intellectual faculties, than that more limited benevolence, which is treated of by the heathen moralists, which was hardly ever thought to extend farther than to a love of one's own countrymen, and which admitted slaves to none of the privileges of men, but considered them as no other than the property of their masters. But, in the eye of a Christian, *Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free*, are all equal. The boasted attachments of private friendship are not more endearing than that mutual love which Christ recommends to his disciples. But, whereas private friendship was, with the Greeks and Romans, the perfection, and almost the end of all virtue, the *brotherly love* of

christians is only considered as a branch of a more extensive benevolence, and leads to the love of all the human race.

It is evident, that the duties of contentment, trust in divine providence, meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness of injuries, are more insisted on by Christ and his apostles, than by any of the heathen philosophers; and these virtues certainly require a greater comprehension of mind than any other social duties. Children are quick in their resentments, their anger is presently excited, and they are unable to conceal what little malice or revenge they are capable of; but, in proportion as men advance in age, in experience, and, consequently, in intellect, they are able to overlook affronts, and to suspend, or wholly to stifle their resentments; because they are able to take in more distant consequences of passions and actions; and the sentiments which are suggested by these extensive views, moderate and overpower those which are prompted by their present sensations.

Christianity, therefore, by extending these duties, supposes, and thereby favours and promotes a still greater advance in intellectual perfection. To act like a christian, a man must be possessed of true greatness of mind, a self-command, fortitude, or magnanimity, which is infinitely more superior to the disguised revenge of which some are capable, and which they can brood over for years, than this

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is superior to the quick resentments of children. It requires a more just knowledge of things, more experience, and more foresight.

Thus does the christian scheme appear to be perfectly consonant to nature. It supposes a series of dispensations, in which the human mind is operated upon, and its improvement promoted in a manner analogous to that in which it is actually operated upon, and its improvement promoted every day. As the one, therefore, is conducted according to the ordinary providence of the divine being, the other is what might be expected from his extraordinary dispensations. Both these schemes have the same great object in view, and in both of them the same end is gained by the same methods. For, in fact, the only instrument employed is that great and extensive principle of *association of ideas*, which is so conspicuous in the human mind, and which, according to the admirable theory of Dr. Hartley, furnishes the *stamina* for all its other properties, and is the source of all our faculties.

It is by this principle of *association*, that our views are enlarged to take in distant objects, but objects that have a real connection with those that are present. And it is an habitual attention to these associated circumstances of our actions, that gives them an influence as if they were present. As virtue, with all its consequences in this life, is eligible upon the whole, we are led, by this principle of asso-

ciation, to chuse and practice it, without any other guide than nature and common providence; but as virtue, with all those more extensive consequences, which revelation informs us of, is infinitely more eligible; we are led, by the same principle of association, to love it with more ardour, and to practice it with more constancy; because, by the help of those lights, which are furnished by the extraordinary providence of Almighty God, in the revelation of his will to mankind, we see it to be a thing in which we are more deeply interested than we could otherwise have known ourselves to be:



I N S T I T U T E S

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

R E L I G I O N.

P A R T III.

CONTAINING

A View of the Doctrines of Revelation.



THE
INTRODUCTION.

THE execution of this part of my undertaking has been attended (as all who are acquainted with the subject will be fully sensible) with peculiar difficulties, owing chiefly to the very different views, which even rational and learned men have entertained concerning the *Doctrines of Revelation*; and, therefore, it is with peculiar diffidence that I offer this part to the public.

A strict attention, however, to my original design, which was *the instruction of young persons*, has enabled me to keep clear of a great deal of that embarrassment, in which I should otherwise have been involved; for, though it was not possible to avoid all subjects that have been controverted, I have, by this means, avoided many of them; and there are few of those which I could not avoid that I have discussed at large, having contented myself, for the most part, with relating what appeared to me to be the genuine *Doctrines of Revelation*,

without intimating that there has ever been any controversy upon the subject.

It was also with a view to the instruction of youth, that I have been so particular in my account of what we learn from the scriptures concerning *God*, and all the branches of human *duty*; and, especially, that I have quoted so much from the scriptures themselves on those subjects. My intention was to appear as little as possible in this matter myself, and to let the sacred writers, to whose more intimate acquaintance I wish to introduce my pupil, speak for themselves. There is, besides, an authority and energy in the language of the scriptures, which is peculiar to themselves, and which cannot fail, when they are read and considered with due attention, to make the most favourable and the strongest impressions.

I have, upon more occasions than one, complained that the scriptures are too much neglected even by christians, though we cannot be too well acquainted with them, and there are no books that we can read with so much advantage. I shall be happy if I can make this work also subservient to my design of recommending them, and more especially to young persons. This part, which contains an account of what we learn from the scriptures, was far from being intended to supersede the use of them. It was rather intended to afford some assistance for the better understanding of them, and
thereby

thereby to introduce my reader to the diligent study of them, and frequent meditation upon them, with more advantage.

I had intended to have prefixed to this part a particular examination of what has been advanced concerning the doctrines and evidences of religion by Dr. Beattie, and especially Dr. Oswald, who represent *common sense* as superseding almost all *reasoning* about religion, natural or revealed, and who have advanced maxims which I cannot help thinking to be both ill-founded and dangerous. But finding, after I had made some progress in this work, that it drew to a considerable length, I thought it would be better to reserve the remarks that I had made on those writers to some other opportunity, when I might enter into a more particular examination of what Dr. Reid has advanced concerning this pretended new principle of *common sense*; and, in the mean time, to content myself with a few general remarks on the subject, and an extract or two from Dr. Oswald, that my reader may form some idea of the nature and spirit of the principles that I mean to oppose*.

I am truly sorry to complain of the conduct of any of the sincere friends of revelation, as I be-

* Since this was written I have published, in a separate volume, *An Examination of the writings of Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald.*

lieve Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oswald to be; but it appears to me, that their writings must necessarily give a great, and a very plausible advantage to unbelievers; who, finding that it is not now pretended that religion in general, or christianity in particular, is founded on *argument*, will make no difficulty of rejecting them on the principles of *common sense* also, and will not be displeas'd to find that christian writers will argue the matter with them no longer.

This common sense, which is from henceforth to be considered as the first, and likewise the last resort with respect to religion, and the evidences of it, these writers represent as being the same power or faculty by which we judge that the whole is greater than a part, and by which we distinguish all other self-evident truths from palpable absurdities. By the very concise process of an appeal to this principle, they say, that any man may fully satisfy himself concerning the truth of the being, the unity, the attributes, and the providence of God, and also of a future state of retribution, and even (as Dr. Oswald has given out, and has promised to prove at large) of the evidences of christianity.

Upon this plan I might have saved myself the trouble of writing the preceding parts of this work, in which my object has been to prove the truth of the above-mentioned propositions, contenting myself

self with roundly asserting them; and, without replying to any of the objections of unbelievers, not hesitating to pronounce every man a fool (see Dr. Oswald's Appeal, p. 134.) who did not assent to them.

But, notwithstanding, I have given all the attention I could to the treatise of Dr. Oswald, who has written most fully on the subject, I am by no means convinced that the propositions above-mentioned are to be classed among *primary truths*, or those to which every man must necessarily give his assent (when the terms of them have been properly explained) without the help of other intermediate propositions. And as I have no natural right to set up my private judgment as the standard of truth, in opposition to that of the rest of mankind, I do not see but that an unbeliever is as much at liberty to assert the *falsehood*, as I am to assert the *truth* of such propositions; and what would be gained by our reciprocally calling one another fools and blockheads?

The source of this umbrage that has been taken at *reasoning* about religion, appears to me to have been a mistake concerning the nature of it, and an expectation of a *kind*, or *degree* of evidence, that the nature of the case will not admit of; and which, indeed, is by no means necessary for the purpose to which it is applied; being different from, or superior to, that evidence which, in
other

other similar cases, does actually produce conviction, and influence the conduct; which, however, is evidently all that can be necessary in the business of religion.

If a lottery be proposed to me, in which I see that there are a thousand prizes to one blank, I do not demur about purchasing a ticket, because it cannot be *absolutely demonstrated* that I shall be a gainer by it; a very high degree of probability having an effect upon the mind, that can hardly be distinguished from that of absolute certainty.

If the Copernican hypothesis of the solar system be proposed to me, I do not reject it, or even keep my mind in suspense, because there is a *possibility* of the Ptolemaic system being true, and because the sun, immense as it is, and rapid as its motion must be, *may* revolve round the earth.

This is still more evidently the case with respect to the influence of *testimony* upon the mind of man, though it can never amount to more than a very high degree of probability. For we reason and act upon the supposition of there having been such a man as Julius Cæsar, of his having been stabbed in the senate-house, and of there being such a city as Pekin in China, just as if we ourselves had been present at those scenes, or places; though there is a *possibility* of all the books we have read having been contrived to impose upon us and the world,

world, and that all our acquaintance were in the secret, and concurred to favour the deception.

Now all the evidence of religious truths is of these kinds, being either general conclusions, by induction from a number of particular appearances, or founded on historical evidence.

If any person, like Lord Bolingbroke, call in question the goodness of God, all that I can say to convince him of his mistake, is to shew him that there are more marks of kind intention than of the contrary in the structure and government of the world; and, if he reply, that some facts, singly taken, are as evident marks of a malevolent intention, as others are of a good intention, and the particular instances to which he alludes be such as I cannot deny or explain, so that my proof is not complete, I frankly acknowledge that I have no other, or better. But this is sufficient to satisfy me, and, I presume, it will be abundantly satisfactory to all who are candid and impartial; and with persons who are otherwise disposed, an appeal to their common sense will have no more effect.

In like manner, to prove the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ, the early dates, and consequent authenticity of the gospel histories, or any other facts, from which the truth of what we call the *gospel* is inferred, it is sufficient, but it is necessary, to shew that the credibility of these facts
has

has the same foundation as that of those which constitute the body of all ancient history, and that the miraculous events have such additional evidence of an external and internal kind, as overbalances our backwardness to admit the truth of facts dissimilar to those in other histories, and those which have fallen within our own particular observation. And if any person will say that this is not *demonstration*, I am silent; satisfied with having alledged such evidence as the nature of the case admitted, and despairing of producing conviction by any other means.

The thing that seems chiefly to have influenced the writers above-mentioned to desert the plain doctrine of Mr. Locke, concerning the source of our ideas, is its insufficiency to demonstrate the reality of a *material world*; and, I readily acknowledge, it is insufficient for such a demonstration as shall leave no room for cavil: because it may be said that, it is *possible* that the divine being may, by his own immediate agency, present every separate train of ideas to every individual mind, without the medium of an external world. And if this appears to any person a more natural, and simple hypothesis to account for our ideas, and therefore preferable to the supposition of a real external world; by means of which, and of a more general agency of the deity, the same ideas may be presented to thousands and millions of minds, I
leave

leave him to his imagination, from which no evil, that I know, will result.

Half the inhabitants of the globe, for instance, may be looking towards the heavens at the same time, and all their minds are impressed in the same manner: all see the moon, stars, and planets, in precisely the same situations; and even the observations of those who use telescopes, correspond with the utmost exactness. To explain this, bishop Berkley says, that the divine being, attending particularly to each individual mind, impresses their sensoriums in the same, or a corresponding manner, without the medium of any thing external to them. On the other hand, I, without pretending that his scheme is impossible, where divine power is concerned, think, however, that it is more natural to suppose, that there really are such bodies as the moon, stars, and planets, placed at certain distances from us, and moving in certain directions; by means of which, without such an agency of the deity as he supposes, all our minds are necessarily impressed in this corresponding manner.

I am satisfied that if such a representation as this (by which I exhibit to any person particular appearances as arising from more *general laws*, which is agreeable to the analogy of every thing else that we observe) does not please and convince him, it will signify nothing to tell him, with

Messrs.

Messrs. Reid, Beattie, and Oswald, that the case is not to be argued at all, that he has something within himself, called *common sense*, which tells him that there *is* an external world, and that, if he reflects a moment, he must *know* that all his objections are frivolous and absurd.

The hypothesis of there being no external world, is by no means so shocking to my understanding, or, to use the favourite phrase, my common sense, as the supposition that I am properly *conscious* of more than passes within my own mind, or, as Dr. Reid expresses it, that we *really perceive things that are external to us*, and do not judge of all things that are without ourselves by notices perceived within, how mistaken soever we may be in our judgments concerning them.

It is not very easy to understand what it is, philosophically speaking, that Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald, always mean by their common sense; but how captivating soever their general description of it may be at the first hearing, they appear to me to be exceedingly vague and inconsistent, upon a more attentive examination.

Sometimes one would imagine, that the human mind was so effectually guarded with this internal defence, that no one of the human race could be in danger of falling into any error of consequence, and that even all revelation might have
been

been spared. "The human mind," says Dr. Oswald, vol. i. p. 8, "has a power of pronouncing, at first sight on obvious truth, with a quickness, clearness, and indubitable certainty, similar, if not equal to the information conveyed by the external organs of sense. Its exercise begins in children with the first dawn of rationality, and not till then; and is ever after enjoyed, in some degree, by learned and unlearned, and by every individual of the human kind, who is not an idiot, or some how disordered in his intellects, affording an almost infallible direction in the whole conduct of their lives; and was intended by the author of our being for giving us intire satisfaction concerning all primary truths, those of religion in particular; and our not having recourse to that power, is the true cause of those idle disputes which have been maintained of late about the truth of religion. The feeling of moral excellence," he says, p. 120, "may be lost, but, the case of madness excepted, a man cannot lose a perception of the difference between obvious truth and palpable absurdity."

At other times we are informed, that it is a most difficult thing to attain to a right judgment on the principles of this same common sense. "Good sense," Dr. Oswald says, vol. i. p. 16, "is a species of knowledge, of difficult attainment.

“ ment. It is, indeed, the gift of heaven, but
 “ needs to be stirred up, and has been so long, and
 “ universally neglected, that to give it full exer-
 “ cise requires more attention and application of
 “ thought, than most people are willing to bestow.
 “ Every smatterer in science takes it for granted
 “ that he is possessed of the principles of good sense,
 “ but on trial the greatest adepts will hardly admit
 “ them. They are, in truth, so plain, that to il-
 “ lustrate and inculcate them is to tire the patience,
 “ and to affront the judgment of the reader; but,
 “ at the same time, so diametrically opposite to
 “ received opinions, and established maxims, that
 “ barely to propose, or even to state them with
 “ perspicuity, without unfolding or inculcating
 “ them with due care, would be to encourage
 “ that superficial way of judging, which is the
 “ source of all our errors.”

He farther says, p. 18, that in order “ to con-
 “ vey that full and permanent conviction which
 “ is due to truths of the first rank, the mind must
 “ be allowed to judge of them with impartiality
 “ and coolness, proceeding not upon sentiments
 “ suddenly raised by striking views of truth, but
 “ on a deliberate judgment, formed by a familiar
 “ acquaintance with the object: and in order
 “ thereto, the same truths must be presented again
 “ and again, with no great variation, and with
 “ as little adventitious ornament as possible.”

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In this deplorable state of the affairs of *common sense*, one would think that Dr. Oswald might be glad to avail himself of the aid of *reason*; but of this he entertains the greatest dread. Even a professed unbeliever is not so great a bugbear to him as a reasoning christian. I shall present my reader with one of his numerous pathetic complaints on this subject.

“ Not only the christian revelation, but the
“ moral perfections and moral government of God,
“ yea, and the very being of virtue, have been
“ made a subject of dispute. Freethinkers are not
“ ashamed to publish their doubts concerning
“ these realities; divines and philosophers have
“ not disdained to establish them by a multitude
“ of arguments. What is yet more to be regret-
“ ted, the preachers of the gospel, forgetting the
“ dignity of their character, and the design of their
“ office, have condescended to plead the cause of
“ religion in much the same manner as lawyers
“ maintain a disputed right of property. Instead
“ of awakening the natural sentiments of the hu-
“ man heart, and giving them a free direction,
“ they have entered into reasonings about piety,
“ justice, and benevolence, too profound to be
“ fathomed by the multitude, and too subtle to
“ produce any considerable effect. Instead of set-
“ ting forth the displays of divine perfection in
“ the

“ the dispensation of the gospel, so admirably
“ well fitted to touch, to penetrate, and to subdue
“ the human mind, they have entertained their
“ audiences with long and laboured proofs of a
“ revelation from God, of which few have any se-
“ rious doubt, and which no man can disbelieve
“ in any consistency with common sense. May
“ not this be called with great propriety a throw-
“ ing cold water on religion? And ought it not
“ to be considered as one of the chief causes of
“ that insensibility to all its concerns, of which
“ we so frequently complain? The multitude
“ have been astonished, wise men have been
“ ashamed, and good men grieved at this treat-
“ ment of religion, so much beneath its dignity.”

I would not be severe upon Dr. Oswald, though he observes no bounds in his censures of the most respectable writers of the last and present age, without distinction; but I cannot help saying, that, in his loose and rhetorical manner, and with such airs of self-sufficiency, and arrogance, is the greatest part of his two volumes written; consisting of mere declamation, the grossest misrepresentations of the nature of reasoning, and exaggerations of the abuses of it; imputing to christian divines a conduct that they are not chargeable with, and where argument fails, having recourse to dogmatical assertions, and abuse; at the same
time

time that his tautology is inexpressibly tiresome. I really do not remember that I ever read a work so large as this of Dr. Oswald, that contained so little; I do not mean of *truth*, but of *any thing*. That any good should come of this manner of writing is to me incomprehensible. It may, indeed give pleasure to some to see insolence answered by insolence, and sophistry by sophistry; but, alas! truth is no gainer by such a mode of defence as this.

It was not till after the publication of the two preceding parts of this work that I had an opportunity of reading Dr. Oswald's treatise; for though I had promised the author of the *Remarks on my publications*, to procure it immediately, upon his recommendation, a variety of pursuits prevented my giving any attention to it. I am sorry that my opinion of this performance should differ so much from that of this ingenious writer, and indeed from that of many other persons whom I much respect.

As to *Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, I frankly declare, that, excepting a few incidental things, foreign to his general object, I do not find in it a single observation that is *new*, and at the same time *just*. The only effect of all the pains that both this ingenious writer, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald have

taken with the subject, appears to me to have terminated in nothing, besides beclouding and puzzling a business, which, in the main, Mr. Locke left very clear, and far advanced.

But I am most astonished that any person should write upon the subject of the *human mind*, without taking notice of so capital a performance as that of Dr. Hartley; who, beginning where Mr. Locke left it, has raised a system that is equally amazing for its simplicity and extent. For my own part, I do not hesitate to rank *Hartley's Observations on Man* among the greatest efforts of human genius; and, considering the great importance of the object of it, I am clearly of opinion that it is, without exception, the most valuable production of the mind of man.

Time is necessary to the general understanding of every work of great depth and merit, as was most remarkably the case with *Newton's Principia*. I have no doubt, however, but that the time will certainly come, when the general principles of Hartley, as well as of Locke, will be fully established, and when every contrary hypothesis will be forgotten. If they be remembered at all, it will be with astonishment, that, appearing after such a work as Hartley's (which was published so long ago as 1749) the least attention should have been given to them.

I can-

I cannot conclude this introduction without recommending to my readers the present bishop of Carlisle's *Appendix to his Considerations on the Theory of Religion*, for a fuller account of the scripture doctrine of the *state of the dead*, than is given in Chapter I. Section V. of this volume.

PART III.

THE

DOCTRINES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

AS the Jewish and christian religions have been proved to be founded on a series of revelations of the will of God to man, the history of which is recorded in the Old and New Testament, it behoves us to examine these books with care; taking it for granted, that they contain truths of the greatest importance to our happiness.

In this part of my work, therefore, I propose to exhibit, with as much fidelity and distinctness as I can, all the *general knowledge* that can, with certainty, be collected from these books, which are usually, and very deservedly, termed *sacred*. I shall be careful, however, to keep as far as possible from all controversy, and simply recite what appears to me to be contained in the scriptures, just as I think I should have done if I had never heard

heard of any controversy upon the subject. Every thing that has been the subject of much contention and debate, I shall reserve for another work, which will be appropriated to a view of the corruptions of christianity.

As I divided the subject of natural religion into three parts, the first containing what we are able to learn from thence concerning *God*, the second concerning *our duty*, and the third concerning our *future expectations*, I shall adhere to the same general division in this part of my work also; by which means it will be more easily and distinctly seen what *additional*, what *fuller*, and *clearer* knowledge, we receive on these important subjects from divine revelation.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING GOD.

This first chapter I shall subdivide into two others, the first respecting the *unity*, as also the *natural perfections*, and *providence* of God, and the second his *moral perfections*.

SECTION I.

Of the *unity*, the *natural perfections*, and *providence* of God.

ONE of the most important of all the truths concerning God, as that invisible being, who is the object of our supreme reverence, and to whom we address ourselves in prayer, as our immediate inspector, and moral governor, is his *unity*. That there is but one God, we have seen to be a truth deducible from the observation of the works of nature; but it is not so easily and clearly deducible from thence, but that mankind have always been prone to fall into *idolatry*, or the worship of more gods than one; which seems to have arisen chiefly from the very low and imperfect ideas that men entertained of the knowledge and power of God.

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Judging of all other intelligent beings by themselves, they had no conception of one superintending mind only being sufficient for all the purposes for which the presence and agency of the deity was supposed to be requisite; and therefore they imagined, that there must, of necessity, be a multiplicity of beings of that character, each superintending his respective province in nature. If they retained the idea of one *supreme* God, which seems to have been the belief of all mankind in the earliest ages (handed down, I believe, by tradition from Noah and his immediate descendants) they still did not think that this one supreme being could govern the world without the assistance of other *subordinate* beings, of an intermediate nature between himself and man. These subordinate agents they would therefore consider as the beings with whom they had immediately to do, and whom their religious worship and homage would respect; while the worship of the supreme being would be in danger of being neglected.

This was the actual progress of things in the heathen world. Mankind began with the worship of one true God; but, having afterwards associated with him various inferior beings, as objects of divine worship, they, in time, lost sight of the supreme being altogether; so that none of the objects of the popular worship among the Greeks or Romans were any thing more than either the sun,

moon, and stars, the souls of dead men, or their images, symbols, &c.

With these general ideas, which are the foundation of all idolatry, mankind would naturally, in the first place, pitch upon the most illustrious objects in the creation, as instruments in the hands of the supreme being of communicating blessings to them, or inflicting judgments upon them; and these they would consider as the most proper to be placed in the order of gods. Accordingly we find, that the sun, moon, and stars, were universally the first objects of idolatrous worship, as those beings from which it was supposed that men had the most to hope or to fear. And being sensible that *intelligence* was necessary to their office of superintending the affairs of men, they either imagined them to be animated by some intelligent minds, or to be the habitations of such beings.

Imagining also that there must be something in man besides what is visible, they conceived that a spirit, capable of being separated from him, animated him also; and, supposing that the powers of this animating spirit might even be enlarged after death, they made the most illustrious of their princes and heroes the objects of divine worship likewise. Afterwards, imagining that various parts both of the animate and inanimate creation bore a peculiar relation to these gods, with respect to their
names,

names, forms, or qualities, they first entertained a respect for them as the symbols, or tokens of the presence of their gods; and in time proceeded to conceive of them as being themselves endowed with supernatural powers. In this manner, probably, the ancient Egyptians came to rank a great number of both animals and vegetables, and also their images, &c. among their divinities.

By proceeding in this train, it came to pass, as I have observed already, that at length the one living and true God, the creator and governor of the world, was overlooked, and forgotten by mankind. The necessary consequence of this was, that, besides entertaining very false, unworthy, and injurious ideas of God and his perfections, mankind were destitute of that most excellent means of exalting their conceptions, and consequently of improving their natures, which is derived from the contemplation of, and a sense of their constant intercourse with, a being in whom all venerable and amiable attributes unite. It is a sense of our immediate dependence upon, and constant intercourse with a being, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and, at the same time, perfectly holy, just, and good, that can alone inspire that deep reverence, humility, gratitude, submission, and confidence, which gives the greatest dignity to our

sentiments, the noblest ardour to our best affections, the most serene and chearful temper of mind under all events, and which thereby qualifies and prompts us to act our parts in life to the most advantage, so as to make the most of our situation in every respect, by being happy ourselves, and contributing to the happiness of others.

Whenever we quit our hold of this great doctrine of the *divine unity*, and imagine that there is no one object of our worship in whom all venerable and all amiable attributes unite, there is nothing we can contemplate that is capable of impressing our minds *so forcibly*, or in *so happy* a manner. Our attention being divided by a multiplicity of objects of worship, and our ideas of their characters being necessarily different, our affections, with respect to them, will also vary, so that we shall be apt to love some of them, and be afraid of others; and since, in consequence of distributing the divine attributes among a number of beings, they will all of them be, necessarily, brought nearer to our own level, both our fear and love will be in danger of becoming little more than such as beings like ourselves are capable of inspiring. It is also impossible but that, while we imagine there is such a multiplicity of superior beings, which consequently must have their peculiar characters, we shall suppose them to have their
pecu-

peculiar tastes and inclinations, and that those of some of them will interfere with those of others.

Lastly, it can hardly be, but that, among such a number of deities, of inferior natures and characters, the creatures of men's imagination, and consequently supposed to be in many respects like themselves, some of them will be supposed to be capable of such *capricious* fancies, as men are influenced by; and consequently that, in order to please them, mankind would be led to a variety of superstitious and unmeaning practices, and even such as are immoral and destructive.

This appears to have been the natural and universal consequence of polytheism; so that though at first sight it may seem to be a matter of speculation only, whether there be more gods than one, it has, in fact, the most serious and alarming consequences in practice. By breaking the unity of God, and distributing his attributes among a number of beings, the character of the divine administration was debased, a multiplicity of rites were devised, in order to please a multiplicity of deities, and some of them were whimsical, some flagitious, and some cruel.

That the doctrine of the divine unity is a doctrine of very great importance, may be inferred with certainty, from the very great stress that is every where laid upon it in the scriptures. The sacred writers always speak of one being, of in-

comprehensible power, wisdom, and goodness; as the only maker, preserver, and sovereign disposer of all things; who has existed from all eternity, and who is absolutely unchangeable in his nature or designs. He is the only invisible being to whom we are authorized to address ourselves by prayer, while the worship of other beings is forbidden in the strongest manner; and other gods, whether supposed to be equal or subordinate to him, are spoken of with the greatest indignation and contempt. More especially, whereas some of the heathen gods were thought to preside over some particular parts of nature only, and others over other parts, and some of them were supposed to be the authors of good, and others of evil; *universal dominion* is always ascribed to the one true God, and also the appointment of both good and evil, respecting both individuals and nations of mankind.

Indeed, it is not possible to form an idea of the justness, or propriety of those magnificent descriptions of the perfections and government of God, which occur in the books of scripture, without keeping in view the very low ideas which other nations entertained of their Gods; nor can we see the propriety of this subject being so much enlarged upon, and the precepts founded upon it being so frequently repeated, or of the sanctions appointed to guard it being made so awful, without considering that very great propensity to idolatry which

which has ever been discovered by mankind, and the dreadful consequences of it with respect to the depravity which it has never failed to introduce into the sentiments and hearts of men, and the abominable and horrid customs which it has occasioned respecting society. Idolatry has never failed to insinuate itself, under some form or other, into every dispensation of religion, infomuch, that even christianity has by no means escaped this dreadful corruption.

Having undertaken to exhibit what it is that we learn from revelation, I shall also endeavour to give some idea of the relative importance of every article of faith, by noting the degree of stress which the sacred writers lay upon each of them; and I do not think that I can do my duty, and fulfil my engagements in this respect, without reciting a considerable number of passages from the books both of the Old and New Testament on this subject, and more especially from the former, which relates to the times in which idolatry was peculiarly prevalent. To preserve in the world the knowledge and worship of the one true God, seems, indeed, to have been the principal object of the whole Jewish dispensation; and, therefore, we are not surprized that our attention is constantly kept up to it through the whole of the Old Testament history. Besides, we are apt to lose our idea, not only of the *relative*, but also of the *real* importance

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ance of this doctrine, without recurring to, and reflecting upon what we read in the Old Testament concerning it.

The first of the Ten Commandments pronounced by an audible and supernatural voice from mount Sinai, in the hearing of all the Israelites, relates to this subject only, Ex. xx. 3. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The same doctrine of the unity of God, and the sentiments which result from it, are also frequently inculcated in all the writings of Moses; as Deut. vi. 4. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

This passage of Moses is also quoted by our Lord, as containing the first and the most important of all the commandments in the Law, Mark xii. 28—30, “And one of the scribes came and asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.”

The divine being himself, in a very emphatical manner, asserts his sole title to divinity in Is. xliv. 6. “Thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, and
“ his

“ his redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first,
“ and I am the last, and besides me there is no
“ God. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not
“ I told thee from that time, and have declared
“ it? Ye are even my witnessess. Is there a God
“ besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not
“ any.”

The same doctrine is not only always supposed, but it is likewise frequently and very expressly inculcated in the New Testament; as in 1 Tim. ii. 5. “ There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” and, 1 Cor. viii. 4. &c. “ We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” The Apostle James also mentions this doctrine in such a manner as plainly shews that he considered it as the most incontestable maxim in religion. Jam. ii. 19. “ Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well.”

The worship of the true God by images, or symbols, &c. is also most expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. This species of idolatry was commonly practised at the time of the promulgation
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tion of the Law, and the second of the Ten Commandments is appropriated to the prohibition of it. Ex. xx. 4, &c. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

To enforce this command, Moses is particularly careful to remind the Israelites, that when God spake to them from mount Sinai, they saw no resemblance whatever, but only heard a voice, Deut. iv. 12. &c. “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice. Take ye, therefore, good heed to yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female; the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creep-
“ eth

“ eth on the ground, the likenefs of any fifh that
“ is in the water beneath the earth. And left thou
“ lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou
“ feefh the fun, and the moon, and the ftars, even
“ all the hoft of heaven, fhouldeft be driven to
“ worfhip them, and ferve them, which the Lord
“ thy God hath divided unto all nations under the
“ whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you,
“ and brought you forth out of the iron furnace,
“ even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of
“ inheritance, as ye are this day.”

The reason of this prohibition feems to be, that, in confequence of making ufe of images, though only as fymbols, or tokens of the divine prefence, divine powers will at length, by the natural affociation of ideas, be transferred to them, and will be fuppofed to refide in them, and to belong to them. This, indeed, has always been, in fact, the progress of human fentiments. Otherwife different images of the fame god in the heathen world, or of the fame faint in popifh countries, could never have been imagined to be poffeffed of different powers, which is well known to be the cafe; fo that whatever may have been the *origin* of this mode of worfhip, and in whatever light it may be viewed by the more intelligent of thofe who practice and apologife for it, with the common people, at leaft, it is, in reality, nothing but the worfhip of wood, and ftone, and metal; and in this light
it

it is justly considered by the sacred writers. With a view to exclude this kind of worship, God is likewise said to be *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27, and to “ dwell in light which no man can approach unto, “ whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The *works of creation* are in a peculiar manner ascribed to the one true God, and especially the creation of the heavenly bodies, which were the first objects of idolatrous worship in the Gentile world. The first book of Moses begins with reciting all the visible parts of the universe, as the work and appointment of God, Gen. i. 1. “ In “ the beginning God created the heaven, and the “ earth.” Ver. 16. “ And God made two great “ lights, the greater light to rule the day; and the “ lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars “ also.” The ease with which all these magnificent works were produced is most happily expressed by representing them as the immediate effect of a simple command, Gen. i. 3. “ And God said, “ Let there be light: and there was light.” In the same manner also the Psalmist expresses it, Ps. xxxiii. 6. &c. “ By the word of the Lord were “ the heavens made, and all the host of them by “ the breath of his mouth. He spake, and it was “ done; he commanded, and it stood fast.”

The vain pretences of the heathen gods are exposed on this very account, viz. their not having
made

made the world. Jer. x. 10. &c. “ The Lord
“ is the true God, and an everlasting king. The
“ gods that have not made the heavens, and the
“ earth, even they shall perish from the earth,
“ and from under these heavens. He hath made
“ the earth by his power, he hath established the
“ world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the
“ heavens by his discretion.”

When the people of Lystra would have paid divine honours to Barnabas and Paul, supposing the former of them to have been Jupiter, and the latter Mercury; Paul, with peculiar propriety, says to them, Acts xiv. 15, “ Sirs, why do ye
“ these things? We also are men of like passions
“ with you, and preach unto you that ye should
“ turn from these vanities, unto the living God,
“ who made the heaven and earth, and the sea,
“ and all things that are therein.” For neither the people of Lystra, nor any of the idolatrous Greeks or Romans, had the least idea of even Jupiter, the chief of their gods, having been at all concerned in the creation of the heavens or the earth. To the same purpose, also, the apostle Paul addresses himself to the people of Athens, Acts xvii. 24. &c. “ God that made the world,
“ and all things therein, seeing that he is lord of
“ heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made
“ with hands, neither is worshipped with men’s
“ hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing
“ he

“ he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ;
 “ and hath made of one blood all nations of men,
 “ for to dwell on all the face of the earth ; and
 “ hath determined the times before appointed, and
 “ the bounds of their habitation.” All this excellent doctrine would be quite new to his Athenian audience, who had never been used to ascribe such extraordinary powers to any of the gods which were the objects of their worship.

The absolute *property* which the only true God has in the works of which he is the author, is often finely expressed in the books of scripture. Abraham, addressing himself to the supreme being, calls him “ the most high God, the possessor of heaven
 “ and earth,” Gen. xiv. 22. David, in his last speech, delivered in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, addressing himself to God, says, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, &c. “ Blessed be thou, Lord
 “ God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever.
 “ Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the
 “ power, and the glory, and the victory, and the
 “ majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the
 “ earth, is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O
 “ Lord, and thou art exalted, as head over all.” Ps. xxiv. 1. &c. “ The earth is the Lord’s, and
 “ the fulness thereof, the world, and they that
 “ dwell therein ; for he hath founded it upon the
 “ seas, and established it upon the floods. Ps. xcv.
 3. “ The Lord is a great God, and a great king
 “ above

“ above all gods. In his hands are the deep places
“ of the earth, the strength of the hills is his also.
“ The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands
“ formed the dry land. O come, let us worship,
“ and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our
“ Maker; for he is our God, and we are the peo-
“ ple of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”
Moses also was careful to impress the Israelites
with this important truth, as well as with the belief
of the unity, and creating power of God, Deut. x.
14. “ Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of
“ heavens is the Lord’s thy God, the earth also,
“ with all that therein is.”

The absolute sovereignty of God is also strongly
expressed by Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 21. “ Let no man
“ glory in men, for all things are your’s, and ye
“ are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Also, 1 Cor.
xv. 24. “ Then cometh the end, when he shall
“ have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the
“ Father, when he shall have put down all rule,
“ and all authority, and power; for he must reign
“ till he hath put all enemies under his feet. But
“ when he saith all things are put under him, it is
“ manifest that he is excepted who did put all
“ things under him. And when all things shall
“ be subdued under him, then shall the Son also
“ himself be subject unto him that put all things
“ under him, that God may be all in all.

The

The one true God is also represented, in the scriptures, as the sole *preserver*, and constant *upholder* of all things. Upon the occasion of the solemn fast, and prayer, which was observed by the Jews upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, they say, Neh. ix. 5. &c. “Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worship thee.” David expresses the same sentiment more fully, Ps. cxix. 90. “Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day, according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants.”

The divine sovereignty, with respect to the *absolute disposal* of all things, is a necessary consequence of his sole property in them; and this also is frequently and strongly expressed in the scriptures, Ps. ciii, 19. “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.” Perhaps the fullest and most explicit acknowledgment of this kind, is that which was made by Nebuchadnezzar, after his humiliation, Dan. iv. 1. 35. 37. “Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto
“ you.

“ you. I thought it good to shew the signs and
“ wonders, that the high God have wrought to-
“ ward me. How great are his signs ! and how
“ mighty are his wonders ! his kingdom is an
“ everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from
“ generation to generation. And all the inhabi-
“ tants of the earth are reputed as nothing : and he
“ doeth according to his will in the army of hea-
“ ven, and among the inhabitants of the earth :
“ and none can stay his hand, or say unto him,
“ What doest thou ? Now I Nebuchadnezzar
“ praise and extol and honour the king of heaven,
“ all whose works are truth, and his ways judg-
“ ment, and those that walk in pride he is able to
“ debase.”

The divine being himself makes the following solemn declaration, *Is. xlvi. 9.* “ Remember the
“ former things of old, for I am God, and there
“ is none else ; I am God, and there is none like
“ me. Declaring the end from the beginning,
“ and from antient times the things that are not
“ yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I
“ will do all my pleasure. I have spoken it, I
“ will also bring it to pass ; I have purposed it, I
“ will also do it.” *Daniel*, in his thanksgiving to
God, on account of the revelation that was made
to him of *Nebuchadnezzar’s* dream, says, *Dan. ii.*
20. “ Blessed be the name of God for ever and
“ ever : for wisdom and might are his. And he
“ changeth

“ changeth the times and the seasons ; he removeth
 “ kings, and setteth up kings : he giveth wisdom
 “ unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know
 “ understanding.” Cyrus made the same acknow-
 ledgment, when, in his decree for rebuilding the
 temple of Jerusalem, he said, Ezra i. 2. “ Thus
 “ saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of
 “ heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the
 “ earth, and he hath charged me to build him an
 “ house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.”

Power and wisdom are ascribed to this one God in the highest degree, and in the most emphatical manner in the books of scripture. Indeed, this is necessarily implied in what has been already recited concerning his being the maker and governor of all things. I shall, however, quote a few passages with this view only. In Is. xxviii. 29. he is said to be “ wonderful in counsel, and excellent in
 “ working;” and in 1 Tim. i. 17. he is called “ the only wise God,” and also in Rom. xvi. 27. and Jude 25. But in Is. xl. 12. &c. we have a most magnificent description of the power, wisdom, and universal supremacy of the one true God, as opposed to the objects of worship in the heathen world. “ Who hath measured the waters in the
 “ hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with
 “ the span, and comprehended the dust of the
 “ earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains
 “ in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath
 “ directed

“ directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his coun-
“ fellow, hath taught him? With whom took he
“ counsel, and who instructed him, and taught
“ him knowledge, and shewed him the way of un-
“ derstanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop
“ of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust
“ of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as
“ a very little thing. All nations before him are
“ as nothing, and they are counted to him less
“ than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will
“ ye liken God? or what likenesses will ye com-
“ pare unto him? Have ye not known? have ye
“ not heard? hath it not been told you from the
“ beginning? have ye not understood from the
“ foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth
“ upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants
“ thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out
“ the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out
“ as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes
“ to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth
“ as vanity. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold
“ who hath created these things, that bringeth out
“ their host by number: he calleth them all by
“ names, by the greatness of his might, for that
“ he is strong in power, not one faileth. Why
“ sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,
“ My way is hid from the Lord, and my judg-
“ ment is passed over from my God? Hast thou
“ not known? had thou not heard, that the ever-
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“lasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends
 “of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?
 “there is no searching of his understanding. He
 “giveth power to the faint; and to them that have
 “no might, he increaseth strength.”

The Gentile nations imagined that some Gods had power over one country, and others over another; and even that some had power in the hills, and others in the valleys only. There are, however, two remarkable pieces of history in the Old Testament, in which we find that, for the instruction of the Israelites, the divine being particularly attended to, and by the most signal displays of his own power, refuted those absurd opinions.

Senacherib, king of Assyria, imagining that the God of Israel was no other than the God of that particular country, and of no greater power than the Gods of other countries, insulted Hezekiah, king of Judah, which he was then about to invade, with a detail of the other kingdoms which he had lately conquered, saying, Is. xxxvii. 10. &c.
 “Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah,
 “saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest
 “deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be
 “given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Be-
 “hold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria
 “have done to all lands, by destroying them utter-
 “ly, and shalt thou be delivered? Have the Gods
 “of the nations delivered them which my fathers
 “have

“ have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Re-
“ zeph, and the children of Eden which were in
“ Telafar? Where is the king of Hamath, and
“ the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of
“ Sepharvaim, Henah, and Ivah?” Hezekiah, in
his prayer to God upon this occasion, avows
very different sentiments, acknowledging the su-
premacny of the one true God, and putting his trust
in him only; for laying open the letter which he
received from Senacherib before the Lord, he pray-
ed, saying, *Is. xxxvii. 16.* “ O Lord of hosts,
“ God of Israel, that dwellest between the cheru-
“ bim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all
“ the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made hea-
“ ven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and
“ hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and
“ hear all the words of Senacherib, who hath sent
“ to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord,
“ the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the na-
“ tions and their countries, and have cast their
“ Gods into the fire: for they were no Gods, but
“ the work of mens hands, wood and stone:
“ therefore they have destroyed them. Now there-
“ fore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand,
“ that all the kingdoms of the earth may know,
“ that thou art the Lord, even thou only.” Upon
this prayer, the prophet *Isaiah* was sent to encou-
rage Hezekiah, with a promise of the utter destruc-

tion of the army of Senacherib, which was presently after accomplished, in a sudden and miraculous manner.

The Syrians having been worsted in the hilly country, during their war with the Israelites, imagined that the God of Israel had power there, but not in the valleys; and, therefore, endeavoured to bring the Israelites to an engagement in a flat country. But there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, 1 Kings xx. 28. "Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys: therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Accordingly the historian informs us, that, in a battle which was fought on the seventh day from that time, the Israelites gained a most signal victory over the Syrians.

It was an opinion that prevailed from very early times in the east, and which spread from thence into the western parts of the world, that the *evil* there is in the world was not the production of a good being, but arose from an evil intelligent principle, either co-ordinate with the good one, or subordinate to him; and as the attributes of the good principle were divided, and distributed by them among a number of beings, so also invisible powers of an evil nature were multiplied, and became

came the object of several modes of worship. Against this principle of idolatry the strongest declarations are made in the scriptures, which ascribe both good and evil to the same supreme mind, who effects his excellent purposes by means of them both alike.

Thus, the divine being, addressed himself to Cyrus (though long before that prince was born) in whose country the opinion above-mentioned was most firmly established, says Is. xlv. 4. &c. “ For
“ Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I
“ have even called thee by thy name: I have sur-
“ named thee, though thou hast not known me.
“ I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is
“ no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou
“ hast not known me: That they may know from
“ the rising of the sun, and from the West, that
“ there is none besides me, I am the Lord, and
“ there is none else. I form the light, and create
“ darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the
“ Lord do all these things.” To the same purpose
Jeremiah, in Lament. iii. 37, &c. “ Who is he
“ that says, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord
“ commanded it not. Out of the mouth of the
“ most high, proceedeth not evil and good; And
Amos iii. 6. “ Shall there be evil in a city, and
“ the Lord hath not done it? Job also is made to
express the same sentiment, when he says, Job. 1.
21. “ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

“ away ; blessed be the name of the Lord :” and again, Job. ii. 10. “ Shall we receive good at
 “ the hand of God, and shall we not receive
 “ evil ?”

Lastly, in the course of the scripture history, not only all prosperous events, but also all calamitous ones are constantly ascribed to God, as the sole governor of the world, and the sovereign disposer of all events, respecting both nations and individuals of mankind. Thus the destruction of the old world by a flood, as well as the interposition in favour of Noah and his family ; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the saving of Lot : the plagues of Egypt, as well as the deliverance of the Israelites ; and also all the good and evil that befel either the Israelites themselves, or the neighbouring nations with whom they had intercourse, are equally referred to the same superintending providence, administering both good and evil, according to the characters and conduct of men.

The most striking ideas are given us in the scriptures of the *eternity*, the *omnipresence*, and *unchangeable nature* of the true God. I shall only quote a few, out of numberless passages to this purpose. Moses, in that prayer of his, which makes the xcth Psalm, addresses the divine being in the following manner : “ Lord, thou hast been our dwelling
 “ place in all generations. Before the mountains
 “ were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed
 “ the

“ the earth and the world : even from everlasting
“ to everlasting thou art God.” Solomon, at the
dedication of his temple, addressing the divine be-
ing, in the presence of all the people, says, 1 Kings
viii. 27. “ But will God, indeed, dwell on the
“ earth ? behold, the heaven, and heaven of hea-
“ vens cannot contain thee, how much less this
house that I have builded ?” By the prophet Jere-
miah, the divine being says, Jer. xxiii. 23. &c.
“ Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a
“ God afar off ? Can any hide himself in secret
“ places that I shall not see him ? saith the Lord :
“ do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord.”
In Pf. xxxiii. 13. we read, “ The Lord looketh
“ from heaven : he beholdeth all the sons of men.
“ From the place of his habitation he looketh upon
“ all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth
“ their hearts alike : he considereth all their
“ works.”

In the cxxxix Psalm, we have a most admirable
description of the *universal presence* of God, and also
of the intimate knowledge that he has of every
thing belonging to man. Pf. cxxxix. 1. &c.
“ O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.
“ Thou knowest my down-sitting, [and mine up-
“ rising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
“ Thou compasseth my path, and my lying down,
“ and art acquainted with all my ways. For these

“ is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou
 “ knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me be-
 “ hind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
 “ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is
 “ high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I
 “ go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from
 “ thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou
 “ art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou
 “ art there. If I take the wings of the morning,
 “ and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:
 “ even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right
 “ hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the dark-
 “ nefs shall cover me: even the night shall be
 “ light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not
 “ from thee, but the night shineth as the day;
 “ the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

The knowledge which the divine being has of
 the *hearts of men*, whatever pains they may take to
 conceal them, is strongly expressed in Jer. xvii. 9.
 “ The heart is deceitful above all things, and de-
 “ sperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord
 “ search the heart, I try the reins, even to give
 “ every man according to his ways, and according
 “ to the fruit of his doings.”

The *unchangeable nature* of God is strongly as-
 serted by himself in Mal. iii. 6. “ I am the
 “ Lord, I change not:” and it is likewise ex-
 pressed, in a peculiarly beautiful and emphatical
 manner, Ps. cii. 25. &c. “ Of old hast thou laid
 “ the

“ the foundation of the earth: and the heavens
“ are the work of thy hands. They shall perish,
“ but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall
“ wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou
“ change them, and they shall be changed. But
“ thou art the same, and thy years shall have no
“ end.” The apostle James also says, ch. i. 17:
“ With God there is no variableness, neither
“ shadow of turning.”

Lastly, the *incomprehensible nature* of God is finely expressed in several parts of scripture, especially in the following passages of the book of Job xi. 7.
“ Canst thou by searching find out God? canst
“ thou find out the almighty unto perfection? It
“ is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper
“ than hell, what canst thou know? The mea-
“ sure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader
“ than the sea.” xxxvi. 26. “ Behold, God is
“ great, and we know him not: xxxvii. 23.
“ Touching the almighty, we cannot find him
“ out.” David also says, Pf. cxlv. 3. “ Great
“ is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his
“ greatness is unsearchable.”

The pretences of the *heathen gods* are refuted in several parts of scripture in a most effectual, and sometimes in a very humorous manner. It is with respect to the knowledge of *future events* that the true God more especially challenges the gods of the heathens, as in Is. xli. 21. &c. “ Produce

“ your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your
 “ strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let
 “ them bring them forth, and shew us what shall
 “ happen: let them shew the former things what
 “ they be, that we may consider them, and know
 “ the latter end of them, or declare us things for
 “ to come. Shew the things that are to come
 “ hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods:
 “ yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dis-
 “ mayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are
 “ of nothing, and your work of nought: an abo-
 “ mination is he that chooseth you.”

When it is foretold that the idols of Babylon should be carried away captive, it is said, Is. xlvi.

1. “ Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their
 “ idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle:
 “ your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a
 “ burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they
 “ bow down together, they could not deliver the
 “ burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.”

Jeremiah also ridicules these gods in a similar manner, Jer. x. 1. &c. “ Hear ye the word which
 “ the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel.
 “ Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the
 “ heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of
 “ heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them.
 “ For the customs of the people are vain: for one
 “ cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the
 “ hands of the workman) with the ax. They
 “ deck

“ deck it with silver and with gold, they fasten it
“ with nails and with hammers, that it move not.
“ They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak
“ not: they must needs be borne, because they
“ cannot go: be not afraid of them, for they can-
“ not do evil, neither also is it in them to do
“ good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto
“ thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is
“ great in might. Who would not fear thee, O
“ king of nations, for to thee doth it appertain.”

The overthrow of Pharoah and his host is represented by Moses as the triumph of the true God over the false ones, Ex. xv. 2. “ The Lord is
“ my strength and song, and he is become my sal-
“ vation: v. 11. “ Who is like unto thee, O
“ Lord, amongst the gods? who is like thee, glo-
“ rious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing won-
“ ders.”

Elijah makes use of a fine piece of irony, when he addresses the priests of Baal, on the occasion of the contest which he proposed between the true God and that imaginary one. When these priests were unable to procure a supernatural fire, to burn their sacrifices, we read 1 Kings xviii. 27. “ And
“ it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked
“ them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god,
“ either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is
“ in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and
“ must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and

“ cut themselves after their manner with knives
 “ and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon
 “ them; but there was neither voice, nor any to
 “ answer, nor any that regarded.” At the con-
 clusion of this affair, the people, who were exceed-
 ingly prone to idolatry, and therefore strongly pre-
 judiced in favour of the priests of Baal, cried out,
 “ The Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the
 “ God.”

We find in the book of Daniel, that both Ne-
 buchadnezzar and Darius, though strongly at-
 tached to their idol worship, were compelled to
 make the same concession. See Dan. ii. xvii. iii.
 29. When Daniel was delivered from the lions,
 we are informed, Dan. vi. 25. that then Darius
 wrote “ unto all people, nations, and languages,
 “ that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied
 “ unto you. I make a decree, that in every do-
 “ minion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear
 “ before the God of Daniel: for he is the living
 “ God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom is
 “ that which shall not be destroyed, and his do-
 “ minion shall be even unto the end.”

Considering the abominable flagitious customs,
 and the cruel and horrid rites of the idolatrous in-
 habitants of Canaan, and other neighbouring na-
 tions, and the shocking depravity of the hearts, as
 well as of the lives of men, which was the neces-
 sary consequence of an addictedness to those mon-
 strous

strous kinds of idolatry, it is no wonder that all possible provision was made to prevent the Israelites from giving into it, and to perpetuate in that one nation the worship of the only living and true God, amidst the universal defection from his worship among all other nations.

Abraham is supposed to have been called from his country, where idolatry is generally thought to have been first introduced, about the time when it began to revolt from the worship of the true God; and it is not improbable that this was the case, as not long after we find idols among the gods of Laban, who lived in the same country, that his daughter Rachel carried some of them away with her, and that afterwards Jacob was obliged to search all his family, and commanded them to put away all their false gods. See Gen. xxxv. 2.

The prohibitions of idolatry by Moses are frequent, and exceedingly emphatical. Besides the first and second commandments, quoted before, we read, Ex. xxiii. 13. “And in all things that
“ I have said unto you, be circumspect; and make
“ no mention of the name of other Gods, neither
“ let it be heard out of thy mouth.”

The orders which the Jews received concerning the extirpation of the inhabitants of Canaan respected this case, and nothing else. The settlement of the Israelites in that country, is expressly
said

said to have been delayed “because the iniquity of
 “ the Amorites was not full,” Gen. xv. 16. We
 read in Deut. xii. 29. &c. “When the Lord thy
 “ God shall cut off the nations from before thee,
 “ whither thou goest to possess them, and thou
 “ succeedest them, and dwellest in their land:
 “ take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by
 “ following them, after that they be destroyed from
 “ before thee, and that thou enquire not after
 “ their gods, saying, How did these nations serve
 “ their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou
 “ shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for
 “ every abomination to the Lord which he hateth,
 “ have they done unto their gods: for even their
 “ sons and their daughters they have burnt in the
 “ fire to their gods:” Deut. xii. 2. &c. “Ye
 “ shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the
 “ nations which ye shall possess served their gods,
 “ upon the high mountains, and upon the hills,
 “ and under every green tree. And you shall
 “ overthrow their altars, and break their pillars,
 “ and burn their groves with fire, and you shall
 “ hew down the graven images of their gods,
 “ and destroy the names of them out of that
 “ place.”

That their motive for this was not the lust of
 plunder, is evident from the orders which they re-
 ceived, and with which they complied, not to take
 the silver and the gold belonging to their idols, but

to

to destroy it utterly, Deut. vii. 25. “ The graven
“ images of their gods shall ye burn with fire :
“ thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on
“ them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared
“ therein : for it is an abomination to the Lord
“ thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomi-
“ nation into thy house, lest thou be a cursed thing
“ like it : but thou shalt utterly detest it, and
“ thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed
“ thing.”

Nor were they the inhabitants of Canaan only who were to be extirpated on account of their idolatry ; for the Israelites themselves were to have as little mercy shewn them on the same account, Lev. xx. 1. “ And the Lord spake unto Moses, say-
“ ing, Again thou shalt say to the children of Is-
“ rael, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel,
“ or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that
“ giveth any of his seed unto Molech ; he shall
“ surely be put to death : the people of the land
“ shall stone him with stones.” Deut. xiii. 6. &c.
“ If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy
“ son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom,
“ or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, en-
“ tice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve
“ other gods, which thou hast not known, thou,
“ nor thy fathers : namely, of the gods of the
“ people which are round about you, nigh unto
“ thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of
“ the

“ the earth, even unto the other end of the earth ;
“ thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken
“ unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him,
“ neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou con-
“ ceal him ; but thou shalt surely kill him ; thine
“ hand shall be first upon him to put him to death,
“ and afterwards the hand of all the people. And
“ thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die ;
“ because he hath sought to thrust thee away from
“ the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of
“ the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
“ And all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do
“ no more any such wickedness as this is among
“ you. If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities,
“ which the Lord thy God hath given thee to
“ dwell there, saying, certain men, the children
“ of Belial, are gone out from among you, and
“ have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city,
“ saying, Let us go and serve other gods (which
“ ye have not known). Then shalt thou enquire
“ and make search, and ask diligently : and be-
“ hold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that
“ such abomination is wrought among you :
“ Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that
“ city with the edge of the sword, destroying it
“ utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle
“ thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou
“ shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of
“ the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the
“ city,

“ city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for
“ the Lord thy God : and it shall be an heap for
“ ever, it shall not be built again. And there
“ shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine
“ hand : that the Lord may turn from the fierce-
“ nefs of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and
“ have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee,
“ as he hath sworn unto thy fathers ; when thou
“ shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God,
“ to keep all his commandments which I com-
“ mand thee this day, to do that which is right in
“ the eyes of the Lord thy God.”

These were certainly severe and awful measures, but they are abundantly vindicated by the consideration of the evils which they were intended to prevent. These evils were indeed of the most alarming nature, defeating the very end of the whole Jewish constitution, which was especially calculated to preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God amidst a general defection from it, and to put a stop to the progress of the most abominable and destructive vices, which was the necessary consequence of that defection.

The divine displeasure at idolatry was likewise expressed by the utter destruction of all the idolatrous nations of antient times, viz. the Canaanites, Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Tyrians ; and also by the repeated captivities, and other awful judgments, which never failed to be
inflicted

inflicted upon the Israelites themselves, whenever they revolted from the one true God.

In the New Testament these awful denunciations of the judgments of God against idolatry, are not repeated with respect to the Jews, because that people had been effectually cured of their proneness to idolatry by the Babylonish captivity; but we see the same sentiments kept up, and referred to, upon every proper occasion, and very pressing-exhortations and cautions are given to the Gentile churches, respecting this subject. Our Lord replies to his tempter, by quoting the books of Moses, Mat. iv. 10. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The abstaining from meats offered to idols, was one of the *necessary things* which all the apostles enjoined upon the Gentile converts, Acts, xv. 29. The apostle Paul most earnestly and affectionately warns the Corinthian converts on this subject, 1 Cor. x. 7. “Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them:” (that is the Israelites) v. 14. “Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry:” v. 19. “What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrifice to demons*,

* For so it ought to have been translated.

“ and not to God: and I would not that ye should
“ have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink
“ the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons:
“ ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and
“ of the table of demons.” The apostle John also
concludes his General Epistle to the christian
churches with these words, 1 John v. 21. “ Lit-
“ tle children, keep yourselves from idols.” Lastly,
the eating of meat sacrificed to idols was one of the
charges which our Lord, after his ascension,
brought against the churches of Pergamos, and
Thyatira, Rev. ii. 14. 20.

Through the whole of the New Testament,
there is not so much as one example of any invisi-
ble being, who is addressed as the object of prayer,
but the same one living and true God, who is also
called “ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
“ Christ,” (Eph. iii. 14. “ For this cause I
“ bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord
“ Jesus Christ,) and every instance of homage
approaching to divine is strongly repressed. When
Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter, though it
cannot be supposed that he who was himself a wor-
shipper of the true God, meant to pay him divine
honours, the apostle replied, Acts x. 26, “ Stand
“ up; I myself also am a man.” And twice that
John fell down before the angel who was explain-
ing to him the visions of the book of Revelations,
he

he was rebuked in the same manner, Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God."

Considering how strongly this great article, the worship of one God only, is guarded in all the books of scripture, it would seem impossible that it should ever be infringed by any who profess to hold the books of the Old and New Testament for the rule of their faith and practice; and yet we shall see, that this very article was the subject of one of the first and the most radical of all the corruptions of christianity. For upon the very same principles, and in the very same manner, by which dead men came to be worshipped by the antient idolaters, there was introduced into the christian church, in the first place, the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ, then that of the Virgin Mary; and lastly, that of innumerable other saints, and of angels also; and this *modern christian idolatry* has been attended with all the absurdities, and with *some*, but not *all* the immoralities, of the antient heathen idolatry. It has, however, evidently promoted a very great neglect of the duties we owe both to God and man.

SECTION II.

Of the moral attributes of God.

THAT God is a being of the greatest *purity* and *rectitude* is another important doctrine of revealed religion; and though, like the doctrine of the divine *unity*, it may be said to be the dictate of nature, it was a doctrine which mankind had in a great measure overlooked, and never sufficiently attended to. Entertaining low notions of the beings on whom they supposed that they immediately depended, and ascribing to them a great variety of objects and pursuits, some of which were exceedingly trifling and unworthy, they had recourse to a variety of methods by which they thought to recommend themselves to their favour, many of which had no connection with moral virtue, and some of them were gross violations of the most fundamental rules of it.

Judging of their Gods as having been, many of them, men no better than themselves, but subject to envy and jealousy, they were in general more especially prone to that kind of superstition which consists in mortifying themselves, in order to recommend them to God. If any great calamity be-
fel

fel them, imagining the wrath of their God was to be appeased, like that of revengeful and unreasonable men, with something that cost them very dear, they sometimes did not spare their own children, but put them to a cruel death in their sacrifices; and they made dreadful havock of the rest of their species on much less occasions.

In the Jewish and christian revelations, on the contrary, we see the moral character of the divine being set in the clearest, the strongest, and most amiable light. We find that the God with whom we have to do loves all his creatures; that if he chastises them it is with reluctance, and only for their good, and especially for their improvement in virtue; that he stands in no need of any of his creatures, and has no pleasure either in the compliments they pay him, or the gifts and sacrifices which they make to him, though, as an expression of their homage, dependence, and gratitude, he may think proper to require such things.

The proper seat of virtue and solid happiness being in the heart, the divine being, as his character is revealed to us in our books of scripture, appears to be most solicitous that our hearts and affections be right, and not to pay much attention to mere external actions, which was every thing that the heathen Gods were imagined to trouble themselves about. On the contrary, the God of the Jews and christians is always represented as searching the

the hearts, and as attending to the inmost thoughts, inclinations, and purposes of the mind; so that no secret or intended iniquity can escape his animadversion.

In order to exhibit the doctrines of the scriptures concerning the moral attributes of God, I shall first consider his *purity* or *holiness*, including his regard to moral virtue in general, and then his goodness, mercy, and veracity, in the order in which they are here mentioned.

Passages which express the purity or holiness of God in general, are exceedingly numerous, and many of them very emphatical; as Lev. xix. 2. "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am
" holy." The angels, in the vision of Isaiah, vi. 3. are represented as crying one to another, "Holy
" holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth
" is full of his glory." Moses, in that remarkable song which he composed for the Israelites, in order that they might commit it to memory, says, Deut. xxxii. 3. "I will publish the name of the Lord:
" ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the
" rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are
" judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity,
" just and right is he." Habbakuk, addressing himself to God, says, ch. i. 12: "Art thou not
" from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy
" one? Thou art of purer eyes than to behold
" evil, and canst not look on iniquity." When
David

David enumerates the particulars which constitute the character of the man who is most in favour with God, he draws a picture of the most distinguished moral virtue, “Ps. xv. 1. &c. “ Lord
 “ who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall
 “ dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh up-
 “ rightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh
 “ the truth in his heart, &c.” Lastly, the apostle James says, ch. i. 13. “ Let no man say when
 “ he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God
 “ cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he
 “ any man.”

A thousand passages in the scripture express the pleasure which God takes in good men, and the happiness which he reserves for them, Ps. cxlvii. 11.
 “ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
 “ in those that hope in his mercy.” Ps. xxxvii.
 23, 24. “ The steps of a good man are ordered by
 “ the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though
 “ he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for
 “ the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” Ps.
 ciii. 13. Like as a “ father pitieth his children:
 “ so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Ps.
 lxxxiv. 11. “ For the Lord God is a sun and
 “ shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no
 “ good thing will he withhold from them that
 “ walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the
 “ man that trusteth in thee.” On the other hand,
 the wicked are always represented as the sole objects
 of

of the divine displeasure and vengeance, as *Is.* *xlvi.* 22. and *lvii.* 21. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” And all the judgments which the divine being is represented as interposing to inflict, are always said to have been on account of wickedness only, as in the case of our first parents, the inhabitants of the old world, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, and many others.

Whereas the favour of the heathen gods was supposed to be gained by the performance of certain rites and ceremonies, while moral virtue was seldom thought to be of any use for that purpose; the contrary is expressed in the strongest terms, with respect to the true God; and admonitions of this kind are repeated again and again in the books of scripture. David, confessing his sins before God, says, *Pf.* *li.* 16. “Thou desirest not sacrifice, “ else would I give it: thou delightest not in “ burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a “ broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, “ O God, thou wilt not despise.” One of the finest passages in the sacred writings to this purpose is, *Is.* *i.* 13. &c. “Hear the word of the Lord, ye “ rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our “ God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what pur- “ pose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? “ saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings “ of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight
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“ not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of
 “ he goats. When ye come to appear before me,
 “ who hath required this at your hand, to tread
 “ my courts: Bring no more vain oblations, in-
 “ cense is an abomination unto me, the new-moons
 “ and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot
 “ away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meet-
 “ ing. Your new moons, and your appointed
 “ feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto
 “ me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye
 “ spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes
 “ from you: yea, when ye make many prayers,
 “ I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
 “ Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of
 “ your doings from hence before mine eyes, cease
 “ to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, re-
 “ lieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead
 “ for the widow. Come now and let us reason
 “ together, saith the Lord: though your sins be
 “ as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though
 “ they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

The same sentiment is also admirably expressed in
 Micah vi. 6. &c. “ Wherewith shall I come be-
 “ fore the Lord, and bow myself before the high
 “ God? shall I come before him with burnt of-
 “ ferings, with calves of a year old? Will the
 “ Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with
 “ ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my
 “ first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my
 “ body

“ body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed
“ thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the
“ Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to
“ love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy
“ God?” To the same purpose see also Pf. 1. Jer.
vii. 2. Hof. vi. 6. and Amos v. 21.

In the New Testament, we find John the Baptist exposing the vain confidence of the Jews, on account of their having Abraham for their father, Matt. iii. 9. and our Saviour also, when they made the same boast, in his presence, says, John viii. 39.
“ If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the
“ works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the
“ devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”
Again, speaking of his natural relations, he says, Matt. xii. 50. “ Whosoever shall do the will of
“ my father who is heaven, the same is my brother,
“ and sister and mother.”

If we consider the great object and end of all the parts of the scheme of revelation, we cannot but see that it was intended to promote the practice of moral virtue, in order to men’s attaining to the greatest degrees of perfection and happiness. The ten commandments, which God spake from Sinai, are all of a moral, and most of them of a social nature. His earnest exhortations to the Israelites, through the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, enforces the practice of virtue in the strongest manner; and so do all the writings of the prophets.

The purport of their earnest exhortations is,
 “ Cease to do evil, learn to do well ; turn ye, turn
 “ ye, from your evil ways ; why will ye die, O
 “ house of Israel.”

Repentance and works meet for repentance, was the chief subject of John the Baptist’s preaching, and also of that of our Saviour. Our Lord’s admirable sermon on the mount, consists chiefly of precepts of the most sublime moral virtue ; and he represents the fate of all mankind at the last day, as determined by a regard to their moral character only, and especially their benevolence.

Whenever the general design of the gospel is mentioned, it is always spoken of as intended to reform and bless mankind. Thus the apostle Peter, in his address to the Jews, after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts iii. 26.
 “ God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him
 “ to bless you, in turning away every one of you
 “ from his iniquities.” To the same purpose the
 “ apostle Paul, Titus ii. 11. “ The grace of God
 “ that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all
 “ men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and
 “ worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously,
 “ and godly in this present world ; looking for
 “ that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of
 “ the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ :
 “ who gave himself for us, that he might redeem
 “ us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a
 “ peculiar

“peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And our Lord himself says, John xv. viii. “Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

Lastly, it is impossible that the practice of universal virtue, absolute or relative, should be more strongly enforced than it is in all the apostolical epistles, and especially towards the close of them. See Rom. ii. 4. &c. 12. 1 Cor. vi. 9. &c. Eph. i. 4. v. 2. &c. 1 Thes. v. 22. the epistle of James throughout, 1 Pet. ii. 11. &c. 1 John iv. 20.

It is in vain that we look for any thing that can be compared with this in any system of heathen religion. Almost the best that can be said of them is, that they enjoin practices that are merely idle and insignificant; for too often they countenance the most destructive vices.

SECTION III.

Of the goodness of God.

THE goodness of God seems to be pretty clearly inferred from a view of the works of creation, a benevolent design being sufficiently manifest in every thing that we understand. Indeed the great mixture that we see of *apparent evil* is apt to stagger

ger even well disposed minds, especially when themselves are affected by it; but in the scriptures we see all these doubts removed. All events are promiscuously ascribed to God; but his intention is represented as being good and kind, even when his proceedings are the most severe. David, addressing himself to God, says, Pf. cxix. 68. "Thou art good, and doest good." Pf. cxlv. 9. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Pf. xxxiii. 5. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Pf. cxlv. 15. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Our Lord says, Matt. xix. 17: "There is none good but one, that is God;" and in his sermon upon the mount, he enforces the duty of universal benevolence by the consideration of that of our heavenly father, Matt. v. 45. "That ye may be the children of your father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The apostle John expresses himself in the most emphatical manner concerning this subject, when he says, 1 John iv. 16. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." And the
apostle

apostle James says, ch. i. 17. “ Every good gift,
“ and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh
“ down from the father of lights.”

The severity with which good men are some-
times treated, is always represented in the scrip-
tures as the correction of a tender father, intended
to promote the reformation and good of his chil-
dren; and what he always inflicts with reluctance.
Jeremiah says, Lam. iii. 31. “ The Lord will
“ not cast off for ever. But though he cause
“ grief, yet will he have compassion, according
“ to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not
“ afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”
The prophet Hosea draws a most affecting picture
of the painful reluctance with which the divine
being has recourse to severity, after the most ag-
gravated and repeated provocations, Hosea xi. 1.
&c. “ When Israel was a child, then I loved
“ him, and called my son out of Egypt.—
“ They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense
“ to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to
“ go, taking them by their arms, but they knew
“ not that I healed them. I drew them with cords
“ of a man, with bands of love.—My peo-
“ ple are bent to backsliding from me: though
“ they called them to the most High, none at
“ all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up,
“ Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how
“ shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set
I 4 “ thee

“ thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within
 “ me, my repentings are kindled together. I will
 “ not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will
 “ not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God,
 “ and not man, the holy One in the midst of
 “ thee.”

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, also, reminds the persecuted christians of his age, of these conforming sentiments, so peculiarly proper to their circumstances, Heb. xii. 5. &c. “ Ye have
 “ forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto
 “ you as unto children, my son, despise not thou
 “ the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou
 “ art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth
 “ he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he
 “ receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God deal-
 “ with you as with sons: for what son is he whom
 “ the father chasteneth not?——Now no chaf-
 “ tening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but
 “ grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the
 “ peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them who
 “ are exercised thereby.”

Lastly, the dispensation of the gospel is always represented as an instance of the exceedingly great love and goodness of God, John iii. 16. “ God
 “ so loved the world, that he gave his only begot-
 “ ten son, that whosoever believeth in him should
 “ not perish, but have everlasting life.” 1 John
 iv. 9. “ In this was manifested the love of God
 “ towards

“ towards us, because that God sent his only be-
“ gotten son into the world, that we might live
“ through him. Herein is love, not that we loved
“ God, but that he loved us.” Rom. viii. 32.
“ He that spared not his own son, but delivered
“ him up for us all, how shall he not with him
“ also freely give us all things.”

S E C T I O N IV.

Of the mercy of God.

THE mercy of God to those who are disposed to return to their duty, when they have once rendered themselves obnoxious to his displeasure by their offences, is a subject of which mankind, especially those whose minds were rendered timid and fearful by a consciousness of guilt, would be more apt to entertain doubts, than of the goodness of God in general. No proof by way of *inference* only, how short and plain soever, would be sufficient for such persons; and yet it is easy to see, that it is of the utmost importance, that such persons should receive all possible satisfaction with respect to it: lest, through a distrust of the mercy of God, they should be driven into absolute despair. Besides, nothing is so engaging, and furnishes so powerful a motive to a return to duty, as a

thorough persuasion of the clemency of the offended party. On this account, probably, it is, that the declarations of the mercy of God, to the truly penitent, are so remarkably full and explicit in the scriptures, insomuch that no doubt can possibly remain with respect to it.

At the very time of the promulgation of the law of Moses, which is deemed to be the most rigorous of all the divine dispensations, when Moses waited in mount Sinai with the second tables of stone, immediately after that most aggravated offence of the Israelites in making the golden calf, the divine being makes the most solemn declaration of his mercy imaginable, Ex. xxxiv. 5. &c. “ And the
 “ Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with
 “ him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.
 “ And the Lord passed by before him, and pro-
 “ claimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful
 “ and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in
 “ goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thou-
 “ sands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and
 “ sin.”

When Moses foretels the final dispersion of the Israelites, in consequence of their idolatry, and other vices, he at the same time gives them the most solemn assurances of the divine favour in case of their repentance. I shall quote two remarkable passages for this purpose, Deut. iv. 25. &c. “ When
 “ thou shalt beget children, and children’s chil-
 “ dren,

“dren, and shalt have remained long in the land,
“and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven
“image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do
“evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to pro-
“voke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to
“witness against you this day, that ye shall soon
“utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye
“go over Jordan to possess it: ye shall not prolong
“your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.
“And the Lord shall scatter you among the na-
“tions, and ye shall be left few in number among
“the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you.
“And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s
“hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor
“hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence
“thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt
“find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart
“and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribu-
“lation, and all these things are come upon thee,
“even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord
“thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice:
“ (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God) he
“will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor
“forget the covenant of thy fathers which he
“swore unto them.” Deut. xxx. 1. &c. “And
“it shall come to pass when all these things are
“come upon thee, the blessing and the curse,
“which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call
“them to mind, among all the nations whither the

“ Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return
 “ unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice
 “ according to all that I command thee this day,
 “ thou and thy children, with all thine heart and
 “ with all thy soul: that then the Lord thy God
 “ will turn thy captivity, and have compassion
 “ upon thee, and will return and gather thee from
 “ all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath
 “ scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out
 “ unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence
 “ will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from
 “ thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy
 “ God will bring thee into the land which thy fa-
 “ thers possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he
 “ will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy
 “ fathers.”

To these promises Daniel had recourse, when
 he made confession and prayer to God on the be-
 half of Israel, during the Babylonish captivity,
 Dan. ix. 8. &c. “ O Lord, to us belongeth con-
 “ fusion of face, to our kings, to our princes,
 “ and to our fathers, because we have sinned
 “ against thee.— To the Lord our God belong
 “ mercies and forgiveness, though we have re-
 “ belled against him.” The prophet Jeremiah
 also repeats the same promises of mercy and resto-
 ration, with a view to the same case, Jer. iii. 12.
 &c. “ Go and proclaim these words toward the
 “ north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Is-
 “ rael,

“ rael, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine
“ anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith
“ the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.—
“ Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord,
“ for I am married unto you : and I will take you
“ one of a city, and two of a family, and I will
“ bring you to Zion.”

The declarations of divine mercy to penitent offenders, upon a great variety of occasions, in the course of the Jewish history, and especially in the book of Psalms, and of the prophets, who wrote in times of great degeneracy, are remarkably emphatical; and to give us the stronger foundation for our confidence in the divine mercy it is always represented as arising *from himself only*, from that love and compassion which is essential to his nature, and which he bears to all the works of his hands. We cannot so much as collect from any of them the most distant hint of its arising from any foreign consideration whatever; and this was certainly a matter of the greatest consequence; since a suspicion of this kind would tend to beget an idea of uncertainty, or partiality in the distribution of the divine mercy.

Indeed every idea of this nature seems to be expressly excluded in several passages of scripture, as in that declaration which the divine being makes by the prophet Isaiah, xliii. 22. &c. “ Thou hast
“ not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast
“ been

“ been weary of me, O Israel.—Thou hast made
 “ me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me
 “ with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that
 “ blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake,*
 “ and will not remember thy sins.” David, it is
 evident, had no other idea when he prayed for the
 forgiveness of his sins, Ps. xxv. 6. &c. “ Re-
 “ member, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy
 “ loving kindneses, for they have been ever of
 “ old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor
 “ my transgressions; according to thy mercy re-
 “ member thou me, *for thy goodness sake,* O Lord.
 “ Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will
 “ he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he
 “ guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach
 “ his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy
 “ and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and
 “ his testimonies. *For thy name's sake,* O Lord,
 “ pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.”

On this most important and agreeable subject, I
 shall quote a few more passages, Ps. ciii. 8. &c.
 “ The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to an-
 “ ger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not al-
 “ ways chide: neither will he keep his anger for
 “ ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins:
 “ nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
 “ For as the heaven is high above the earth: so
 “ great is his mercy towards them that fear him.
 “ As far as the east is from the west: so far hath
 “ he

“ he removed our transgressions from us. 'Like as
“ a father pitieth his children : fo the Lord pitieth
“ them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame :
“ he remembereth that we are duft.” Pf. lxxxvi.
5. “ For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to for-
“ give.” If. lv. 6. &c. “ Seek ye the Lord while
“ he may be found, call ye upon him while he is
“ near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the
“ unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him re-
“ turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy
“ upon him, and to our God, for he will abun-
“ dantly pardon.” Ez. xxxiii. 11. “ As I live,
“ faith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the
“ death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn
“ from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from
“ your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house
“ of Israel ?” v. 14. &c. “ When I say unto
“ the wicked, Thou shalt surely die : if he turn
“ from his sin, and do that which is lawful and
“ right ; if the wicked restore the pledge, give
“ again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes
“ of life without committing iniquity ; he shall
“ surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins
“ that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto
“ him : he hath done that which is lawful and
“ right, he shall surely live.” Ez. xviii. 31. &c.
“ Cast away from you all your transgressions,
“ whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a
“ new heart, and a new spirit ; for why will ye
“ die,

“ die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure
 “ in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord
 “ God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

These passages certainly express more than a *willingness*, they discover a most *earnest desire* in the divine being, that sinners should repent and be happy. I shall therefore close these quotations with only one more from Micah vii. 18. &c.
 “ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth
 “ iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the
 “ remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his
 “ anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.
 “ He will turn again, he will have compassion
 “ upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and
 “ thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the
 “ sea.”

The mercy of God appears not only in such full *declarations* as these, but likewise in the history of his *conduct*, as recorded in the Old Testament. As often as the Israelites repented, after suffering for their frequent apostacies, so often did they find mercy. This was the case, in a remarkable manner, with king Manasseh, and also with Ahab; nor was this grace confined to the Israelites. The inhabitants of Nineveh obtained the same favour on the same equitable terms; for upon Jonah's proclamation, that within forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, we read, Jonah iii. 5. &c. that
 “ the people of Nineveh believed God, and pro-
 “ claimed

“ claimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth, from the
“ greatest of them even to the least of them; and
“ that the king of Nineveh arose from his throne,
“ and laid his robe from him, and covered him
“ with sack-cloth, and sat in ashes. And he
“ caused it to be proclaimed, and published
“ through Nineveh, (by the decree of the king
“ and his nobles) saying, Let neither man nor beast,
“ herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not
“ feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast
“ be covered with sack-cloth, and cry mightily
“ unto God: yea, let them turn every one from
“ his evil way, and from the violence that is in
“ his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and
“ repent, and turn away from his fierce anger,
“ that we perish not? And God saw their works,
“ that they turned from their evil way, and God
“ repented of the evil that he had said that he would
“ do unto them, and he did it not.” Jonah him-
self was displeased that his prediction was not literally fulfilled; but the acknowledgement which he makes why he was unwilling to undertake the commission, is much to our present purpose, ch. iv. 1. &c. “ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and
“ he was very angry. And he prayed unto the
“ Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not
“ this my saying, when I was yet in my country?
“ Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I
“ knew that thou art a gracious God, and merci-
“ ful,

“ful, flow to anger, and of great kindness, and
“repentest thee of the evil.”

The above-mentioned declarations of mercy to the penitent, were delivered under the Jewish dispensation, and no person will imagine that they were restricted under the gospel. John the Baptist, the fore-runner of our Lord, our Lord himself, and also his apostles, all opened their respective commissions with the doctrine of repentance for the remission of sins, Matt. iii. 1. “In those days
“came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilder-
“ness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the
“kingdom of heaven is at hand: and v. 8.
“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”
Ch. iv. 17. “From that time Jesus began to
“preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of
“heaven is at hand.” It is not possible to give a more striking or more beautiful illustration of the propitious nature of the divine being, than our Lord has done in the parable of the prodigal son, in which we are informed, Luke xv. 17. that as soon as this profligate youth came to himself, and to a resolution to return to his father, and to say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and
“before thee, and am no more worthy to be called
“thy son; that, when he was yet a great way off,
“his father saw him, and had compassion, and
“ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”
The Lord’s prayer, and the illustration of it by
our

our Lord himself, Matt. vi. 14. assures us, that if we forgive men their trespasses, our heavenly father will also forgive us. The same doctrine is repeated and enforced by him in his parable of the king who took an account of his servants, one of whom owed him ten thousand talents. Matt. xviii. 23.

The apostle Peter, at the close of his first speech, to a great multitude of Jews, who were assembled on the report of the first great miracle that was wrought after the ascension of our Lord, viz. the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts ii. 38. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." The same apostle, speaking of the divine being, says, 2 Pet. iii. 9. "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and to quote no more, the apostle John says, 1 John i. 8. &c. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

SECTION V.

Of the divine veracity.

THE last of the moral attributes of the divine being, of which I shall take particular notice, is his *veracity*, or regard to truth, and his fidelity with respect to his promises and engagements. Of this we can have no direct knowledge from the light of nature, though we infer from it that we should have reason to depend upon the truth of all the declarations of the divine being, if he should think proper to make any; but in the scriptures we find both the most express declarations concerning the veracity and faithfulness of God, and likewise a sufficient number of facts corresponding to those declarations.

In Is. lxxv. 16. he is called *the God of truth*. It is said of him, Ps. cxlvi. 6. "he keepeth truth for ever;" and he himself says, Ps. lxxxix. 34. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips:" and Is. xlvi. 11. "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; "I have purposed it, I will also do it." Lastly, we read, Heb. vi. 18. "It is impossible for God to lie."

With

With respect to *facts*, it is sufficient to say, that no instance is mentioned of the divine being having failed to fulfil any promise that he had made, respecting either individuals, or nations of mankind; but a great variety of facts are recorded, in which the performance exactly corresponds to the engagement. I shall recite only one of them. After the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan, it is said, Josh. xxi. 43. “ and “ the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he “ swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord “ gave them rest round about, according to all “ that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood “ not a man of all their enemies before them: the “ Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. “ There failed not ought of any thing good which “ the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: “ all came to pass.”

On such ground as this (the Jewish and christian religions having been proved to be divine) we have sufficient reason to depend upon the truth of those divine declarations, the time for the accomplishment of which is not yet come; especially with respect to the grand catastrophe of the whole scheme, viz. that there shall be a resurrection of all the dead, followed by an ample reward for the righteous, and an adequate punishment for the wicked.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRES OF
MAN.

THE unity, and the moral attributes of God being so clearly revealed to us in the scriptures, we naturally expect that the chief thing which he will require of man will be purity of heart and integrity of life, or the genuine principles, the uniform practice, and the confirmed habits of all moral virtue; comprehending an unfeigned reverence and love of himself, the highest respect for his authority, and a humble and cheerful submission to all the dispensations of his providence, together with all the natural expressions of our dependence upon him, and obligation to him. We might also expect that he would require of us a sincere regard to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and all those actions which naturally arise from that generous principle, viz. all the duties of justice, equity, and humanity. Lastly, we might expect that his authority should be interposed in favour of those virtues which more immediately respect ourselves, and the government of our appetites and passions; so that in all things we be chaste and temperate

temperate, no slaves to violent and unreasonable passions, or to any affection of mind by which we might debase our natures, or expose ourselves to the temptation of disturbing and injuring others.

SECTION I.

Of the duty of man with respect to God.

THE duties of piety, or devotion, consisting of a right disposition of mind with respect to God, and the actions which flow from that disposition, are, in a manner, peculiar to the Jewish and christian religions; being almost unknown to the Gentile world. But in the scriptures very great stress is deservedly laid upon them.

In general the fear and love of God, and an habitual regard to his inspection, authority, and example, are represented in the scriptures as the most effectual guard, and the most powerful and animating principle of virtue; and every branch of virtue is constantly spoken of as his express command, and as an observance of the laws which he has thought proper to prescribe as the rule of our conduct. Sentiments of this kind are expressed with an infinite diversity of manner through the whole of the Old and New Testament; so that the difference,

ference, in this respect, between the books of scripture and the best moral pieces of the heathen writers is exceedingly striking.

When Joseph was tempted to commit adultery in the most private manner, he replied, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Solomon also says, Prov. ix. 10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." and Prov. xvi. 6. "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." We are exhorted to be "holy, because God is holy," Lev. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16; to "be perfect, even as our father who is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48. and also to, "be followers of God as dear children," Eph. v. 1. And, for this reason, to "be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven us." Ch. iv. 32.

On the other hand, it is mentioned as characteristic of the wicked, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes." Ps. xxxvi. 1. and "that God is not in all his thoughts." Ps. x. 4.

The disposition of mind which we are required to cultivate, with respect to God, is represented in the scriptures as a mixture of filial reverence, love, and confidence, as to a most affectionate father, and equitable moral governor; and has in it nothing of that terror and anxiety, which is inspired by a subjection to a cruel or capricious being. On this

this account we are sometimes commanded to “serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Pf. ii. 11. and at other times to “serve him with gladness,” Pf. c. 2. Upon the whole, it means a perfect attachment of soul to this greatest and best of beings, so as to have no will but his, and to respect no interest or authority whatever in comparison with his.

Our Lord, quoting from the law of Moses, says, that “the first and greatest commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, Matt. xxii. 37; and we are exhorted by him, Luke xii. 4. “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” Upon this principle, the apostles Peter and John say, with confidence, to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, Acts iv. 19. “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.”

This habitual regard to God, and entire confidence in him, is also represented as the best support of the mind under all the difficulties and trials of life. David says, Pf. xvi. 8. “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my

“right hand, I shall not be moved.” The prophet Isaiah, exciting to confidence in God, says, ch. xxvi. 3. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” Solomon also gives this excellent advice, Prov. iii. 5. &c. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths:” and the apostle Peter encourages christians, in time of trial, to “cast their care upon God, who careth for them.” 1 Pet. v. 7.

From a firm persuasion that every thing is under the direction of a wise and good providence, we find in the scriptures, such expressions of hope, joy, and even exultation, in the most calamitous and trying scenes, as heathens could have no idea of; because they had no principles from which such sentiments and language could possibly flow. The calm acquiescence of Job under a most afflictive dispensation of divine providence, has been mentioned already. When Eli heard a message from God by Samuel, the import of which was the greatest calamity that could befall his family, he replied, 1 Sam. iii. 18. “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” The prophet Habakkuk gives us a most admirable description, not merely of the acquiescence, but of the cheerfulness with which afflictive providences should be borne, ch. iii. 17. “Although the fig-tree shall not
“blossom,

“ blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the
“ labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall
“ yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from
“ fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls :
“ Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the
“ God of my salvation.” David gives the general
ground of this satisfaction and confidence in the
most obscure scenes of providence, when he says,
Ps. xcvi. 1. &c. “ The Lord reigneth, let the
“ earth rejoice : let the multitude of isles be glad
“ thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about
“ him : righteousness and judgment are the habi-
“ tation of his throne.”

On the foundation of this firm persuasion of the
favour of God to the righteous, and the certainty
of the reward which he reserves for them, our
Lord encourages his followers to the most chearful
bearing of persecution for conscience sake, Matt.
v. 10. &c. “ Blessed are they who are persecuted
“ for righteousness’ sake : for theirs is the kingdom
“ of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile
“ you, and persecute you, and shall say all
“ manner of evil against you, falsely, for my
“ sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for
“ great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted
“ they the prophets who were before you.” Our
Lord took the most effectual method to inculcate
an entire submission to the will of God, by direct-

ing it to be the subject of our daily prayers, Matt. vi. 10. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and he exhibited an example of this entire submission in a scene of the greatest distress to which it is probable that human nature was ever subjected, I mean in his agony in the garden, when "his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" when yet he prayed, saying, Matt. xxvi. 39. "O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, in his second prayer on that occasion, v. 42. "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Lastly, the apostle James makes use of exhortations exactly similar to those of our Saviour in the case of persecution, James i. 2. 12. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." And the apostle Peter, on the same occasion, says, 1 Pet. iii. 14. "If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

The propriety of *praying* to God is far from being satisfactorily proved from the light of nature, and much less can the obligation of it as a moral duty, be

be strictly demonstrated upon those principles. Had the practice appeared ever so desirable, the humble and the diffident might have thought it too presumptuous, as much as others would have thought it unnecessary. It is, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction, that, in the scriptures, we find all the indigent and dependent race of mankind encouraged in the freest and most constant access to God by prayer. And notwithstanding the infinite distance that subsists between the divine being as our creator, and us as his creatures, in the whole of the scripture history, he appears in the condescending and amiable character of our *Father*, as ready to attend to our wants, as he is able to supply them; being to us, in reality, what our occasions require him to be; insomuch, that though he is represented as knowing every thing that we can tell him, even the thoughts of our hearts; yet, because our nature is such, that we cannot keep up that constant regard to him, in the whole of our conduct, which our own improvement and happiness require, without a free and familiar intercourse with him, such as we maintain with our earthly governors and parents (our attachment to whom is greatly strengthened, by the genuine and natural expressions of it) he has been pleased not only to permit, but absolutely to require that intercourse; expecting that we should both make acknowledgments to him

for favours already received, and also apply to him for those which we still want; not forgetting, however, to express the most entire acquiescence in his will, whether he should think proper to grant our requests or not. Now, this is certainly the very part that a prudent and wise parent would take with a child, though with respect to himself, both the acknowledgments and the requests of the child were ever so unnecessary.

In the Old Testament history, we find prayer to be the constant practice of all good men; and so far was there from being any doubt concerning the propriety of it, that it is mentioned by Eliphaz as the greatest aggravation of the wickedness which he ascribed to Job, that he even “cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God,” Job. xv. 4. It is mentioned as the characteristic of God, that “he heareth prayer,” Ps. lxxv. 2. “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” Solomon also says, Prov. xv. 8. “That the prayer of the upright is his delight;” and David, Ps. cxlv. 18. “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him. He will also hear their cry, and will save them.”

Our Saviour recommends frequent prayer to his disciples. He also gave them a variety of particular instructions, and was himself a pattern for them, with respect to it. For we not only read of his
praying

praying upon particular occasions (several of which prayers are recorded by the Evangelists) but it is said, upon one occasion, that he spent even a whole night in prayer to God, Luke vi. 12. as if he who received the most from God, and who was therefore the most dependent upon him, thought it necessary to be more particularly careful to express that dependence. Our Lord even encourages great earnestness and importunity in prayer; one of his parables being particularly calculated to excite men “always to pray, and not to faint.” Luke xviii. 1. &c. “What man is there of you,” says he, addressing himself to a great multitude, Matt. vii. 9. &c. “whom, if his son ask bread, will he “give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he “give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, “know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father who is “in heaven give good things to them that ask “him?”

Our Lord is very careful, however, to inculcate a right disposition of mind in prayer, and particularly cautions his disciples to avoid the ostentation of the Pharisees, and the clamorous repetitions of the heathens upon that occasion, Matt. vi. 5. &c. “When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the “hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in “the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, “that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say “unto you, they have their reward. But thou,

“ when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and
 “ when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy fa-
 “ ther who is in secret, and thy father who
 “ seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But
 “ when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the
 “ heathen do: for they think that they shall be
 “ heard for their much speaking. Be not ye,
 “ therefore, like unto them: for your father know-
 “ eth what things ye have need of, before ye ask
 “ him.” To these excellent admonitions, he sub-
 joins that pattern of prayer which we usually call
 the *Lord's prayer*, which is admirably simple and
 expressive; and as the most important of all our pe-
 titions is that which we make for the forgiveness of
 our sins, he is particularly careful to insist upon it,
 that we make that request with a heart thoroughly
 reconciled to all those who have offended us.
 Matt. vi. 14. &c. “ For, if ye forgive men their
 “ trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive
 “ you. But if ye forgive not men their tref-
 “ passes, neither will your father forgive your
 “ trespasses.”

The apostles also, upon a great variety of occa-
 sions, most earnestly recommend frequent prayer,
 I Thes. v. 17. “ Pray without ceasing.” Rom.
 xii. 12. “ Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribu-
 “ lation; continuing instant in prayer.” Philip.
 iv. 6. “ Be careful for nothing: but in every
 “ thing, by prayer and supplication, with thankf-
 “ giving,

“ giving, let your requests be made known unto
“ God.” 1 Tim. ii. 1. &c. “ I exhort that
“ supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving
“ of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and
“ for all that are in authority.” This apostle does
not fail, however, to recommend a proper temper
of mind in prayer, when he adds, v. 8. “ I will
“ that men pray every where, lifting up holy
“ hands, without wrath and doubting.”

When persons are under affliction, they are more
especially disposed to have recourse to prayer.
Seeing no other hope, they fly to God, as their
all-sufficient Saviour, and friend; and this natural
propensity of the mind is particularly encouraged
by the apostle James, v. 13. “ Is any among you
“ afflicted? let him pray.”

Though the greatest stress is laid, in the scriptures,
upon *private* devotion, it is by no means so much
so, as to set aside the obligation of *social worship*,
which is also much insisted upon in them. The
sacrifices which were appointed to be made every
morning and evening in the Jewish tabernacle or
temple, were offered in the name of the whole na-
tion; and as many persons as conveniently could,
did usually attend during the ceremony, and offered
up their prayers, while the priest went into the
temple to burn incense. Luke i. 10. “ And the
“ whole multitude of the people were praying with-
“ out at the time of incense.” David expresses

the highest satisfaction which he received from those opportunities of public worship in several of his psalms, as Ps. xxvi. 8. “ Lord, I have loved
 “ the habitation of thy house, and the place where
 “ thine honour dwelleth.” Ps. cxxii. 1. “ I
 “ was glad when they said unto me, Let us go
 “ into the house of the Lord.” And Ps. lxxxiv.
 1. “ How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of
 “ hosts! A day in thy courts is better than a
 “ thousand.” He also recommends the greatest
 reverence upon these occasions. Ps. lxxxix. 7.
 “ God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the
 “ saints: and to be had in reverence of all them
 “ that are about him.”

Though we have no particular accounts of the custom of the Jews, in antient-times, with respect to the manner in which they spent their sabbaths, yet since they were commanded to rest from all labour on those days, and were enjoined to read and meditate on their law “ at all times,” Deut. vi. 7. we cannot but suppose that they employed those days, in which they had most leisure for that purpose, in reading, meditation, and prayer; and several passages in the Old Testament seem pretty plainly to allude to such a custom. We find, however, in the time of our Saviour, that *synagogues* were established through the whole country of Judea, and in all other countries where the Jews had any settlement; and in these places the books of
 the

the law and the prophets were regularly read, and prayers made every sabbath day. These services our Lord himself stately attended, as Luke informs us, ch. iv. 16. "As his custom was, he "went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day." And the same exercises were continued by the apostles in all christian churches, which were formed upon the same general plan, and have been transmitted through all ages to this day.

SECTION II.

Of the social duties.

IT would be tedious, and is by no means necessary to go over all the articles of *social duty*, as they are explained and enforced in the scriptures. Whatever I have observed in the first part of these Institutes, as the dictate of Nature, is strongly inculcated in the books of the Old and New Testament, and recommended by motives and considerations peculiar to revelation. I must not omit, however, to observe that the prophets in the Old Testament, and our Saviour, and the apostles in the New, do not content themselves with giving instructions, concerning men's conduct in particular cases and instances, but are more especially careful to inculcate the necessity of cultivating such an *inward*

temper of mind as will form a complete *character*, which will lead to the observance of every particular duty, and make the constant practice of it easy and delightful.

They more especially recommend the universal principle of *brotherly love*, and a constant attention to the interests of others. The second great commandment of the law, our Saviour says, is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and in this, as the apostle Paul observes, the whole of the moral law, as far as it relates to society, is comprehended. Rom. xiii. 8. &c. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Our Lord and the apostles, besides this general good-will to all men, strongly recommend a more affectionate concern for our fellow-christians, those who have the same faith, and the same hope with ourselves, John xv. 12. “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” And xiii. 35. “By this shall all men know

“ know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love
“ one to another.” Accordingly the apostle Peter
exhorts, 1 Peter i. 22. “ See that ye love one
“ another with a pure heart fervently.” The
apostle John, more than any other, recommends
this divine principle of brotherly love, and shews
that it is impossible to love God without it. 1 John
iv. 20. “ This commandment have we from him,
“ that he who loveth God, love his brother also.”
v. 11. “ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought
“ also to love one another. No man hath seen
“ God at any time. If we love one another, God
“ dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.
v. 16. “ He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in
“ God, and God in him.” v. 20. “ If a man
“ say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is
“ a liar : for he that loveth not his brother, whom
“ he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he
“ hath not seen ?”

Our Lord is particularly careful to warn his dis-
ciples, that they do not confine their attention to
outward actions, but to consider the *inward temper*
of their mind, with respect to every branch of so-
cial duty ; and he censures the narrowness of the
Pharisaical morality for its deficiency in this re-
spect, upon several occasions, and especially in his
sermon upon the mount. Matt. v. 21. “ Ye have
“ heard that it was said by them of old time,
“ Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill,
“ shall

“ shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say
 “ unto you, That whosoever is angry with his
 “ brother without a cause, shall be in danger of
 “ the judgment:” ver. 27. “ Ye have heard that
 “ it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not
 “ commit adultery: But I say unto you, That
 “ whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her,
 “ hath committed adultery with her already in his
 “ heart.”

Very proper attention was also given to the temper of mind, and inclination of the heart, in the Old Testament; an instance of which we have in the tenth commandment. Ex. xx. 17. “ Thou
 “ shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt
 “ not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-
 “ servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor
 “ his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

Far from confining our good-will and kind offices to our particular friends and fellow-christians, our Lord strongly recommends good-will and kindness to all persons, and even to enemies: Matt. v. 43. &c. “ Ye have heard that it hath
 “ been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and
 “ hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love
 “ your enemies, bless them that curse you, do
 “ good to them that hate you, and pray for them
 “ who despitefully use you and persecute you;
 “ That ye may be the children of your Father
 “ who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise

“ on

“ on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain
“ on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love
“ them that love you, what reward have ye? do
“ not even the publicans the same? Be ye there-
“ fore perfect, even as your Father who is in hea-
“ ven is perfect.” The apostle Paul also enjoins
us, Rom. xii. 17. &c. “ to recompense to no man
“ evil for evil, and not to be overcome of evil, but
“ to overcome evil with good.”

The *forgiveness of injuries*, about which the hea-then moralists had, as we have seen, great doubts, and which some of them absolutely denied to be a duty; but which is certainly a most amiable and valuable one, is strongly recommended by our Lord and his apostles. Luke xvii. 3. &c. “ If thy
“ brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and
“ if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass
“ against thee seven times in a day, and seven
“ times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I re-
“ pent; thou shalt forgive him.” He also parti-
cularly enforces this advice by the consideration of the divine mercy and clemency. Mat. vi. 14. “ If
“ ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly
“ Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive
“ not men their trespasses, neither will your Fa-
“ ther forgive your trespasses.” Luke vi. 36. “ Be
“ ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is
“ merciful.” To the same purpose the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 31. “ Let all bitterness, and
“ wrath

“wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.” See also Col. iii. 12, 13.

As a most important branch of christian duty, and a proof of the most sincere brotherly love, we are frequently exhorted, in the scriptures, to consult one another’s improvement in virtue and goodness: Rom. xiv. 19. “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another:” Heb. x. 24. “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.”

It being our Lord’s chief object to inspire just dispositions of mind, and right principles of action, which shall supersede all nice distinctions about particular rules of conduct, by leading us to *feel* properly upon every occasion, he gives us this one rule, which, in fact, comprehends all the duties of social life: Matt. vii. 12. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” An important example to this rule he also gives us with respect to candour in judging of one another. Matt. vii. 1. “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

It

It is not necessary to recite the precepts of scripture which relate to the universally acknowledged duties of *justice* or *equity*, which are very full and explicit; but I shall observe, that the obligation of *compassion* and *charity*, which is variable in itself, and which might be disputed and evaded by subtle cavillers, is frequently insisted upon both in the Old and New Testament. Some of the passages in which this duty is inculcated, are peculiarly affecting. Deut. xv. 7. “ If there be among you
“ a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any
“ of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy
“ God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy
“ heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor bro-
“ ther: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto
“ him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his
“ need, in that which he wanteth.” Lev. xix. 9.
“ And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou
“ shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field,
“ neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy
“ harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vine-
“ yard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of
“ thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor
“ and stranger: I am the Lord your God.” Isa.
lviii. 6. &c. “ Is not this the fast that I have
“ chosen—to undo the heavy burdens, and to
“ let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every
“ yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry,
“ and that thou bring the poor that are cast out
“ to

“ to thy house : when thou seest the naked, that
 “ thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself
 “ from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light
 “ break forth as the morning, &c.” Pf. xli. 1.
 “ Blessed is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord
 “ will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Our Saviour is far from being forgetful of a duty, which has so near a relation to that affectionate sympathy and brotherly love, which enters so much into the spirit of his gospel. Upon occasion of the rich making feasts for the entertainment of others, as rich as themselves, he says, Luke xiv. 13. “ When thou makest a feast, call
 “ the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ; And
 “ thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at
 “ the resurrection of the just.” The apostle James, whose whole epistle is a recommendation of good works, does not omit this duty : James ii. 15.
 “ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of
 “ daily food : And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things
 “ which are needful to the body : what doth it
 “ profit ?” And the apostle John, whose temper seems to have been peculiarly benevolent, says, 1 John iii. 17. “ Whoso hath this world’s good, and
 “ seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his
 “ bowels

“ bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth
“ the love of God in him?”

The obligation of *veracity* seems to have been but weak in the heathen world, and therefore the apostles are careful to caution their christian converts very particularly on this head. Eph. iv. 25. “ Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every
“ man truth with his neighbour: for we are mem-
“ bers one of another:” ch. iv. 15. “ Speaking
“ the truth in love.” Col. iii. 9. “ Lie not one
“ to another, seeing that ye have put off the old
“ man with his deeds.”

Lastly, the most explicit rules are laid down for our conduct, with respect to the various *relative duties of life*, as those of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, minister and people; recommending, in general, to superiors, a regard to equity, and an affectionate attention to the interest of those who are under their power; and to inferiors, a reasonable submission, and a faithful attachment to those to whom they are subject; but a detail of all the particulars is not necessary in this place. See 1 Pet. ii. 13. to the end, iii. 1—7. Eph. v. 22. to the end, vi. 1—9. Col. iii. 18. to the end, vi. 1. &c.

SECTION III.

Of the duties which respect ourselves.

WHEREAS very little account was made by the heathens of the duties of temperance and chastity, and in general of those duties which respect a man's government of himself, in cases where others are not immediately concerned, we find that these duties make a considerable figure in the system of the revealed will of God, and that the utmost *purity of heart*, as well as life and conversation, is required of us in these respects. More especially, as the gentile converts had not been used to put any restraint upon their private passions, from a principle of conscience, the apostles, in writing to them, are particularly careful to enforce a regard to these virtues.

“Blessed,” says our Saviour, Matt. v. 8. “are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” The apostle Paul cautions Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 22. “to flee youthful lusts, *and* to keep himself pure.” 1 Tim. v. 22. To the same purpose the apostle Peter, 1st ep. ii. 11. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” And Paul to the Ephesians, ch. v. 3. “Fornication,

“ tion, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let
“ it not be once named amongst you, as becometh
“ saints : neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor
“ jesting, which are not convenient.” And last-
ly, he gives the Corinthians a most solemn warn-
ing, concerning the extreme danger of an addict-
edness to these, as well as other vices. 1 Cor. vi.
9. “ Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor
“ idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor
“ abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor co-
“ vetous, nor drunkards—shall inherit the king-
“ dom of God.” And, whatever some modern
libertines may plead in favour of what they call
gallantry, the apostle peremptorily says, Heb. xiii.
4. that “ Whoremongers and adulterers, God will
“ judge.” Nor is this doctrine, as some have pre-
tended, peculiar to the apostles, as if they had made
the doctrines of the gospel more rigorous than their
master ; for our Lord himself enumerates *fornica-
tion* along with *murders, adulteries, thefts, false wit-
nesses*, and *blasphemies*, which come from the heart,
and defile the man, Matt. xv. 19.

Every other irregularity of passion, besides the
irregular indulgence of the bodily appetites, is also
expressly forbidden in the scriptures, and a varie-
ty of virtues, dispositions, and habits, which have
their seat more properly in the *mind*, are strongly
inculcated upon us, as *humility, meekness, content-
ment* and *diligence*.

Admo-

Admonitions respecting *pride*, or too high an opinion of ourselves, and the consequence of it, arrogance with respect to others, are very frequent both in the Old and New Testament. To assist us to repress this improper disposition of mind, which is the source of so much uneasiness, both to ourselves and others, we are more especially reminded, that every advantage of which we can be possessed, and which can be the foundation of pride, as birth, riches, power, knowledge, &c. is the gift of God, and therefore should be enjoyed with gratitude, humility, and usefulness.

Moses admonishes the Israelites on this subject. Deut. viii. 12. &c. “When thou hast eaten and
 “ art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt
 “ therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks
 “ multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy
 “ God, and thy heart be lifted up; and thou say
 “ in thine heart, My power, and the might of my
 “ hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

Our Saviour took every opportunity of inculcating this useful lesson on his disciples. He began his sermon on the mount with pronouncing a blessing upon the “poor in spirit.” Matt. v. 2. He frequently reproved the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees. Matt. xxiii. 2—6. and recommended humility and moderation to his apostles, upon several occasions, and more especially when they disputed

puted among themselves who should be the greatest in his kingdom; and he sets before them his own example in this respect. Matt. xi. 29. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The apostles give many excellent advices on this subject, as Rom. xii. 3. "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The same apostle argues this matter more particularly in 1 Cor. iv. 6. &c. "That no one of you be puffed up one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" He repeats the same exhortation, 1 Tim. vi. 17. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." The apostle James also gives us this general maxim to the same purpose.

James

James iv. 6. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Hasty and unreasonable resentment is also the subject of frequent caution and advices in the books of scripture; Solomon says, Prov. xvi. 32. and xxv. 28. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." David says, Ps. xxxvii. 8. "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Our Lord pronounces a blessing upon the *meeke*, Matt. v. 5. and he represents being *angry without cause* as a thing of a very criminal nature. The apostle Paul exhorts, Phil. iv. 5. that our "moderation," in this respect, "be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand:" and lastly, *peaceableness*, *gentleness*, and *meekeness*, are enumerated by St. Paul among the *fruits of the spirit*, while *hatred*, *wrath*, and *strife*, are reckoned among the fruits of the flesh. Gal. v. 20.

With respect to the things of this world, and our condition in it, *industry*, but without *anxiety*, is every where recommended to us. More especially, idleness is often finely exposed, and diligence praised in the book of Proverbs, ch. vi. 6. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise." xviii. 9. "He that is slothful
" in

“ in his work, is brother to him that is a great
“ waster.” vi. 9. “ How long wilt thou sleep,
“ O sluggard? when wilt thou awake out of thy
“ sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little
“ folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy po-
“ verty come as one that travelleth, and thy want
“ as an armed man.” The apostle Paul, among
other advices to the christian converts, exhorts
them, Rom. xii. 10. not to be slothful in business;
and he himself was an example of industry, work-
ing with his own hands, at his trade of a tent-
maker, rather than be burthensome to the Corin-
thians, with whom he resided.

On the other hand, we are perhaps more fre-
quently cautioned against excessive *anxiety* about
the things of this life; and mankind in general,
perhaps, suffer more in consequence of it. Envy,
which takes its rise from anxiety, is particularly
forbidden in the tenth commandment. Solomon
says, Prov. xxviii. 20. that “ he that maketh haste
“ to be rich shall not be innocent;” and Agur is
represented as making this excellent prayer, Prov.
xxx. 8. “ Give me neither poverty nor riches,
“ feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be
“ full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?
“ or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of
“ my God in vain.”

Our Lord advises his disciples, Luke xii. 15,
“ to take heed and beware of covetousness: for

“ that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance
 “ of the things which he possesseth ;” and again,
 xxi. 34. “ Take heed to yourselves lest at any
 “ time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting
 “ and drunkenness,” and “ cares of this life,”
 and he advises us to lay up “ treasure in heaven,
 “ rather than upon earth,” Matt. vi. 19. The
 apostle Paul has many earnest exhortations upon
 this subject. Heb. xiii. 5. “ Let your conversation
 “ be without covetousness, and be content with
 “ such things as ye have.” 1 Tim. vi. 6. “ God-
 “ liness with contentment is great gain : For we
 “ brought nothing into this world, and it is cer-
 “ tain we can carry nothing out. And having
 “ food and raiment, let us be therewith content.
 “ But they that will be rich fall into temptation,
 “ and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful
 “ lusts, which drown men in destruction and per-
 “ dition. For the love of money is the root of all
 “ evil, &c.” Lastly, he gives a beautiful descrip-
 tion of the temper of his own mind in this respect,
 Phil. iv. 11. “ I have learned in whatsoever state
 “ I am, therewith to be content. I know both
 “ how to be abased, and I know how to abound :
 “ every where, and in all things I am instructed,
 “ both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound
 “ and to suffer need.”

It may seem extraordinary to some persons, that
 nothing should be said in the scriptures about the
 crimi-

criminality of what we usually call *self-murder*; but since all those *wrong dispositions of mind*, which lead to it, are sufficiently censured, there was no great reason for noticing this particular action, which takes its rise and its character from them.

The voluntary death of Achitophel, and indeed of Sampson, in the Old Testament, and that of Judas Iscariot, in the New, are mentioned in the course of the history, together with the circumstances which led to them, but without any particular censure; and Sampson was even assisted supernaturally to put an end to his own life, together with that of his enemies.

Josephus, in the speech which he made, to dissuade his countrymen from laying violent hands upon themselves (which great numbers of the Jews about that time did) *De Bello Judaico*, lib. iii. cap. 7. makes not use of one argument drawn from the scriptures, but only from reason, or the principles of the heathen philosophy; speaking of the separate state of the soul, of transmigration, and of Tartarus.

It seems to be sufficient to say, that there is no example in the scriptures of any person of distinguished virtue putting an end to his own life, and that a voluntary death is never mentioned with approbation; and the most eminent personages, espe-

cially Jesus Christ, are recorded to have borne pain and torture to the last; without ever thinking of relieving themselves by a voluntary death. We also know that none of the apostles, or primitive christians, ever took this method to avoid torture, even when they could have no hope of life; and we cannot but feel that we should have thought meanly of them if they had done so; thinking such a degree of impatience and cowardice, as that conduct would have argued, a considerable flaw in their characters.

I do not see much force in the argument against a voluntary death, from the consideration of life being the *gift of God*, and a *trust*, which we ought not to resign without his orders, because every blessing of life comes under the same description, and yet many of these we think ourselves sufficiently authorized to relinquish, according to our own prudence and discretion. But to throw away *life* is, in another view, a very different thing from relinquishing wealth, rank, or ease, &c. for it is putting an end to the whole period of trial and discipline, and throwing away the opportunity which adversity, as a part of it, might afford, to improve us, and fit us for something greater hereafter; and, with respect to other persons, there certainly is not a nobler, or more improving spectacle in the world, than that of a good man struggling

gling with undeserved sufferings, without a complaint.

But though, on these accounts, I should, in all cases, condemn a man for withdrawing himself from the public theatre of life, I would not bring this action under the denomination of *murder*, because they are by no means things of the same nature; for, certainly, the temper of mind with which a man destroys himself, and that with which he kills another, are very different; and the latter is much more malignant, and deserving of punishment, than the former. *Despair*, or *fear*, are reprehensible; but *malice* is certainly of a much more atrocious nature.

Neither can there be any thing peculiarly hazardous in suicide, considered as the *last* crime of which a man is guilty, and of which he has no opportunity of repenting, because it is not a single action, the first, the middle, or the last of a man's life, that ought, in equity, to determine his character in a future state, but the *whole of his character and conduct*, taken together.

SECTION IV.

Of the means of virtue.

THE sacred writings not only contain the most powerful dissuasives from all kinds of vice, and the most effectual exhortations to a life of universal virtue, but likewise a variety of observations and advices relating to the manner in which vicious, or virtuous habits, are formed, and the methods by which inordinate affections may be repressed, and proper ones promoted.

For this purpose, they propose constant watchfulness, frequent meditation on the works and word of God, a careful choice of good company, and great resolution and self-denial, whenever bad habits are become predominant. They, moreover, advise all persons to watch over one another, and to do every thing to mutual edification:

David says, Ps. cxli. 3. “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips.” Our Lord advises his disciples, Matt. xxvi. 41. “To watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation;” and Mark iv. 18. “To take heed, lest when they hear the word, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the word, and make it become unfruit-

“ fruitful:” and he charges the church at Sardis, Rev. iii. 2. “ to be watchful, and strengthen the “ things that remain, that are ready to die.” Exhortations of a similar nature abound in the apostolical writings.

More especially are the *books of scripture* recommended to our use, as containing the best instructions for a good life; and being a history of the divine proceedings, respecting the human race, they necessarily exhibit such views as cannot but make an impression, in the highest degree, favourable to virtue. Moses repeatedly charges the Israelites to read and meditate upon his laws and writings, Deut. vi. 6. “ These words which I command “ thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou “ shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, “ and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine “ house, and when thou walkest by the way, and “ when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The same injunction he repeats, Deut. xi. 18. The kings of Israel were moreover required to write out a copy of the law with their own hands, Deut. xvii. 18. “ And it shall be when he sitteth upon the “ throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a “ copy of this law in a book, out of that which is “ before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be “ with him, and he shall read therein all the days “ of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord “ his God, to keep all the words of this law, and “ these statutes, to do them, &c.” David says

a good man, Ps. i. 2. That “his delight is in the
 “law of the Lord, and in his law doth he medi-
 “tate day and night;” and, Ps. xxxvii. 31.
 “The law of his God is in his heart; none of
 “his steps shall slide.” Lastly, the apostle Paul
 commends the parents of Timothy, and mentions
 it as a great advantage to him, 2 Tim. iii. 15.
 that, “from a child he had known the holy scrip-
 “tures, which, he says, were able to make him
 “wise unto salvation, through faith which is in
 “Christ Jesus.” Concerning the same scriptures,
 he adds, that they are “profitable for doctrine, for
 “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righ-
 “teousness: That the man of God may be per-
 “fect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Solomon repeatedly admonishes young persons
 concerning the danger of *bad company*. Prov. i. 10.
 “My son, if sinners intice thee, consent thou
 “not;” v. 15. “Walk not thou in the way
 “with them; refrain thy foot from their path.”
 And he observes in general, Prov. xiii. 20. that,
 “he that walketh with wise men shall be wise:
 “but that a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”
 The apostle Paul also cautions the Corinthians on
 this head, when he says, 1 Cor. xv. 33. “Be
 “not deceived: evil communications corrupt good
 “manners.”

The practice of our duty is, in general, repre-
 sented in the scriptures as *pleasant* and *easy*, when

we are accustomed to it. Thus Solomon says, of wisdom, Prov. iii. 17. that “her ways are ways
“ of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;”
and David says, Ps. cxix. 165. “Great peace
“ have they who love thy law: and nothing shall
“ offend them.” Our Saviour also says, Matt.
xi. 29. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of
“ me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye
“ shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is
“ easy, and my burden is light.”

But, notwithstanding this, we are warned, agreeable to what reason and nature would apprise us of, that before vicious habits are subdued, and virtuous ones formed, great exertions of courage and resolution will be necessary; and the difficulty, in this case, is by no means concealed by the writers of the Old and New Testament, especially the latter, who generally wrote in times of persecution. Their writings, accordingly, abound with exhortations to exert proportionate courage and fortitude.

Our Lord expresses the difficulty of conquering a propensity to certain vices, by a very strong figure, when he says, Matt. v. 29. “If thy right
“ eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from
“ thee, &c.” He also gives us an idea of the great hardships which may attend the profession of christianity, when he says, Luke ix. 23. “If any
“ man will come after me, let him deny himself,

“ and take up his cross daily, and follow me, &c.” Accordingly, we are exhorted by the apostle Paul, Col. iii. 5. To “ mortify our members which are “ of the earth,” and, Rom. xii. 2. “ not to be “ conformed to this world : but to be transformed “ by the renewing of our mind.” We shall find, however, that the scriptures propose to us rewards and encouragements, abundantly adequate to the labour and difficulties of which they apprise us.

Lastly, we are most earnestly exhorted to watch over one another, and to promote our mutual edification by every proper means. Moses says, Lev. xix. 17. “ Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy “ neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” The book of Proverbs contains excellent observations concerning the benefit of instruction and reproof. Prov. xxviii. 23. “ He that rebuketh a man af- “ terwards shall find more favour than he that “ flattereth with the tongue;” and David says, Ps. cxli. 5. “ Let the righteous smite me, it “ shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it “ shall be an excellent oil.” The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews enjoins, Heb. iii. 13. that we “ exhort one another daily while it is called, “ To-day; lest any of us be hardened through the “ deceitfulness of sin.” We are, in many places, cautioned to *give no offence*; that is, to cause none to offend, by any improper liberty of ours. The apostle Paul enlarges much upon this subject, 1
Cor.

Cor. x. Lastly, the apostle James speaks in the highest terms of the man who contributes to the spiritual benefit of another, James v. 19. “ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him : Let him know, that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

SECTION V.

General remarks concerning morality.

I Shall close this account of *the morality of the Bible*, with some observations of a more general nature.

It is unquestionably a just maxim in itself, and a clear doctrine of the scriptures, that no *partial obedience* to the law of God will be accepted, instead of *universal obedience*, which is absolutely required of us. A just respect to the authority of God, as our sovereign, lawgiver, and judge, will certainly lead us, as it did the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 6. “ to have respect to all his commandments,” and not to admit of some, and refuse others, as we shall judge it reasonable and expedient ; or, which is generally the same thing, as we shall find it *convenient* to us. Such a conduct would not be excused

cused by any earthly sovereign, master, or parent; nor can it be expected to be so by the supreme Lord and judge of all.

The apostle James argues this case more particularly, James ii. 10. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”

We are by no means, however, to infer from this, that all crimes and neglects are equal, and will be punished with equal severity; for it is the doctrine of the scriptures, as well as of reason, that there is a difference in offences, and some are spoken of with much more indignation than others; in the same manner, as more stress is laid upon some virtues than others. Undoubtedly, therefore, a difference will be made between even wilful offences of any kind, and universal profligacy of character and conduct. If a state of perfectly exact retribution be naturally impossible, we may, however, conclude, that in the future life there will be a near approach to it; and that the proper *reward of christians* will be assigned to those only who sincerely endeavour to do the whole will of God, without distinction or reserve.

For the same reason no bounds are set to our attainments in virtue, but we are required to aim at the

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the highest degrees of perfection, “ to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and “ to perfect holiness in the fear of God ;” 2 Cor. vii. 1. “ to stand perfect and complete in all the “ will of God ;” Col. iv. 12. “ to abstain from all appearance of evil,” 1 Thess. v. 22. and to propose to ourselves the imitation of the all-perfect God himself. This was expressly inculcated by our Saviour, Matt. v. 28. “ Be ye perfect, even “ as your Father who is in heaven is perfect ;” by the apostle Paul, Eph. v. 1. “ Be ye followers of “ God, as dear children ;” and the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. i. 15. “ As he that has called you is holy ; “ so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; For “ it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy,” referring to Lev. xi. 2. xix. 2. xx. 7.

These precepts appear, at first view, to be very strict ; and considering the imperfections of human nature, to be unreasonably severe ; but considering that, in all cases, sufficient allowance is made for every natural defect, for whatever is consistent with a sincere endeavour to do the whole will of God, there is the greatest wisdom and propriety in these exhortations.

Had any particular pitch of virtue been defined, upon our arrival at which we had been encouraged to be satisfied with ourselves, without attempting any thing farther ; many persons, abounding in conceit and presumption only, would soon have
arrogated

arrogated to themselves that character, and have been dupes to the most fatal delusion and self-conceit. We even see that absolute perfection has been pretended to by many.

Besides, since moral character is a thing which, in its own nature, admits of no precise boundary, but advances, by insensible degrees, from the most extreme profligacy, to such purity and excellence as only the divine being himself is capable of; and since it is essential to a genuine good disposition to wish the attainment of the greatest degrees of excellence, there would have been an impropriety in moral precepts of any other kind. The man whose chief study it is to recommend himself to God, by a conformity to his whole will, cannot but be sensible, that whatever his attainments are, or may be, there will still be something more that he *might*, and *ought* to have done; his moral discernment being improved by the greater attention which he will continually give to his character and conduct.

Indeed, this is the case with all inferior arts of various kinds, as well as this great *art of life*. What poet or painter ever thought his piece absolutely faultless and perfect, with whatever admiration it might be considered by others: and could he remove all the blemishes he now sees in it, he would still, by more attention to it, discover more. Now, for the same reason, this must necessarily be the case with

with every man whose object is to excel in virtue, and who studies propriety and perfection of moral character.

The apostle Paul discovers this just discernment in his own case, Phil. iii. 13. “ Brethren, I
“ count not myself to have apprehended: but
“ this one thing I do, forgetting those things
“ which are behind, and reaching forth unto those
“ things which are before, I press toward the
“ mark, for the prize of the high calling of God
“ in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as
“ be perfect, be thus minded.” He, and other apostles, give many excellent precepts to this purpose, to those christians to whom they wrote, 2 Pet. i. 5. “ And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is agreeable to the same general maxim, that *perseverance till death* is absolutely required of all who expect the rewards of the gospel; and a backslider at any period, is always represented as even in a worse condition than one who had never known the right way; since the knowledge he had of the excellence

excellence of it ought to have been an additional motive with him to continue in it.

To this purpose the divine being addresses the children of Israel by Ezekiel, ch. xviii. 24. “When the righteous turneth away from his
“righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and
“doth according to all the abominations that the
“wicked man doth, shall he live? All his right-
“eousness that he hath done shall not be men-
“tioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed,
“and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall
“he die.” It is also our Saviour’s doctrine, John
viii. 31. “That if we continue in his word, then
“are we his disciples indeed.” The aggravation
of apostacy is particularly pointed out by the apostle
Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 20. “If after they have escaped
“the pollutions of the world, through the know-
“ledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they
“are again entangled therein, and overcome; the
“latter end is worse with them than the beginning.
“For it had been better for them not to have
“known the way of righteousness, than after
“they have known it, to turn from the holy com-
“mandment delivered unto them.”

On this account the apostles urge their fellow-
christians to constancy in the profession of the gos-
pel, viz. lest they should lose their reward, and en-
hance their future condemnation. Gal. vi. 9.
“Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due
“season

“ season we shall reap, if we faint not.” 2 John, 8. “ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought; but that we receive a full reward.”

It was the great maxim of the heathen philosophers of old, as it is with almost all those who reject christianity at present, to *think with the wise, and act with the vulgar*; but a perfect consistency of character and profession is strictly required of christians. In time of persecution we are allowed, and even commanded, to endeavour to avoid it, by all fair and honest methods; so that if we be persecuted in one city, we may flee to another; but on no consideration whatever are we to *make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience*, by denying or concealing our christian profession. With respect to this great hour of trial, the declarations of our Lord are most express and solemn.

Having foretold his own sufferings, and severely rebuked Peter, who could not bear the thought of them, we are told, Mark viii. 34. that “ he called the people unto him with his disciples, and said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” Matt. x. 32. “ Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my
“ Father

“ Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall
 “ deny me before men, him will I also deny be-
 “ fore my Father who is in heaven.”

These admonitions the apostles keep in mind in their writings, and therefore the apostle Paul says, 2 Tim, ii. 12. “ If we suffer, we shall also reign
 “ with him: if we deny him, he will also deny
 “ us.” And, acting upon this maxim, thousands of christians have cheerfully laid down their lives for the profession of the christian faith.

It is to be observed, that, in the scriptures, though the rewards of virtue are only promised to persons of a truly virtuous character and conduct, they are promised to those who shall so repent of their sins, as to manifest a change of character and conduct at any time of the active part of their lives. No person, however, has any encouragement from any part of scripture, to expect that he shall be entitled to the rewards of the gospel, who repents so late, that he has no opportunity of shewing a change of conduct at all.

Besides, few of those late professions of repentance are sincere, or, if sincere, would have been lasting; and, according to the uniform language of the scriptures, it is “ according to the deeds that men have actually done in this life,” that they shall receive at the hand of God hereafter. 2. Cor. v. 10. “ for we must all appear before the judg-
 “ ment

“ ment feat of Christ; that every one may receive
“ the things done in his body, according to that he
“ hath done, whether it be good or bad. Know-
“ ing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we per-
“ suade men.”

It is alledged, indeed, that our Saviour promised the thief upon the cross, that he should be with him in paradise; but nothing can be inferred from a case so very obscure as this is; for we know nothing of the previous character of this man, we can guess but very imperfectly at what is meant by his request, nor do we know precisely the full import of what our Lord did promise him. Besides, this story is only found in *one* of the evangelists, viz. Luke, who appears, by many circumstances, to have been the least informed of any of them; and Matthew, who was upon the spot, says, that *both the thieves* reviled Christ, without adding one word in favour of either of them. As, therefore, there is no other fact in the history of the Old or New Testament, that gives any countenance to expectations of mercy in a proper *death-bed repentance*, and all the general rules and precepts of the scripture absolutely exclude all hope in this case, it must be very dangerous to rely upon it; though it is to be feared that many persons continue to live in a manner which their conscience disapproves, in consequence of deluding themselves with this miserable fallacy.

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I shall conclude this account of the morality of the scriptures with observing, that it is not delivered systematically, and at large, either in the Old or New Testament; but that it is not on this account the *less*, but, in fact, the *more valuable*, because it is delivered in a manner that is both more *intelligible*, and more *forcible*. For, being delivered as particular occasions suggest, it has necessarily the advantage of a peculiar emphasis and energy. What precept, for instance, against pride or hypocrisy, in a general system of morals, would have had the force of our Lord's vehement reflections upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and of his affectionate admonitions to his own disciples on those subjects; or what other manner of instruction would have recommended a great variety of amiable virtues so much as our Lord's method of inculcating them by *example* and pertinent *parables*.

Besides, what men really want, is not so much to know what is their duty, as proper views and motives to induce them to practise it. It is, therefore, in general, very properly taken for granted, in the scriptures, that men know what it is that God requires of them; and almost all the admonitions to virtue go upon that supposition, enforcing the practice of what is acknowledged to be right, by motives adapted to peculiar situations and circumstances.

SECTION VI.

Of positive institutions.

BESIDE the duties of strictly *moral obligation*, on the observance of which our moral character, and happiness, chiefly depend: we find in revelation, that the divine being has been pleased to enjoin several observances, which are not in themselves of a moral nature, but which ultimately tend to promote good morals, and that just state of mind, which makes the practice of our duty in other respects easy to us. These are the observance of one day in seven for the purpose of rest from labour, which is obligatory on all mankind; the observance of a large ritual of ceremonies by the Jews, and of baptism and the Lord's supper by the christians. Of each of these, in the order of which I now have mentioned them, I shall give a general account, with a view to explain the nature and use of them.

§ I. *Of the observance of the Sabbath.*

WE are expressly told, in the books of Moses, that the observance of the *sabbath*, or of rest from labour every seventh day, was appointed in commemoration of the day on which God rested from the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was completed in six days. This injunction being laid upon Adam, necessarily affects all his posterity. Gen. ii. 2. “ And on the seventh
 “ day God ended his work which he had made :
 “ and he rested on the seventh day from all his
 “ work which he had made. And God blessed
 “ the seventh day, and sanctified it : because that
 “ in it he had rested from all his work which God
 “ created and made.” But we have a more particular account of the rest to be observed on this day, in the fourth commandment, Ex. xx. 8.
 “ Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.
 “ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy
 “ work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the
 “ Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any
 “ work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy
 “ man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy
 “ cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.
 “ For, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,
 “ the

“ the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the
“ seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the
“ sabbath-day, and hallowed it.”

Besides this reason for keeping the sabbath, which equally affects all mankind, we sometimes find other arguments insisted upon, which respect the Jews only, as Deut. v. 15. “ Remember
“ that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt,
“ and that the Lord thy God brought thee out
“ thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretch-
“ ed out arm: therefore the Lord thy God com-
“ manded thee to keep the sabbath-day.” It appears from these passages, that the proper purpose of the sabbath is *rest from bodily labour*. But, on this account, it is also peculiarly seasonable for serious reflection of mind, and devout meditation on the works of God; and by this means it is exceedingly useful for correcting^{ing} the unfavourable influence, which a close and uninterrupted attention to the business of this life naturally has upon our minds; impressing us with just sentiments, and thereby preparing us for good conduct in life. Accordingly, we find in the Old, but more especially in the New Testament, that this use was made of the sabbath both by the Jews and christians, there being stated assemblies on this day for reading the scriptures and public prayer.

The sabbath was also distinguished under the law of Moses by an additional sacrifice of two
lamb

lambs, besides the daily burnt offering, Numb. xxviii. 9. And the ninety-second Psalm being intituled, “ a psalm or song for the sabbath-day,” was probably composed, in order to be sung in the temple-service of that day.

As we find, 2 Kings iv. 23, that it was customary with the Jews of old to resort to their prophets on the sabbath-day, and also on the new moons, it is not improbable but that the prophets, and other persons learned in their law, were used to explain it on those days to the people. Where no such persons were at hand, it is probable that masters of private families read the scriptures in their own houses; or several families might join, and assemble together for the purpose, and this might give occasion to the institution of *synagogues*, which answered the same end. These assemblies were in universal use in our Saviour’s time, and had been so, as is generally agreed, from the time of Ezra, if they were not as old as the time of king David, who is thought to allude to them in some of his Psalms.

Christ having risen from the dead on the first day of the week, which is distinguished by the appellation of *the Lord’s day*, and having afterwards appeared to his disciples on that day, in preference to any other, it seems from thence to have grown into a custom, with the apostles and primitive christians,

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to assemble for public worship on that day, rather than on the seventh; and though the christian Jews probably continued for some time to meet on the seventh day also, yet, by degrees, the observance of that day for the purpose of public worship grew out of use.

Our present practice was certainly that of the earliest christians, whose customs we are able to trace, and there having never been any controversy upon the subject, we may safely conclude, that they derived it from the apostles; and their authority is sufficient for us. Nor does it make any material difference whether we be certified of their practice by their own writings, or any other sufficient evidence. In fact, it does not seem to be very material, what particular day of the week we set apart for rest and public worship, provided we conscientiously appropriate the same portion of our time to that use.

That some portion of time should be set apart for the purpose of public worship, seems to be highly reasonable of itself, exclusive of all express authority; since societies, as such, depend upon God, as well as the individuals that compose them; and therefore they owe him the same homage; and it is most natural, that public thanksgivings, confessions, and petitions, should be made by as many of the society as can conveniently assemble for that purpose. Every person, therefore, who considers him-

self as a member of society, and having a common interest with it, should, on this account, attend the public worship of God; and what time is so convenient for this purpose, as the day of rest from labour and worldly business. The mind will naturally be most composed, and, on every account, the fittest for religious exercises on that day; and the devotion of individuals is greatly strengthened by the example of others joining with them.

It is an additional argument in favour of public worship, that the custom promotes society and friendship, by affording frequent opportunities for the people of a neighbourhood meeting and seeing one another, especially as the business of the day tends to promote mutual love, and all the social virtues.

The sabbath, among the Jews (and for the same reason, it should apply to the Lord's day among the christians) is expressly ordered to be a day of rest for the *cattle*, as well as for man. It must be exceedingly wrong, therefore, to make the labouring cattle work on that day; and in this view it is a most reasonable and merciful institution.

As the most important use of a weekly day of rest (on which the attention of the mind is withdrawn from the usual cares of life) is serious and useful reflection, in order to the moral culture of the mind, it must be wrong, as evidently interfering with this end of the institution, to give way to excessive

cessive levity, and especially to use noisy and riotous diversions on that day; though a chearful, rather than an austere manner of spending it, is favourable to its proper use. Our Saviour was far from approving of the rigorous and superstitious manner in which the Pharisees spent their sabbath, and we cannot think that more gloom and rigour becomes the christian than the Jewish institutions. Since all positive ordinances are in their own nature subordinate to duties of moral obligation, it is evident, that the rest of the sabbath should give place to labour, when acts of justice, benevolence, and mercy, must otherwise be neglected,

§ 2. *Of sacrifices.*

BEFORE I proceed any farther in my account of those scripture precepts, which are not properly of a moral nature, but are subservient to moral purposes, I shall treat briefly of *sacrifices*. Of the *origin* of sacrifices, consisting either of the presentation of fruits, or the killing and burning of animals, we have no account; but we find that they were permitted, and even expressly appointed by God, on a great variety of occasions.

If, as it is possible, sacrifices were not originally of divine appointment, we may suppose, that the natural foundation, or original of them, was the

same, in general, with that of prayer, viz. a method which mankind thought of, to express the sense they had of their gratitude and obligation to God for the gifts and protection of his providence, and to procure farther favours from him; and no kind of action was so proper for this purpose as the devoting to him some part of their substance, and especially such articles as contributed to their daily support.

It is to this day a custom throughout the east, never to approach any superior, or patron without a present. And, in this case, the value of the present is not so much considered, as its being a token of respect and homage. Thus we read, that when a Persian peasant was surpris'd by the approach of his prince, so that he had nothing at hand to present him with, he ran and fetched a handful of water from a neighbouring brook, rather than accost him without any offering. It is probable, that, in conformity to these general ideas, which are still prevalent in the East, the Israelites were forbidden *to appear before the Lord empty.*

When mankind thought of giving any thing to God, they would, probably, at first, only leave it in some open place, and abstain from making any farther use of it themselves; but afterwards, observing many things wasted away, or consumed by the heat of the sun, which is the great visible agent of God in this world, and other things suddenly consumed

consumed by lightning, which was always considered as more immediately sent by God; they might naturally enough fall into the notion, that *consumption by fire*, was the manner in which God took things. They might, therefore, imagine, that burning things, at the same time that it most effectually alienated them from the use of man, would likewise be the most proper, and the most decent method of devoting them to God; especially, as nothing was left to putrify, and become offensive after burning; and in some cases, as in the burning of incense, little or nothing would remain afterwards.

Considering the very low conceptions which mankind in early ages had of God, we do not wonder to find that they consider him as, in some manner, partaking with them of their sacrifices; and, therefore, that they considered them more especially as an expression of *reconciliation and friendship*; which idea is naturally, and especially in the East, connected with that of eating and drinking together, and particularly eating the same salt. In this view it is observable, that no sacrifice among the Jews was to be made without this ingredient.

This account of sacrifices is, in some measure, illustrated and confirmed by the history of the Greeks and Romans, whose sacrifices, originally, consisted of such things only as were

their customary food. Thus, it is acknowledged, that all their sacrifices were at first *bloodless*, consisting of vegetables only; and that this practice continued till they themselves procured a sufficiency of animal food, upon which they began to sacrifice animals. The Greeks also expressly speak of *temples* as the houses of their Gods, of *altars* as their tables, and of *priests* as their servants.

The same general ideas we find among the Jews, and the divine being plainly alludes to them when he is represented as saying, Ps. l. "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Which reproof was not intended to censure or change the general idea which they had annexed to sacrifices (as a transferring of their substance from themselves to God) but to restrain the very gross ideas which some of them might have entertained in pursuance of it, to prevent their laying too much stress upon these ceremonies, and to remind them of the greater importance of things of a moral nature, as being infinitely more pleasing to God.

There was not, originally, any particular order of men employed in the business of sacrifices, but every man sacrificed, as well as prayed, in person, being priest as well as king in his own family; and in those primitive patriarchal times, it does not appear that any part of a sacrifice was eaten by the offerer, but that the whole was devoted to God,
and

and entirely consumed with fire. But when, under the Mosaic dispensation, a particular order of men were appointed for the purpose, they were considered as the more immediate *servants of God*; and there being a manifest propriety, that servants should be fed from their master's table, these priests were allowed a certain share in most sacrifices. Such, at least, is the opinion of the Jewish Rabbi's with respect to the custom of sacrificing before and under the law.

Sacrifices, being of the nature of a *gift*, presented as a token of respect or homage, they naturally accompanied every solemn address to the divine being, as the most decent and proper ceremonial in approaching him; and being likewise considered as a *convivial entertainment*, at which the divine being himself was present, there was a peculiar propriety in their accompanying petitions for the pardon of sin, as expressive of reconciliation and friendship. At the same time, the sacrifices being provided at the expence of the offending party, they indirectly answer the purpose of *mulets*, or fines for offences.

Though I have said, that it is possible that mankind might of themselves have had recourse to sacrifices, as a method of expressing their dependence upon God, &c. yet, when we consider how improbable it is, that mankind should even have attained to any tolerable and useful knowledge of

God himself, without some particular instruction, at least for a long space of time; it is most natural to suppose, that when the divine being communicated that most important knowledge to the first race of men, he also instructed them in those methods by which he chose that they should express their homage, gratitude, and obedience. But whether we suppose sacrifices to have been of human, or divine origin, it makes no difference with respect to the general idea of their nature and use.

§ 3. *Of the Jewish ritual.*

BESIDES the precepts and observances which it has pleased the divine being to enjoin with respect to the whole human race, he provided, what we may call, a much stricter, and more severe discipline for the Hebrew nation, whom he distinguished by frequent revelations of his will, by many interpositions in their favour, and a peculiar constitution of civil government, in which he himself more immediately presided.

They were restricted in their diet, being confined to the use of certain kinds of food; but they are such as are now generally esteemed to be the most innocent in their nature, mild in their qualities, and least apt to become satiating by frequent use. They would therefore tend to impress
upon

upon the minds of those who were confined to them an idea of their obligation to greater purity and innocence, and make them consider themselves as a *holy nation*, peculiarly devoted to God. The use of such food would also, of itself, probably, incline them to a peaceful inoffensive life, as it is thought that the ranker kinds of food tend to make mankind fierce and cruel.

A great part of the ritual of the Hebrews seems to have been intended to preserve upon their minds a sense of their immediate relation to God, and of their obligation to a constant intercourse with him. There was one particular place within their country, to which they were to resort, where the divine being was to be consulted by them, and where he manifested himself in a more especial manner. In this place, which was first a moveable tabernacle, and afterwards the temple at Jerusalem, he had a constant habitation, keeping, as it were, a regular court, with suitable attendants. Here he received their gifts and homage, and here he gave them instructions and advice on a variety of occasions, when they applied to him in a proper manner.

More especially, the great object of the Hebrew ritual seems to have been to inspire the minds of that people with an abhorrence of the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and to preserve among them the pure worship of the one only living and true God. For this reason many of their rites were

the very reverse of those of their neighbours, so as to be altogether incompatible with them, and must consequently have tended to make them averse to them. Upon every occasion the importance of their adherence to this precise mode of worship was strongly inculcated upon them, a particular and remarkable providence attended them through the whole course of their history (and still attends them) giving them prosperity and success while they were obedient, and making the hand of God visible in their punishment, when they departed from his worship, and relapsed into idolatry, or when they became, in other respects, profligate and wicked.

To prevent, as far as possible, the abuse and corruption of this religion, nothing of the least consequence was left to the discretion of the people, but every minute particular, as those relating to the structure of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, the kinds of sacrifices, the ceremonies attending them, and every thing that was to be done on their public festivals, was rigidly prescribed to them, and they were not allowed to make the least deviation. For the same purpose, and also to preserve a proper degree of union among a people who were originally to have had no temporal head, they were allowed to have but one altar, and no sacrifice was to be made but at that one place, and by certain persons appointed for that purpose; and three times every year, viz. at their public festivals,

festivals, every male was to make his appearance before the Lord, at the place of his residence, in the tabernacle, or temple.

Several things in the Hebrew ritual were perhaps intended to serve as types of Christ, or to bear some resemblance to him and his religion, and therefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls them "a shadow of good things to come." Heb. x. 1.

On the other hand, it may be observed, that the author of this epistle perhaps only intended to draw a comparison between the Hebrew ritual and such particulars in the christian system as most nearly resemble it, only as other comparisons and figures are used, merely for illustration, without supposing that there was *originally*, and in the divine mind, a reference from the one to the other. Thus when the apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 2. "that the Israelites were all baptized to Moses in the cloud, "and in the sea," he can hardly be supposed to have meant, that the sprinkling of the water upon that people, or their being, as it were, plunged in it, by the water rising over their heads, was a proper type of baptism; but only, that by a common figure of speech, it might be so termed; or that the *rock* which supplied them with water was really Christ, as the same apostle calls it, 1 Cor. x. 4. or a type of Christ, but only that, in some respects, it might be compared to him, or he to it.

In some cases also, it is very possible, that the apostles and evangelists might imagine there was a reference to Christ, when no such thing was originally intended.

It is very remarkable, that when the sacrifices under the law are spoken of in the Old Testament, as insufficient to render the offer acceptable to God, there is never the most distant allusion to any more perfect sacrifice, to which they are commonly supposed to have referred, and of which they are said to have been the types, but to *good works* only, which are always mentioned in opposition to them. Thus David says, Ps. li. 16. “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” Now it can hardly be supposed but that, if sacrifices had really been designed for types, there would have been, in some place or other, a reference, more or less plain, to the thing which they were intended to prefigure, and from their relation to which they derived all their efficacy.

* This particular passage is differently rendered in the Seventy, and by this means probably the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. came to give a different turn to it. See, however, the following passages, which express the same sentiment with this. If. i. 10.—lxvi. 2. &c. Jer. vi. 8, &c. Amos v. 21, &c. Micah vi. 6. &c.

Lastly,

Lastly, several of the Hebrew customs were intended to commemorate remarkable occurrences in their history, especially such as led them to recollect and reflect upon the divine interpositions in their favour. Thus, the passover was instituted in commemoration of the destroying angel having passed over the houses of the Israelites, when he killed the first-born in every family of the Egyptians: the feast of Pentecost was a memorial of the giving of the law on mount Sinai; and the feast of Tabernacles, of their residing many years in the wilderness, when they lived in tents, and were fed with manna from heaven. Also the rite of circumcision was instituted as a token and pledge of the covenant which God made with Abraham, or of the promise that he would give him the land of Canaan.

It is not easy to say how far, and in what respects, the Jewish dispensation was intended to be abrogated by christianity. Christ himself gave no hint of any such design, except it be implied in his saying, Matt. v. 18. that "one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled;" or in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21. "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

And

And though the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. vii. argues, in a figurative manner, that the Jews were become “dead to the law” by the body of Christ, that they might be married to another,” yet it appears from the book of Acts, that he himself strictly conformed to the temple-service, as all other Jewish christians did, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Paul did not only himself “walk orderly, and keep the law,” Acts xxi. 24. but caused Timothy to be circumcised upon his conversion to christianity, because his mother was a Jewess, though his father was a Greek. Acts xvi. 1.

With respect to *meats*, the divine being seems to have intimated to Peter, that the distinction between clean and unclean was abolished. For by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven, Acts x. 11. and the command, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat,” it seems to have been intended to intimate, not only that no nation or people were unclean in the sight of God, but that those kinds of food which the Jews had been taught to consider as unclean, were now no longer so. We also find that Peter himself, when he was among the Gentiles, at Antioch, “lived after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews.” Gal. ii. 14. though, upon the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem, he abstained, for fear of giving offence; a conduct for which he was justly reproved by Paul.

As

As long as the temple stood, the service of it was kept up, and attended upon by the believing, as well as the unbelieving Jews, and none of the apostles dropped so much as a hint of there being any thing improper or wrong in it. When the temple was destroyed, the service of it ceased of course, just as it did at the Babylonish captivity. But it is remarkable, that in the prophecies of Ezekiel, relating to the restoration of the Jews, the most express mention is made of the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the temple-service, and especially of sacrifices, Ezekiel xliiii. 18. And it will hardly be supposed, that the conversion of the Jews to christianity will not take place at least very soon after their restoration.

As the Jews are still to continue a distinct people, and will probably be the medium of the divine communications, to the rest of the world, it is not improbable, but that they will always continue to be distinguished by certain peculiar observances and religious rites; but whether the whole, or what particular part of their ancient ritual will be retained, it is impossible for us to say.

§ 4. *Of Baptism.*

ALL the positive institutions, of which an account has yet been given, were antecedent to christianity. The two which remain to be treated of, viz. baptism and the Lord's supper, are peculiar to it.

Baptism is the appointed manner in which a person takes upon him the profession of christianity, or by which a person is admitted to the privileges of the disciples of Christ; and was probably intended to represent the washing away, or renouncing the impurities of some former state, viz. the sins he had committed, and the vicious habits he had contracted; and it is to be observed, that the profession of repentance always accompanied, or was understood to accompany, the profession of faith in Christ. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the general exhortation both of John the Baptist and of Christ; and, "Repent and believe the gospel; Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," was the general strain of the apostles' preaching. *Now*, says Paul to the Athenians, "God commandeth all men, every where, to repent." Acts xvii. 30.

We find no account of baptism, as a distinct religious rite, before the mission of John, the forerunner

runner of Christ, who was called *the Baptist*, on account of his being commanded by God to baptize with water all who should hearken to his invitation to repent. Washing, however, accompanied many of the Jewish rites, and, indeed, was required after contracting any kind of uncleanness. Also, soon after the time of our Saviour, we find it to have been the custom of the Jews solemnly to baptize, as well as to circumcise all their profelytes. As their writers treat largely of the *reasons* for this rite, and give no hint of its being a novel institution, it is probable, that this had always been the custom antecedent to the time of Moses, whose account of the rite of circumcision, and of the manner of performing it, is by no means circumstantial. Or baptism, after circumcising, might have come into use gradually, from the natural propriety of the thing, and its easy conformity to other Jewish customs. For, if no Jew could approach the tabernacle, or temple, after the most trifling uncleanness, without bathing, much less would it be thought proper to admit a profelyte from a state so impure and unclean as heathenism was conceived to be, without the same mode of purification.

When a master of a family became a profelyte to Judaism, he was required to circumcise both himself and his household. Thus Abraham was expressly commanded to circumcise both his son
Ishmael,

Ishmael, who had no interest in the promise of which circumcision was a seal, and also all his slaves, "those who were bought with his money." Gen. xvii. 13.

The reason of this practice does not easily appear to us, whose customs and modes of thinking are so different from those which prevailed, and which still prevail, in the East. The power of a master of a family was very extensive, and the actions and customs by which he expressed his own character or resolution, generally extended to all the branches of it. Thus, when the Ninevites made solemn profession of their repentance, they clothed even their cattle in sack-cloth, and made them fast as well as themselves; not that they could imagine that the brute beasts were capable of repentance, or could have done any thing to displease God; but this mournful appearance of every thing about them, was conceived to be expressive of *their own* contrition and humiliation. Jonah iii. 7.

It being the universal custom, therefore, for the master of a family to circumcise, and probably, also, to baptize his children and slaves, as well as himself, upon his making profession of Judaism; and the propriety of the thing being exceedingly obvious to all the people in the East, it would be taken for granted, that baptism, if it was used at all, was to be administered in the same undistinguished

guished manner, when a person made profession of christianity; and the command to *baptize all nations* would necessarily have been understood in this sense, unless our Lord had added some express restriction.

Accordingly we find, that when the jailor, who had the custody of Paul, was converted, both himself was baptized, and *all his*. Acts xvi. 33. Also when Lydia was converted, it is said, that she was baptized, and *her household*. Acts xvi. 15. Now, by this phrase, a Jew, and even a Roman, would necessarily understand, that both the principal person himself, and all who were *under his immediate power*, either as a parent or a master, were included.

What the Jews did with respect to young men, grown up to years of understanding, but living with their parents, when they were converted to Judaism, is not said: but it is probable, that they were not circumcised without their own consent, as in general it must have been the case with slaves. And since christianity is evidently more of a *personal* concern, and men are chiefly interested in it as individuals, and not as members of societies, or even of families, it may be taken for granted, that only young children were required to be baptized along with their believing parents.

As slaves, we find, were often converted without their masters, and christianity made no distinction

tion between bond or free, as being of the same value in the eye of God, it will hardly be thought probable, that slaves were ever baptized without their own consent. At least, the custom did not continue long, especially as slaves were about that time growing more independent of their masters, acquiring civil as well as religious privileges; till at length, through the influence of maxims which christianity greatly countenanced, they were universally manumitted in Europe.

The baptism of children, therefore, is to be considered as one part of a man's own profession of christianity, and consequently an obligation upon him to educate his children in the principles of the christian religion. If a child have no parents, or none who will engage for his religious instruction, other persons, who will undertake this kind office, are so far its parents, and therefore may baptize it, as they would do their own children.

Lastly, I would observe, that it is an argument in favour of the baptizing of infants, to which I do not see how any satisfactory reply can be made, that it appears, from the history of the christian church, to have been the constant practice from the time of the apostles. The first mention that is made of it is as of an *uncontroverted practice*, and it is even *argued from*, as an universally received custom, against very intelligent persons, to whose
cause

cause it would have been of the greatest advantage to have proved it to be novel, or of no authority. This was more especially the case with Pelagius; for, though Austin, in support of his doctrine of original sin, appeals to the practice of infant baptism, as being necessary to do it away, his antagonist does not pretend to dispute the fact, but only denies that this was the use of it.

Now it is certainly highly improbable, that such a custom as that of infant-baptism should have been established so early as it appears to have been, contrary to the apostolical practice, and no trace be left of the innovation; especially when every thing belonging to christianity, about which all persons were not entirely agreed, became so soon the subject of the most eager contention and debate. And it does not appear to be of any consequence by what argument we can infer, that any opinion or practice was apostolical, whether by their own writing, or any other *sufficient evidence*. They could not themselves be mistaken in a case of this nature, and their practice is an authoritative rule for us.

§ 5. *Of the Lord's Supper.*

THE Lord's supper, consisting of eating bread, and drinking wine, is a religious rite instituted by Christ, in commemoration of his death; the breaking of the bread more especially representing the wounding of the body of Christ, and the pouring out of the wine, the shedding of his blood; and this rite is to continue to be celebrated by the disciples of Christ till his second coming.

The design of this institution being to serve as a memorial, or record, of that important fact of the death of Christ, it may be considered as one monument of the truth of the christian religion, as was observed in a preceding part of this work.

Being more especially a memorial of the death of Christ, in which he chiefly manifested the love that he bore to mankind, it furnishes the most proper opportunity of recollecting the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the consideration of the blessings of his gospel.

Since this rite is peculiar to christians, it likewise serves as a public declaration of our being christians; and is, consequently, a recognizing of the obligation we are under to live as become christians. For no man can say that he is a christian, and especially in a public and solemn manner,

ner, without acknowledging that he is obliged to live as becomes a christian. Joining habitually in public worship, implies very much the same thing.

Lastly, as, in this rite, we more especially commemorate the death of Christ, it serves to remind us, that we are the professed disciples of a crucified master; and, therefore, must not expect better treatment from this world than our Lord met with from it: that we must lay our account with meeting with hardships, reproach, and persecution, as he did, and that we should contentedly and patiently bear them, rather than quit the profession of our faith, or do any thing unworthy of it; in full assurance that, if we “suffer for Christ, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.”

This rite having such excellent moral uses, and the celebration of it being an express command of Christ, who said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” I do not see how any person, professing christianity, can satisfy himself with refusing to join in it. In the primitive times, the celebration of the Lord’s supper made a part of the ordinary service every Lord’s day, and every person who was thought worthy to be considered as a member of a body of christians partook of it. Whenever, indeed, any person professing christianity behaved in a manner unworthy of the christian name, so as to be in danger of bringing a reproach upon it, he

he was excommunicated; in consequence of which, he was cut off from joining in any part of christian worship, and from this among the rest; but there was no distinction made between this and other parts of the service, especially the prayers of the church. An excommunicated person was one who was publicly declared not to belong to a christian society; and, therefore, the church would not consent to any thing that should imply their acknowledging him in the character of a brother, and declined associating with him. The reason of this conduct was most evident, because the good name of christians, and of christian societies, was a thing of the greatest consequence to the propagation of christianity in those early times; and it ought to be considered at all times as a matter of great consequence.

Considering that Christ absolutely requires of all his disciples the most open and public profession of his religion, notwithstanding all the hazards to which it may expose them, and has declared, that unless we “confess him before men,” he will not acknowledge us before his heavenly father; it certainly behoves all christians to take this, as well as every other method, of declaring, in a public manner, their profession of christianity. Moreover, as baptism is generally administered in infancy, and is not the act of the person baptized, it seems necessary, that there should be some public

lic act, by which those who are baptized in their infancy, should openly, and in their own persons, declare themselves christians; and the most proper manner of doing this, is certainly the receiving of the Lord's supper.

According to the custom of the primitive church, a custom so antient and uncontroverted, as, with me, to carry sufficient evidence of its having been an apostolical one, all persons who are baptized, children as well as others, should receive the Lord's supper. It is nothing less than the revival of this custom that will secure a general attendance upon this ordinance; and no objection can be made to it, except what may, with equal strength, be made to bringing children to public worship at all, since they are as incapable of understanding the one as the other. Nor would this antient and useful custom have been ever laid aside, if it had not been for the introduction of a train of superstitious notions, which made this plain and simple ordinance appear continually more mysterious and awful; till, at length, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation was completely established.

Indeed, it is not a little remarkable, that the custom of giving the eucharist to children, was not finally abolished in any place till that doctrine had obtained the full sanction of the church of Rome; and that it maintains its ground to this very day, in all those christian churches which were never

subject to that antichristian power, whose spiritual usurpations and corruptions of the gospel have been immense, and have extended to almost every thing belonging to it.

SECTION VI.

Of the government of christian churches.

I Shall conclude these observations on the positive institutions of christianity with a short account of the primitive regulations for the government of christian churches; which, though not of divine appointment, were such as the wisdom of the apostles thought to be the most convenient for transacting the business of christian societies, and making them subservient to the purpose of improvement in knowledge and goodness.

Christian churches were formed upon the plan of the Jewish synagogues, in which a number of the more elderly and respectable members presided, with the title of *elders*, or *overseers*, which in the Greek language is expressed by the word which in English is rendered *bishop*; and one of these persons was generally, by way of pre-eminence in point of *honour*, but not of *power*, stiled the chief, or master of the synagogue.

The

The principal business of elders in christian churches was to attend equally to the instruction and good conduct of the society, and to pass censures in case of improper conduct. In general, some of them gave more particular attention to reading and exhortation, and from these elders, the society usually expected an exposition of those portions of scripture which were read in their assemblies every Lord's day; but any person who was present might, with the leave of the bishop, either expound the scriptures, or exhort the people.

These elders were chosen by the people, and, with their approbation, were *ordained*, or recommended to the divine blessing by prayer, in which the elders of other churches assisted. Along with prayer they used *imposition of hands*, which was nothing more than a ceremony which they constantly used when they prayed for any particular person, on any occasion whatever; and to this the extension of the hands of the person who prayed over, or towards any larger body of people, corresponded.

Besides elders, there were also, in all christian churches, persons who attended to the civil concerns of them, under the title of *deacons*. These were generally younger persons, of good character, who, if they behaved well in this office, were afterwards advanced to the rank of elders.

At the first appointment of officers in christian churches, there was no settled provision for their maintenance, but money was collected every Lord's day, out of which a distribution was made to all who stood in need of it, officers and others, promiscuously. For, at the first promulgation of christianity, no person could have been educated for the ministry. All equally lived by their several professions, and therefore no person was entitled to more consideration in this respect than another. But afterwards, when christianity got a firm establishment, many young persons devoted themselves wholly to the service of christian churches, and prepared themselves for that work by a diligent study of the scriptures, and proper exercises; and thus, giving their whole time and labour to the society, they were, as was reasonable, wholly maintained out of the funds of it.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF
MANKIND DERIVED FROM REVELATION.

SECTION I.

Of a future state in general.

FROM the light of nature we were able to make out a tolerable system of natural religion, as far as it respects the *duty of men* in this life, though the particulars were such as can only be said to have been *discoverable* by nature, since they were not actually *discovered* by it. But nature was a much less sufficient guide with respect to the information, in which we are so much interested, concerning our expectations after death. It even left us under great uncertainty, whether we should survive the grave or not; though, upon the supposition of our surviving the grave, we were able, from the consideration of the equity of God's moral government, to infer, that the event would be very desirable to good men, and much to be dreaded by the wicked; the former having sufficient reason, from present appearances, to conclude,

that the divine being is a friend to virtue, and, therefore, disposed to reward them for their adherence to it; and the latter having equal reason to dread his displeasure.

Since, however, no reasons of justice or equity, could lead men to expect more than an *adequate* punishment, proportioned to their crimes, there was far from being any reason to imagine that future punishments would be eternal, especially if they were exquisite; because no crimes of a finite nature, committed by frail and finite creatures, could deserve it. An alternative, therefore, remained, either to suppose an extinction of the wicked, with or without any other punishment; or that future sufferings would operate like the sufferings of this present life, tending to correct and amend those who are subject to them.

There was some hope, therefore, that, after an adequate punishment, those who were not reclaimed in this world, might be effectually cured of their vicious propensities, by the more severe and durable punishments of another, so as to enter upon a new state of trial with more advantage, though they might still be far behind those who had made the most of their present advantages. In this case; the punishments of the wicked may properly enough be said to be eternal, because they would never arrive at that state of perfection and happiness

ness which was attained to by those who entered earlier on a course of virtue.

Such is the substance of what we were able to collect from nature concerning a future state, provided there were any such thing. From revelation we learn the actual certainty of a future state, and have an absolute assurance of its being a state of exact retribution, in which every man shall receive according to his works. But this being all that is necessary to influence our present conduct, we are still at a loss, and left in a great measure to our conjectures, with respect to the precise *nature*, and final *issue*, of the future state.

This important revelation of a future life seems to have been made to mankind in a gradual manner. At least but little stress seems to have been laid upon it, in the early ages of the world, so that it was not fully *brought to light*, so as to become the great governing principle of men's conduct, till the dispensation of the gospel of Christ.

Enoch being said to have been a *preacher of righteousness*, and having been taken from the world without dying, perhaps in the view of multitudes, it is not very improbable, but that he might have been commissioned to announce this great doctrine to mankind. His miraculous assumption might be intended to intimate that God, being the friend of the virtuous, would provide for the continuance of their being; and they might conclude, that he

who could continue life without dying, could even raise men from the dead.

With the old patriarchs, and mankind in general, in the early ages of the world, the prospect of being the *founders of nations*, which every person had then the chance of being, was so great an idea, and struck them so forcibly, that it, in a manner, superseded all other motives to virtue. It is on this argument, therefore, and other temporal considerations, that peculiar stress is laid in the exhortations to obedience addressed to them.

As the institutions of Moses respected the Jews as a *nation*, and the immediate object of it was *temporal prosperity*, there is the less reason to expect a particular mention of it in his laws; though it cannot but be owned to be a little surprising, that there should be no *incidental mention* of it in any of his writings.

We find some allusions, though not very plain ones, to the state of mankind after death, in several parts of the Old Testament, especially in the book of Psalms, as, Ps. xvi. 8. &c. “ I have
 “ set the Lord always before me: because he is
 “ at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
 “ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory re-
 “ joiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For
 “ thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither
 “ wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see cor-
 “ ruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
 “ in

“ in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right
“ hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Ps.
xvii. 15. “ As for me, I will behold thy face in
“ righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I
“ awake, with thy likeness.”

But there seems to be very express mention of a future state in the following passage of the book of Job, ch. xix. 25. “ For I know that my re-
“ decmer liveth, and that he shall stand at the
“ latter day upon the earth. And though, after my
“ skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh
“ shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself,
“ and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
“ though my reins be consumed within me.”

In the book of Daniel there is still a more express mention of a resurrection, and of the condition of the righteous and of the wicked after it. Dan. xii. 2. “ Many of them that sleep in the
“ dust of the earth shall awake, some to ever-
“ lasting life, and some to shame and everlasting
“ contempt.” There seems also to be a particular promise to Daniel of his own resurrection in the concluding words of the book, v. 13. “ But go
“ thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt
“ rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” He was then too old to have any more preferment in this life, and he had all the power that a subject could have.

In the history of the Maccabees, who bravely suffered death rather than abandon their religion, we see the fullest confidence in their expectation of a happy resurrection, especially in what was said by the mother and her seven sons*, at their martyrdom, the particulars of which, being very striking, I shall here quote. 2 Mac. vii. 9. &c. “And when he,” viz. the second son, was at the “last gasp, he said, Thou, like a fury, takest us “out of this present life, but the King of the “world shall raise us up, who have died for his “laws, unto everlasting life.” The third, speaking of his tongue and hands, which they were going to mangle, said, ver. 11. “These I had “from heaven; and for his laws I despise them, “and from him I hope to receive them again.” The fourth, when he was ready to die, said, ver. 14. “It is good, being put to death by men, to “look for hope from God, to be raised up again “by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no re- “surrection to life.” Lastly, the mother exhorted them in her own language, ver. 21. saying, “I cannot tell how ye came into my womb, for “I neither gave you breath, nor life, neither was “it I that formed the members of every one of

* Though this particular story should be fabulous, it is no less an evidence of the opinion that prevailed among the Jews before the time of our Saviour.

“ you

“ you; but doubtless the Creator of the world,
“ who formed the generation of man, and found
“ out the beginning of all things, will also, of his
“ own mercy, give you breath and life again, as
“ ye now regard not your own selves.”

The manner in which the belief of a resurrection is here expressed, clearly shows, that it was no *novel* doctrine among the Jews of those times, but that they considered themselves as speaking agreeably to the faith of all their ancestors; and it is hard to conceive how they could have been mistaken in this. The doctrine of a resurrection from the dead never occurred to any of the heathens, even those who supposed that there might be a future life. It does not seem, therefore, that this general and firm expectation of the Jews, which was peculiar to themselves, and contrary to all present appearances, could have had any other origin than divine revelation, though we have no account when, or to whom, this revelation was made.

This argument, *a posteriori*, makes it probable, that David, and other writers of the Old Testament, did really refer to the doctrine of a resurrection, and a future life, in those passages to which, without the knowledge of what were the sentiments of the Jews afterwards, we might naturally enough have been led to give a different interpretation. Had there been any new revelation

lation of so important a doctrine between the time of David and the Maccabees (as it was a period in which many eminent Jewish prophets flourished) we might naturally expect to have found some particular account of it. But, supposing it to have been the universal opinion of the patriarchs, founded upon some well-known, though very ancient revelation, and never to have been forgotten, or lost sight of, by the pious Israelites (though it was quite lost with the rest of the world) we may much better satisfy ourselves with finding so little express mention of it.

With the Pharisees, among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, the expectation of a resurrection was universal; though it appears that, in some respects, they had a very imperfect idea of it, and the Sadducees altogether denied it. Thus Martha, the sister of Lazarus, says to our Saviour, when he told her that her brother should rise again; John xi. 24. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;" which evidently shows, that she took the doctrine for granted, without seeming to have learned it from Christ.

In all the New Testament, we find the greatest possible stress laid upon this doctrine. Christians having no expectations, as the Jews had, from temporal considerations, expected all their reward in a future life. All the recompense they looked for, on account of their sufferings in the cause of truth and righteousness, was *at the resurrection of*
the

the just. This, therefore, is the great sanction of virtue in christianity, which inculcates upon the professors of it, that they are to consider themselves as *not of this world*, but as *citizens of heaven*, and only *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, in full assurance that, *by patient continuance in well doing*, they shall at length, attain to *glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.*

We likewise learn, in the gospel, that Christ is appointed both to raise all the dead, and to judge the world at the last day. Addressing himself to the Jews, he says, John vi. 40. "This is the will of him that sent me; that every one who seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Speaking to Martha, upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus, he says, "I am the resurrection, and the life;" and when he was solemnly adjured by the high priest, at his trial, to say whether he was the Christ, he said, Mark xiv. 62. "I am, and ye shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Our Lord gives a more particular account of the proceedings of this great day. Matt. xxv. 31. "When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them

“ them one from another, as a shepherd divideth
 “ his sheep from the goats:” when he will say to
 the righteous, “ Come, ye blessed of my Father,
 “ inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the
 “ foundation of the world;” but to the wicked
 he will say, “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into
 “ everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his
 “ angels.”

The reason why Christ should be appointed by
 God to act this illustrious part, is pretty clearly
 intimated to be his being *a man*, viz. of the same
 rank and species with ourselves, John v. 22. “ The
 “ Father judgeth no man; but hath committed
 “ all judgment unto the Son.” And, v. 27. “ he
 “ hath given him authority to execute judgment
 “ also, because he is the son of man;” so that
 being, with respect to his nature, in all respects,
 like ourselves, subject to the same infirmities and
 passions, we may be well assured, that he will *feel*
for us, and be disposed to make all the reasonable
 allowances that our situation and circumstances
 shall require; so that we can have no reason to
 complain, or be apprehensive of unjust severity
 from our judge. For this reason, among others,
 the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews observes,
 chap ii. 10. that “ it became him, for whom are
 “ all things, and by whom are all things, to
 “ make the captain of our salvation perfect through
 “ sufferings;” ver. 17. “ That in all things it
 “ behaved

“ behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;” that he should not be an angel, but of the seed of Abraham, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest for us.”

We are informed that, at the second coming of Christ, the virtuous shall be raised first, and immediately after that, a *change*, which shall supersede death, will take place upon all who are alive; in consequence of which, their bodies, as well as those which are raised from the dead, will become incorruptible, and not subject to die any more. These particulars we are informed of in the following passages of scripture. 1 Theff. iv. 13. “ I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we
“ ever

“ ever be with the Lord.” 1 Cor. xv. 42. “ So
 “ also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown
 “ in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it
 “ is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory:
 “ it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it
 “ is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual
 “ body.” Ver. 50. “ Now this I say, brethren,
 “ that flesh and blood cannot inherit the king-
 “ dom of God; neither doth corruption inherit
 “ incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery;
 “ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be
 “ changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an
 “ eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall
 “ sound) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,
 “ and we shall be changed. For this corruptible
 “ must put on incorruption, and this mortal must
 “ put on immortality.” Hence we may clearly
 infer, that all bodily imperfections will be removed,
 so that every person will appear with his full
 powers of body and mind; but whether any will
 rise in the state of *infancy*, we are not informed.

SECTION II.

Of the nature of future rewards and punishments.

THE happiness of the righteous, after the resurrection, is expressed in such terms as makes it appear to be the most desirable thing that can be conceived by man; but still the terms are *general*, and give us no distinct idea of the nature of it. Nor, indeed, was this at all necessary: nay, our hopes and wishes are, perhaps, more strongly engaged without that circumstance.

Sometimes the future happiness is described as a *state of rest*. Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead
" that die in the Lord, for they rest from their
" labours; and their works do follow them."

But most frequently it is spoken of as a state of *indefinite and positive happiness*. It is said of the virtuous, in the book of Revelation, ch. vii. 16. that
" they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any
" more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor
" any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of
" the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them
" unto living fountains of waters: and God shall
" wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. xxi.
3. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven,
" saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with
" men,

“ men, and he will dwell with them, and be their
 “ God. And God shall wipe away all tears from
 “ their eyes; and there shall be no more death,
 “ neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there
 “ be any more pain: for the former things are
 “ passed away.”

The happiness of the righteous is also represented as a state of *glory*, and honourable distinction, and that of the wicked as a state of infamy and disgrace. The angel informs Daniel, ch xii. 2. that “ many
 “ of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall
 “ awake, some to everlasting life, and some to
 “ shame and everlasting contempt. And they that
 “ be wise shall shine as the brightness of the fir-
 “ mament, and they that turn many to righte-
 “ ousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” To
 this passage our Lord probably alluded, when he
 said, Matt. xiii. 43. “ Then shall the righteous
 “ shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their
 “ Father.”

There can be no doubt but that, as *moral excel-
 lence* is the only preparative to future happiness, so
 it will be a necessary ingredient in it. And every
 truly good man will look forward, with joy, to
 the time when all sin, and every propensity to it,
 shall be no more, and when his nature will be as
 excellent as it is capable of being.

The happiness of heaven, like the happiness of
 generous virtue in this life, we have reason to
 think,

think, will not be of an indolent, but of an *active* nature; and our benevolence being perfected, we shall, probably be employed in promoting the happiness of other beings; which may engage us in a variety of the most vigorous and unremitting pursuits. This idea is favoured by almost every representation which our Lord gives us, in his parables, of the rewards of the righteous. Thus, it is usual with him, to compare it to a *kingdom*, and the exercise of *dominion*, in various forms; which suggests the idea of a scene of great *exertion*, as well as of dignity, splendor, and authority. He that had improved two talents, was made ruler over two cities; he that had improved five talents, was made ruler over five cities; and to both of them he says, Matt. xxv. 21. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Speaking concerning the same subject, he says, Matt. xxiv. 45. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

Considering the intelligent nature of man, and the pleasure we naturally take in the acquisition of
know-

knowledge, it can hardly be supposed, but that an enlarged acquaintance with the works and providence of God, will make a considerable part of the happiness of the wise and good hereafter. We shall, probably, have the best opportunity of gaining a thorough knowledge of the constitution, and mutual relations of things in the world that we inhabit; and having it in our power to converse with the chief actors in all great events, we shall be better acquainted with the true history of the world, and may thereby better trace the wonderful conduct of divine providence in all the affairs of it.

Lastly, if our natures be at all the same that they are now, we shall, no doubt, receive the highest satisfaction from conversing with our wise and virtuous acquaintance, talking over the transactions in which we were concerned in this world; when all the labours, fatigues, and sufferings, which we underwent, in the cause of virtue and christianity, will, like the recollection of all difficulties surmounted in a good cause at present, be the source of great joy and exultation.

That all the virtuous will not be admitted to the same degree of honour and happiness hereafter, is agreeable both to reason, and to the scriptures, which teach us, that every man shall receive “ according to his works;” that he who “ soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully; but he
“ that

“ that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly.” 2 Cor. ix. 6.

On the other hand, the *punishment of the wicked* is described in the scriptures, in such a manner, as, if the representation be at all attended to, cannot but alarm our fears to the utmost. But still the terms are *general*, and leave us to expect some very terrible, but *unknown suffering*, and of very long, but uncertain duration.

Not unfrequently, the anguish of the mind, which is to be the portion of the wicked after death, is represented as derived, in a great degree, from a sense of their *exclusion from the happiness*, to which they see the virtuous, who had been the objects of their contempt and abuse, advanced; and this circumstance must necessarily be a very great aggravation of the punishment of *hell*, which is the term by which the place of future punishment is sometimes denominated in the scriptures. Thus, when the good and virtuous are represented as going to a *marriage supper*, the wicked are said to be *shut out*, and to remain in “ outer darkness, where “ shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. xxii. 13. This, also, is said to be the fate of the *unprofitable servant*, who had neglected to improve his talent, Matt. xxv. 30. and of the *five foolish virgins* it is likewise said, that, coming too late, they found the door shut, and admission refused to them.

But

But other accounts of the future state of the wicked, lead us to expect very *severe positive sufferings*, as 2 Theff. i. 7. “ In that day shall the
 “ Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven, with his
 “ mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance
 “ on them that know not God, and that obey not
 “ the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall
 “ be punished with everlasting destruction from
 “ the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of
 “ his power.”

In several passages of the scripture, the state of the wicked after death is described, as has been hinted before, as a state of *shame and disgrace*, than which nothing is generally more dreaded by mankind; while the righteous are said “ not to be
 “ ashamed before Christ at his coming.” 1 John ii. 28. And certainly the extreme folly of their conduct must appear in a striking and tormenting light to the wicked and profligate, when they shall see how shamefully they have misapplied their time and talents. And this situation will more especially affect those who are used to pride themselves in their cunning and foresight, when they shall see how miserably narrow and short-sighted all their boasted schemes were. Also, how must the sense of their own folly be aggravated, by seeing those whom they had despised inheriting the rewards of *true wisdom*, as well as of virtue, and in knowing that all their base views, and low un-
 worthy

worthy pursuits, are no longer concealed within their own breasts, but laid open to the perfect knowledge of all those to whose censure they are the most sensible.

Very many of those expressions, by which the fate of the wicked is described in the scriptures, taken in their literal sense, denote utter *destruction*, or extinction of being. Thus, the apostle Peter says, 2 Pet. iii. 7. that “the earth is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men;” and in the passage quoted above from the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, the punishment of the wicked is called “everlasting destruction.” If this should actually be the fate of the wicked, their punishment may more properly be said to be *eternal*, than upon the former supposition, there being no reversion of the sentence, or remission of the rigour of it.

SECTION III.

Of the duration of future punishment.

THE duration of future punishment, according to the scriptures, as I observed before, will be very long, but uncertain; which is the general meaning of that word which we render *everlasting*; being applied to many things which are expressly

expressly said to be of limited duration, as the priesthood of Aaron, and the kingdom in the family of David. For, even if we consider Christ as intended by the seed of David, and that the duration of his dominion was foretold in the prophecies, still his kingdom, we are assured, will have an end, as we learn, 1 Cor. xv. 24. “ Then
 “ cometh the end, when he shall have delivered
 “ up the kingdom to God, even the Father;—
 “ then shall the Son also himself be subject unto
 “ him that put all things under him, that God
 “ may be all in all.”

There can be no doubt, but that the punishment of the wicked will be very awful; but if God be a just and righteous governor, it must be in proportion to the sins, by the commission of which it is incurred; and there is no proportion between finite and infinite. Besides, in the scriptures, the divine being appeals to mankind, whether *his ways be not equal*, that is, just and reasonable, Ezekiel xviii. 25. And Abraham takes it for granted, that “ the judge of all the earth must
 “ do that which is right.” Gen. xviii. 25. that is, what is agreeable to our ideas of justice and equity. It is, moreover, expressly said, Ps. ciii. 9. that “ God keepeth not his anger for ever,” that “ in judgment he remembereth mercy,” and that “ he is not extreme to mark iniquity.” These expressions seem to be intended to give us an idea
 of

of the divine character, and the general maxims of his conduct; and must, therefore, respect his government in a future world, as well as this. Also, whenever the divine justice and mercy are compared, the latter is always represented as of greater extent than the former. Thus he is said, Ex. xx. 5. "to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the *fourth generation*, but to shew mercy to *thousands* of them that love him."

It is remarkable, that the punishment of the wicked is always described in general terms only, expressive of great and uncertain sufferings; whereas, if the doctrine of the *proper eternity* of hell torments had been strictly true, we might have expected, that it would be said, in so many words, that *it should have no end*, and that the greatest stress should always have been laid upon this most important circumstance, as being most interesting and alarming to all mankind.

Our Saviour, indeed, says, Mark ix. 44. that "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" but this is manifestly a figurative expression; and, besides, the words are taken from Isaiah lxvi. 24. where they are applied to the burning of dead bodies. All the meaning may be, that the fire shall not be quenched till it has consumed that which shall be committed to it, so as to have answered its destined end; that is, till those wick-

ed persons who are doomed to those flames be destroyed, or till their vices be thoroughly corrected.

Christ also says of Judas Iscariot, Matt. xxvi. 24. that "it had been good for him, if he had not been born." But this, again, is a figurative expression, used to denote extreme misery and distress in general, especially such as is apt to make men wish, from anguish of mind and impatience, that they had never been born; which was the case with Job, though at the time that he used such expressions as these, Job. iii. it is probable that his sufferings had been greatly overbalanced by his happiness.

It must likewise be allowed to be an argument of considerable weight against the proper eternity of hell torments, that the number of those who believe and obey the gospel, and of the virtuous and good in general, who alone are entitled to the happiness of heaven, is sometimes represented as small, in comparison with that of the disobedient and wicked; as when our Saviour says, Matt. vii. 13. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be
" that

“ that find it*.” Now there seems to be no way of reconciling this with the notion of divine goodness, but upon the supposition that the wicked will either finally perish, like plants or fruits which never come to their maturity, or that just and severe punishment will be a means of correcting and improving them. For God, having a perfect fore-knowledge of all that would actually happen, cannot be supposed to have made a voluntary choice of a system, the final issue of which he knew would be the everlasting and inexpressible misery of the greater part of his creatures.

It must be allowed, however, that the scriptures represent the punishments of the wicked in a future world, to be exceedingly dreadful, so that we have reason to be alarmed to the utmost extent of our faculties. Even this may stagger some; but it will not appear inconsistent with the usual government of God, if it be considered, to how much anguish and distress many *single acts of sin and folly* often expose us in this life; and, therefore, it is very possible, that all the vices of this present state may expose us to inexpressibly greater sufferings in the life to come.

* It is proper to observe, however, that, in the opinion of some, this passage, and others of a similar turn, do not relate to the final state of mankind in general; but to the state of things at the time when the words were delivered, and to the outward profession of christianity only.

For some observations on the *moral effect* of the doctrines of the proper eternity, or non-eternity of future punishments, I must refer my reader to the first part of this work. I shall only, in this place, suggest farther, that this, as well as every other great mistake concerning christianity, is a means of making unbelievers, who will think themselves justified in concluding, without reasoning or enquiry, that no religion can be true, or come from God, which contains a doctrine so manifestly unreasonable and absurd.

SECTION IV.

Of the time and place of future rewards and punishments.

IT has long been the general opinion of christians, that the reward of the virtuous, and the punishment of the wicked, will take place immediately after death, when the soul will exist in a conscious state, separate from the body, till the resurrection. But it appears to me, that the notion of the separate existence of the soul, on which this whole doctrine is founded, is built entirely on the false philosophy of the East, according to which, human souls are lapsed angels, fettered in
these

these gross bodies; and is by no means favoured by *present appearances*, according to which the power of thinking depends entirely upon the body, and especially upon the brain; so that any injury being done to the one, a proportionable injury is done to the other.

If thought be suspended in sound sleep, and if for a time we be wholly deprived of it by a blow on the head, much more must all our faculties be deranged, and a period be put to sensation and thought by death. And though *particular texts*, especially as they have been usually translated, are speciously enough alledged in favour of an intermediate conscious state, just as single texts have been, with equal plausibility, alledged in favour of all the doctrines of Popery and Calvinism; yet scriptural arguments of a more *general nature*, derived from a comprehensive view of the order and design of revelation, which are a much surer guide to truth, are strongly conclusive against it.

If the soul be capable of an existence separate from the body, and, as is generally supposed by those who adopt this opinion, be capable of a greater exertion of its powers, when unfettered from this incumbrance of the flesh, what reason could there be for a *resurrection*? The affection, which some persons arbitrarily suppose, that the soul must have for its old companion, is absurd, when it was always a clog and a burden to it.

Also, what occasion was there for a *general judgment*, at the last day, which is clearly the scripture doctrine, if there will have been a previous separate judgment for every individual of mankind, and they will all have actually received their proper reward or punishment before that time; which, with respect to some of them, will have continued several thousand years. Upon this plan, the general judgment must be a mere piece of pomp and parade, without any real use. Whereas, on the contrary, both the righteous and the wicked are represented by our Lord, in his account of the proceedings of that great day, Matt. xxv. as totally ignorant of their future state, and expressing their surprize at the decision of their judge; when, according to this hypothesis, they could not but have been acquainted with it, by dear or joyful experience, long before.

If we examine the scripture *promises*, we shall find no hint given of any thing taking place to the advantage of good men before *the coming of Christ* to judgment. When our Lord encourages persons to give to the poor, he says, Luke xiv. 14. "They cannot recompense thee: but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just;" not before. The apostle Paul, speaking of the duty and expectations of christians, directs their views to the same great event, and to nothing before, or short of it. Titus ii. 11. "For the grace
" of

“ of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appear-
“ ed to all men; teaching us, that denying un-
“ godliness and worldly lusts, we should live so-
“ berly, righteously, and godly, in this present
“ world; looking for that blessed hope, and the
“ glorious appearing of the great God, and our
“ Saviour Jesus Christ.” The apostle Peter had
no other idea when he said, 1 Pet. iv. 12. “ Be-
“ loved, think it not strange concerning the fiery
“ trial, which is to try you, as though some
“ strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice,
“ inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffer-
“ ings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye
“ may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

The same only time of the reward of the right-
teous, and the punishment of the wicked, is also
particularly mentioned, Rev. xi. 16. where the
four and twenty elders are said to fall down upon
their faces, and to worship God, saying, “ We
“ give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty; be-
“ cause thou hast taken to thee thy great power,
“ and hast reigned. And the nations were angry,
“ and thy wrath is come, and the time of the
“ dead that they should be judged, and that thou
“ shouldest give reward unto thy servants the pro-
“ phets, and to the saints, and them that fear
“ thy name, small and great, and shouldest de-
“ stroy them who destroy (or corrupt) the earth.”

All the exhortations of the New Testament go upon this same proper christian principle.

The punishment of the wicked is also always represented as taking place at the same time, viz. the day of judgment, and not before. Thus it is only "at the end of the world," Matt. xiii. 14. that our Lord says, "the Son of man shall send forth his angels;" when "they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that shall offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. "Then," and not before, "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father."

When the apostles write to comfort the friends of deceased christians, they drop not the most distant hint of their enjoying any degree of happiness at present, which is a topic which they could not possibly have overlooked on such an occasion, if they had really believed it, even though they had imagined that the resurrection was ever so near at hand. It is plain, however, that the apostle Paul had not the notion of the resurrection being so very near, when he wrote the Epistle to the Thessalonians, whom he endeavours to comfort upon this occasion. For, in the second Epistle, which, in this respect, is only explanatory of the former, he speaks of the rise, progress, and destruction of the *man of sin*, as to take place before this great event.

On

On the contrary, all the consolation that he has to offer, is derived from the prospect of the joyful resurrection of their deceased friends. 1 Thess. iv. 13. “ I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.—Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” The very phrase which the apostle here makes use of, viz. “ sleeping in Jesus,” clearly implies, that he had no idea of their being awake, alive, and happy.

Besides, we see, in this very passage, that the apostle was apprehensive that the persons to whom he was writing would imagine, that they who should be alive at the second coming of Christ, would at least have *some advantage* over those who should be raised from the dead. For so the word *φθασιωμεν* ought to be rendered, and not *prevent*, as in our translation. This suspicion the apostle endeavours to obviate, by showing that, of the two, those who had been dead would rather have the advantage of the living; since the resurrection of the dead would precede the change that was to pass upon those who should be found alive; and this he relates, as by express revelation from Christ, ver. 15. “ For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive,

“ and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall
 “ have no advantage over them who are asleep,
 “ for—the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then
 “ we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught
 “ up together with them in the clouds, &c.”

Nothing can be more evident, from the consideration of the whole of this passage, than that both the apprehensions of the Thessalonians, and the method which the apostle takes to silence them, go upon the supposition, that neither he nor they had the least notion of any intermediate state.

I would observe, by the way, that by the phrase *being with Christ*, the antients never understood any degree of happiness that could be enjoyed by good men before the resurrection. For even those christians who, from their leaning to the principles of the oriental or Greek philosophy, imagined that the soul had a separate existence, still supposed that it continued in Hades till the resurrection; and, at that time only, upon being united to the body, was taken into heaven, to be with Christ. Indeed, our Lord himself says, John xiv. 3. that he must *come again* before he can *receive his disciples to himself*; so that the apostles could not possibly have any expectation of being with Christ before that time.

I think it must a little embarrass the advocates for an intermediate state, to consider how the apostle Paul could avoid making mention of it, or alluding

alluding to it, in his long discourse concerning the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. when the subjects must be allowed to have a very near connection; or how he could represent the consequences of disbelieving the resurrection to be so very great as he describes them; if the souls of all good men were, immediately after death, made completely happy with God and Christ in heaven. On the other hand, it is plain, from the whole tenor of his writings, that neither he nor the Corinthians had any idea of such an intermediate state; since the consequence of their error was nothing less than this, that if there be no resurrection, both *his preaching* and *their faith* were *altogether vain*, ver. 14. “Also those who were asleep in Christ were perished,” ver. 18. and “they,” the apostles, “having no hope but in this life, were of all men the most miserable.”

Lastly, our Saviour’s argument with the Sadducees, in proof of a resurrection, from the words of God to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Matt. xxii. 31. Mark xii. 26. Luke xx. 37. is this, that since God is their God, those patriarchs, even now, that they have no life, *live unto him*; that is, they have existence in his sight, who looks into futurity. For, had they been actually alive, and happy at that very time, it might have been replied, that the promise which is implied in God’s being *their God*, was

sufficiently fulfilled without a resurrection. Indeed his argument might have been thought to be calculated to prove an intermediate state only, had he not expressly said, that what he advanced was to prove a resurrection, *that the dead shall arise*. He does not so much as mention any state of conscious existence before it; so that, from the circumstances of the discourse, we may safely conclude, that he had no idea of any such thing.

It may be said, that our Saviour's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, goes upon the supposition of there being an intermediate state. But this parable is only a personification of what had no real sense; for he does not speak of the soul being separate from the body, but of the *whole man*, as having passed into the state of death, and therefore mentions the *tongue* of the rich man as tormented in a flame. In the same manner, Isaiah personifies the dead king of Babylon, whom he, at the same time, speaks of, as consumed by the worms. Isa. xiv. 9.

“ Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet
 “ thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for
 “ thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it
 “ hath raised up from their thrones all the kings
 “ of the nations. All they shall speak and say
 “ unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we?
 “ Art thou become like unto us; Thy pomp is
 “ brought down to the grave, and the noise of
 “ thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and
 “ the

“ the worms cover thee.” There is also an instance of a personification similar to this in Rev. vi. 9. where the *souls of the martyrs* are represented as crying to God from under the altar (the place where the blood of sacrificed victims was poured out) to avenge their blood. But, in other places, *blood* itself is represented as crying for vengeance.

Our Saviour said to the thief upon the cross; “ This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” But this saying is too obscure to found any certain opinion upon. It may only signify, that the promise was made that day, notwithstanding his present state of humiliation; or, by *paradise*, our Lord might mean, the unconscious state of the virtuous dead, a state of mere rest, but wherein they are secure under the protection of divine benevolence, and reserved for the accomplishment of its purposes in their favour. The Jews supposed their *sheol*, or the state of the dead, to be divided into two regions, viz. *paradise* for the good, and *gehenna* for the wicked. See *Windet de Vita functorum Statu*, p. 109.

A passage in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians is urged with the greatest appearance of strength in favour of an intermediate state; but when the whole context is rightly considered, it will appear to imply no such thing, as is, I think, sufficiently proved in Alexander’s Dissertation, prefixed to his Commentary on 1 Cor. xv. The apostle, writing
from

from Rome, not long before his death, says Phil. i. 21. "To me to live is Christ." i. e. Christ will be glorified by my labours, and, "to die is gain," as I shall then be delivered from a state of persecution and suffering; "but if I live in the flesh, " this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall " choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt " two;" or, as it might have been rendered, "I " am straitened by two things," viz. the prospect of life, or of death. Neither of them are the objects of my choice, "having a desire to depart, and " to be with Christ; which is far better:" wishing, if it were possible, to be delivered at once from mortality, by the coming of Christ, and so be immediately with him. That this must be the sense of the passage is evident from what I have observed before, viz. that "being with christ," always refers to his second coming, at the resurrection. "Never- " theless," the apostle goes on to say, "to abide " in the flesh is more needful for you;" that is, of the two things which are not the objects of my desire, viz. life or death, more good will accrue to you from the former, and therefore I prefer it.

The same considerations may also help us to the right understanding of the same apostle, in 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are willing rather to be absent from " the body, and to be present with the Lord;" that is, we prefer the future life, which commences at the resurrection, and in which alone we shall be
with

with Christ, to the present, in which we are absent from him. He particularly excepts against the idea of being *unclothed*, or *naked*, ver. 4. “For we
“ that are in this tabernacle do groan, being bur-
“ dened; not that we would be unclothed, but
“ clothed upon, that mortality might be swal-
“ lowed up of life.”

Now this being “clothed upon,” or, as it is expressed, ver. 2. “clothed upon with our house
“ which is from heaven,” certainly refers to the bodies which we are to receive at the resurrection; and, it is evident, from ver. 1. that the apostle had no idea of any state between that and the present. “For we know, that if our earthly house of this
“ tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building
“ of God, an house not made with hands, eternal
“ in the heavens.” And since, in the sleep of death, we cannot be sensible of any interval of time, how long soever it may really be, the one will seem immediately to succeed the other; so that it will appear to us, that the very next moment after closing our eyes in death, we awake at the general resurrection, which is a most sublime and alarming consideration.

Other *single passages* of scripture are produced in favour of the doctrine of an intermediate state, but none so plausibly as these, and with me they weigh nothing against the force of the *general arguments* above-mentioned.

As to the *place* where the virtuous, or the vicious will be disposed of after death, it is absolutely unknown to us, especially the latter; for, as to the former, the apostle Peter seems to intimate, that good men will inhabit this earth after it has been destroyed by fire, and been made habitable again in a more advantageous form, 2 Peter iii. 7. “The heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire, against the day of judgement, and perdition of ungodly men.” Ver. 10. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.” Ver. 13. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

As the apostle says, that “the earth is reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men;” it should seem, that the destruction of this world by fire, is to have some connection with the punishment of the wicked; and may, perhaps, be the immediate instrument of it. If this be the case, there will be something more than figurative in the description of the torments of the wicked in the scriptures, as caused by *fire*, and this fire may terminate in the utter extinction

tion of the wicked. But these, it must be acknowledged, are mere conjectures.

A learned friend, being dissatisfied with the preceding interpretation of the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, has suggested another, which, to gratify my readers, I shall here insert.

I freely own, that I am not satisfied with this explanation of Phil. i. 21. first, because the apostle does not appear to me to write under any depression, but rather with triumph and exultation, ver. 20. “According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that, with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.”

Secondly, the apostle does not seem to have considered the two things by which he says he was straitened as *evil*, but rather as *good*, and both of them as objects of earnest choice; so good, that his difficulty was, which to prefer, whether to live to Christ, i. e. for the furtherance of the gospel, and the salvation of his fellow-creatures through him, which had long been the object of his ardent wishes, and earnest cares and labours, or to die and be with Christ, which would be a gain to himself, and far better for his personal interest. From the whole preceding context, from ver. 12. the apostle appears to have had, at the time of writing, no painful feelings of what he had already suffered, either from

from the malice of open enemies, or treachery of false friends, nor formidable apprehensions of what might yet await him. He rather expresses a quite different state of mind in those words, ver. 18.

“ And I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice;” a state of mind pretty much similar to that which he professed to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 22.

—24.

However, I not do think it will follow, that the apostle meant by the words, *to die is gain*, and *to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*, to convey an idea of a state of *consciousness* and *positive happiness*, which he should enjoy with Christ from the instant of his death till the resurrection. It is enough to justify the expressions, and his desire to depart, if we only suppose him to mean, that he should not only be exempted from farther danger, suffering, opposition, and treachery from others, but also from care, solicitude, and apprehensions in himself about his own eternal interests, which he so pathetically expresses, chap. iii. 8—14. and 1 Cor. ix. 27. and elsewhere; that from thenceforth he and his interests would be in *security* under the faithful protection of a powerful Saviour. He would be with Christ in the same sense as Christ promised to the penitent thief, that he should be with him that day in paradise, i. e. in the state of those dead, who are, as it were, within the inclosure of divine benevolence and power, reserved for
the

the accomplishment of divine purposes and promises. Now surely, to be admitted to such a state of security, is a proper object of desire to a good mind, even preferably to the continuance of an useful life, but exposed to fears, dangers, and sufferings, both from within and without.

This also seems conformable to the apostles sentiments and expressions on other occasions, 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. “ I am now ready to be offered, and “ the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I “ have kept the faith. Henceforth,” he does not say, I shall be happy with Christ, but “ there “ is laid up (*ἀπόκειται*) for me a crown of “ righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous “ judge, shall give me at that day;” and chap. i. 12. of the same Epistle, “ I know whom I have “ believed, and I am persuaded that he is able” (not to make me happy with himself immediately, but) “ to keep that which I have committed unto “ him against that day.” I conceive, that the apostle means to convey the same sentiment, that the lives and happiness of his disciples are intrusted to the care and protection of Christ, to be by him restored and perfected at the last day, in those words, Colos. iii. 3. 4. “ For ye are dead,” (a figure by no means too strong to denote, not only the spiritual professions, but the hazardous circumstances of christians at that time) “ and your life “ is

“ is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who
 “ is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also ap-
 “ pear with him in glory.” The same sentiment
 seems also to be couched under, and an attention
 to it throws a beautiful and strong light on, that
 otherwise obscure passage, 1 Thes. iv. 14. “ Even
 “ so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God
 “ bring with him;” intimating, that they are al-
 ready committed to him by God as a deposit or
 trust, and that God will then bring them with
 him, that he may accomplish the purposes of the
 trust.

The apostle seems to have borrowed these senti-
 ments and modes of expression, on the subject of
 the security of dead christians, as reserved in the
 hands, and under the protection of Christ unto a
 glorious resurrection, from the words of Christ
 himself, John vi. 39. “ This is the Father’s will
 “ which hath sent me, that of all which he hath
 “ given me I should lose nothing, but should raise
 “ it up again at the last day;” and ch. x. 28, 29.
 “ I give unto them eternal life, and they shall
 “ never perish, neither shall any pluck them out
 “ of my hand. My father which gave them me,
 “ is greater than all; and none is able to pluck
 “ them out of my Father’s hand.” Hence we see
 the reason and propriety of dying Stephen’s invoca-
 tion, Acts vii. 59. “ Lord Jesus, receive my
 “ spirit.”

Upon

Upon the whole, by *being with Christ*, the apostle seems to me to mean being in a state of security with him, under the protection of divine power, and the sanction of his faithful promise, reserved as a trust or deposit committed to them both by God and ourselves, in order to be restored to life, and made completely happy by him at the resurrection of the just.

SECTION V.

Of the future condition of the world in general.

THE great events of the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and a state of retribution afterwards, are such as all mankind are most nearly interested in, as *individuals*. But there are, likewise, other *intermediate events*, which are foretold with sufficient clearness in the scriptures, in which we are interested as *members of civil societies*, or, at least, as well wishers to the cause of christianity and virtue in the world. Of these I shall briefly mention a few, that are the most considerable.

The power of *antichrist*, mentioned by different names in several parts of the scriptures, by which almost all interpreters understand the usurpations
of

of the pope of Rome, is to be finally overthrown. Several different steps are to be taken in order to the reduction of this enormous power, as is most probably the meaning of the *seven vials*, which are said, in the book of Revelation, to be poured, in succession, upon the *beast*, which is synonymous to antichrist. And since it is evident, from the state of the world, that the papal power has long been upon the decline, we may conclude, that several of these vials are already poured out.

But the utter destruction of antichrist seems to be reserved for a more remarkable period, which is often denominated in the scriptures by *the coming of Christ*, as was also perhaps the period in which Jerusalem was destroyed; so that probably this coming also will not be a literal one, but figurative, representing a most eminent judicial proceeding, in the exertion of that *power in heaven and in earth*, which was given to Christ after his resurrection. The apostle says, of this *man of sin* (by which there can be no doubt of the same antichrist power being intended) that the Lord shall “consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Theff. ii. 8.

The same coming of Christ seems to be described by the apostle John, in the book of the Revelation, in such a manner, as to lead us to conclude, that the powers of this world will make

a vio-

“ kings of the earth, and their armies gathered to-
“ gether to make war against him that sat on the
“ horse, and against his army. And the beast
“ was taken, and with him the false prophet that
“ wrought miracles before him, with which he
“ deceived them that had received the mark of the
“ beast, and them that worshipped his image.
“ These both were cast alive into a lake of fire
“ burning with brimstone.—And I saw an angel
“ come down from heaven, having the key of the
“ bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand.
“ And he laid hold on the dragon, that old ser-
“ pent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound
“ him a thousand years. And cast him into the
“ bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal
“ upon him, that he should deceive the nations no
“ more till the thousand years should be fulfilled:
“ and after that he must be loosed a little season.
“ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them:
“ and judgment was given unto them: and I saw
“ the souls of them that were beheaded for the
“ witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and
“ who had not worshipped the beast, neither his
“ image, neither had received his mark upon their
“ foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and
“ reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the
“ rest of the dead lived not again until the thou-
“ sand years were finished. This is the first re-
“ surrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part

“ in the first resurrection: on such the second
“ death hath no power, but they shall be priests
“ of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with
“ him a thousand years.”

Some have supposed that Christ himself will reign in person upon earth, and that the martyrs will actually rise from the dead and live with him; but considering the figurative language of prophecy, it is more probable, that the revival of the *cause* for which they suffered is, in reality, the thing denoted by it. Besides, it is contrary to the clear sense of many passages of scripture, that any persons, however distinguished by their virtues, or sufferings, should receive their reward before the great day of judgment, after the general resurrection. Dr. Whitby has also advanced other very sufficient arguments against the literal interpretation of the millenium, which was adopted by some of the antients, and, with some variations, hath been patronized by several modern divines, especially Mr. Joseph Mede, and bishop Newton.

The circumstance which makes this passage look the most like the literal description of an event is its being said, that “ the rest of the dead shall not
“ live again till those thousand years be ended.” But if the resurrection of the martyrs may only denote the revival of their *cause*, the *rest of the dead*, may signify their enemies, and their resurrection may denote the recovery of their power also.

As a *day* in the prophetic language is generally, and I think very justly, supposed to stand for a *year*, I do not see why we should not follow the same rule in the interpretation of these thousand years; as it seems to me that nothing but the very great length of that period has induced interpreters to acquiesce in the literal sense. But it should be considered, in favour of the figurative interpretation, that, with respect to knowledge, and improvements of all kinds, the world is yet but in its infancy, and will probably continue to be so several centuries more. Even the extent of it is not yet known; the greatest part, and perhaps the very best part of it, is yet in a manner uninhabited; and far the greatest part absolutely uncivilized: not to say that even the best policied states abound with so many absurd institutions, by which *the many* are miserably enslaved by *the few* (which is so unfavourable to the happiness of the whole) that, compared with what human society is naturally capable of, they hardly deserve to be termed better than barbarous.

Now, if we consider how very slowly mankind has advanced in political, and all kinds of improvements, how gradual has been the progress of all discoveries in science, and of excellence in the arts, we can hardly imagine (though this progress be evidently more rapid at present than it has been in any former age of the world, and though there is no reason to apprehend any more great interruptions

tions in valuable improvements, and therefore we may expect them to go on with an accelerated progress) that a thousand years can be sufficient to bring the present system of the world, and the present race of mankind, to any thing like what may be called their *mature state*; and till this be attained, it cannot but appear improbable, that an end should be put to their existence. And, allowing a period of *manhood*, in proportion to this long *infancy* of the human species, three hundred and sixty thousand years will not be deemed a disproportioned age of the world.

As to the fabulous tradition of the Jews, that the world is to continue seven thousand years, viz. four thousand before the Messiah, two thousand more before the millenium, and one thousand afterwards, which seems to have weighed much with bishop Newton and others; besides, that it cannot be pretended to have any other than Rabinical authority, it appears upon the very face of it, so very idle and chimerical, that I wonder it should have met with any regard from christians.

That the Jews shall return to their own country, about the time of the commencement of the millenium; that they shall possess it many years in peace, and be a very flourishing nation, seem to be most distinctly foretold in many prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly refer to a return of this people, after a much longer, and more complete dispersion of them, than that which attended

the Babylonish captivity. Besides, several of these prophecies were delivered after their return from Babylon, and therefore must refer to another return, subsequent to it, and which therefore has not yet taken place. Also the restoration of the ten tribes of Israel is spoken of, as well as that of Judah; and the ten tribes cannot be said to have returned from captivity at all yet. In proof of this I shall recite a few of the more express of these prophecies, by which it will also appear, that this nation is still to be distinguished by God, and to be the medium of his communications to the rest of the world.

Jer. xxx. 3. "For lo, the days come, saith
 "the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity
 "of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord,
 "and I will cause them to return to the land that
 "I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."
 Ver. 10. "Therefore, fear not thou, O my ser-
 "vant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be dismay-
 "ed, O Israel; for lo, I will save thee from afar,
 "and thy seed from the land of their captivity;
 "and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and
 "quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I
 "am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee:
 "though I make a full end of all the nations
 "whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not
 "make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee
 "in measure."

The

The calamities of the Jewish nation are to bear but a small proportion to their prosperity after their return from their last captivity, with respect to its greatness, or duration, as we may infer from Is. liv. 7, 8. “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. “ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a “ moment; but with everlasting kindness will I “ have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy re- “ deemer.” If there be any truth in this representation, what we call the *millenium*, must be of much more than a thousand years duration. For, the desolation of Judea has now continued more than one thousand seven hundred years. For this period to appear wholly insignificant, as we are here taught to conclude it will be, with respect to the flourishing state of that country, the latter must be of great extent indeed.

Zechariah, who wrote after the return of the Jews from Babylon, distinctly points out the same event, intimating, with many other prophets, that it will be attended with great calamities to those nations who shall oppose the settlement of the Jews in their own country, and also that they will bitterly repent of their sin in murdering Christ.

Zech. xii. 6. “ In that day will I make the “ governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among “ the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; “ and they shall devour all the people round about,

“ on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusa-
 “ lem shall be inhabited again, in her own place.
 “ —And it shall come to pass in that day, that I
 “ will seek to destroy all the nations that come
 “ against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the
 “ house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Je-
 “ rusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications,
 “ and they shall look upon *him** whom they have
 “ pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one
 “ that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in
 “ bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for
 “ his first-born.

Daniel also distinctly foretells the same event, and he seems to connect it with the destruction of a power, which, from his description of its rise and progress, most interpreters conclude must mean the Turkish, which has so long been in possession of the Holy Land. Whenever, therefore, this signal event shall take place (which is likewise, probably, denoted by the pouring out of the sixth vial in the book of the Revelation) we may be looking forward for some other very great and glorious events, but which will be preceded by some very calamitous ones, respecting almost all the known world, as the following prophecy, together with others in the Revelation, plainly intimates.

* For the authority of this reading, see *Mr. Eyre's Observations on the Prophecies relating to the Restoration of the Jews.*

Dan. xi. 40. “ And at the time of the end,
“ shall the king of the south (the Saracens) push
“ at him (the Roman empire) and the king of the
“ north (the Turks) shall come against him like a
“ whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen,
“ and with many ships, and he shall enter into the
“ countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He
“ shall enter also into the glorious land, and many
“ countries shall be overthrown: but these shall
“ escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab,
“ and the chief of the children of Ammon. He
“ shall stretch forth his hand also upon the coun-
“ tries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.
“ But he shall have power over the treasures of
“ gold and of silver, and over all the precious
“ things of Egypt: and the Libyans, and the
“ Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings
“ out of the east, and out of the north shall trou-
“ ble him: therefore, he shall go forth with great
“ fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.
“ And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace
“ between the seas, in the glorious holy moun-
“ tain: yet he shall come to his end, and none
“ shall help him. And at that time shall Michael
“ stand up, the great prince who standeth for the
“ children of thy people, and there shall be a time
“ of trouble, such as never was since there was a
“ nation, even to that same time: and at that

“ time thy people shall be delivered, every one that
 “ shall be found written in the book.”

That great calamitous events await the present governments of Europe, seems to be sufficiently evident without a spirit of prophecy. “ The state
 “ of Europe,” as Dr. Hartley observes (see his *Observations on Man.* vol. ii. p. 455.) is so particularly “ critical and alarming, that hardly any
 “ thing less than universal confusion must be the
 “ consequence; and if famine and pestilence
 “ should accompany civil commotions, it will in-
 “ deed be a time of trouble, as Daniel says, such
 “ as was never known before.”

The present kingdoms of Europe are unquestionably represented by the feet and toes of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his prophetic dream; and upon the feet of this image will fall the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which represents the kingdom to be set up by Christ, and which, after dashing in pieces the whole image, will itself become a great mountain, filling the whole earth. From Daniel’s interpretation of this vision it may be clearly inferred, that the forms of government, ecclesiastical and civil, which now subsist in Europe, must be dissolved; but that something very different from them, and greatly superior to them, more favourable to the virtue and happiness of mankind, will take place in their stead. That this is the meaning of the
 prophecy

prophecy can hardly be doubted by any person who shall give the least attention to it. Dan. ii. 44.

“ And in the days of these kings shall the God of
“ heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be
“ destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to
“ other people, but it shall break in pieces, and
“ consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand
“ for ever.”

When the prophetic thousand years above-mentioned shall be expired, we are informed, by the same spirit of prophecy, that there will be another prevalence of infidelity and wickedness, which will bring on the last crisis and final dissolution of the world. The following is the prophetic description of this great event. Rev. xx. 7. “ And
“ when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall
“ be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to
“ deceive the nations, which are in the four quar-
“ ters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather
“ them together to battle: the number of whom
“ is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on
“ the breadth of the earth, and compassed the
“ camp of the saints about, and the beloved city:
“ and fire came down from God out of heaven,
“ and devoured them. And the devil that de-
“ ceived them was cast into the lake of fire and
“ brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet
“ are, and shall be tormented day and night for

“ ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne,
“ and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth
“ and the heaven fled away, and there was found
“ no place for them. And I saw the dead, small
“ and great, stand before God; and the books
“ were opened: and another book was opened,
“ which is the book of life: and the dead were
“ judged out of those things which were written in
“ the books, according to their works. And the
“ sea gave up the dead which were in it; and
“ death, and the grave delivered up the dead
“ which were in them: and they were judged
“ every man according to their works.——And I
“ saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first
“ heaven and the first earth were passed away.”

A P P E N D I X.

S E C T I O N I.

Of other intelligent beings besides man.

WE learn from the scriptures, that other intelligent beings, besides men, have had occasional intercourse with this world. *Angels* are particularly spoken of as the messengers of God to the patriarchs and prophets, and are also said to have been the instruments which he has employed in the distribution of his blessings or judgments. Thus, an angel was sent to rescue Lot, Gen. xix. and to announce the birth of Samson, Jud. xiii. One whose name we are told is *Michael*, is said, Dan. x. 13. to be "one of the chief princes;" and, ch. xii. 1. "the great prince who standeth for the children of Israel." The same is called the *archangel*, Jude ix. Another, whose name is called *Gabriel*, interpreted two visions to the prophet Daniel, ch. viii. 16. ix. 21. The same also appeared to Mary, to announce to her the conception of Jesus.

What rank these beings hold with respect to intellectual power, is altogether unknown to us;

for we can by no means infer, from their being immediately employed by God, that they are naturally endued with any extraordinary share of understanding. This, at least, we are not led to infer, from the choice which God has thought proper to make of prophets of the human race. Indeed, his own wisdom was often rendered the more conspicuous by their weakness. Nor is their employment an absolute proof of superior goodness.

It must be allowed, however, that, considering angels as being in a higher, and ourselves in a lower station, it was not unnatural to imagine, that they were much superior to us in power, wisdom, virtue, and happiness. Accordingly, we find the woman who applied to Joab, 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20. speaking of angels as possessed of extraordinary wisdom, “knowing all things that are in the earth;” and having the most perfect discernment of characters; and Achish, a king of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xxix. 9. compares the innocence of David to that of an angel. Also David himself speaks of the angels as *excelling in strength*, Ps. ciii. 20.

If it be true, that some of these angels have sinned, so as to have been cast out of heaven, and to continue still abandoned to impiety, making it their business to seduce mankind, and taking pleasure in doing them all kinds of injury (though, not knowing their situation, we cannot judge completely of their temptation, yet) we can hardly imagine,

gine, that they could have had much greater strength of mind than men are generally possessed of, or have had originally a disposition more favourable to virtue.

This fall of angels, I must own, however, appears to me to be very problematical ; and though it cannot be said that the thing is absolutely impossible, it seems, upon the face of it, to be very improbable. Besides, if such exalted beings as these are supposed to have sinned, and have thereby become obnoxious to the divine displeasure, what end could it answer to them to be assiduous in seducing mankind ? Indeed, upon the supposition, that their existence and torments were to be everlasting, it may be conceived to give them a gloomy kind of satisfaction, to have *brethren in iniquity* for their companions in their sufferings. But this idea of never-ending punishments, respecting any order of beings, as well as men, has, I apprehend, been shewn to be unreasonable and absurd.

The language of the scriptures is often highly figurative, which may account for the unknown *principle*, or *source of evil*, being personified in them, so as to be called *Satan* in Hebrew, and *Devil*, διαβολος, in Greek ; but whatever is actually ascribed to this being, will appear, if we consider the circumstances of the several narrations, to be derived from nothing but the irregular passions of men, which

which are, of themselves, a cause abundantly adequate to the effect.

Indeed, the manner in which the sacred writers speak of the vices of those men, who are said to have been actuated by this evil principle, plainly enough intimates, that they did not, in reality, consider their guilt as shared with them by any other being who prompted and seduced them. Nay, the very contrary doctrine is strongly asserted by the apostle James, who says, ch. i. 14. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." When our Lord said to Peter, on his suggesting that his sufferings were unworthy of him, Matt. xvi. 23. "Get thee behind me, Satan," the very indignation with which he spake, shows that he conceived the suggestion to have arisen only from Peter himself, who, in this case was his Satan or adversary, as opposing the great purposes which were to be answered by his death. And, surely, the strong affection which Peter appears to have had for Jesus, joined with the narrowness of his views, may easily be supposed to account for his language. In like manner, all that may really be meant by Jesus being *tempted by the devil*, Matt. iv. may be, that the improper thoughts mentioned in the course of the narrative, either occurred to himself in his private meditations, or were suggested by some other person.

When

When Satan is said to have stirred up David to number the people of Israel, 1 Chr. xxi. 1. the thought may, in fact, have arisen from his own pride only, which being evil, is therefore ascribed to Satan; and it is remarkable, that the very same scheme is by another historian, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. ascribed to God, because the purposes of his providence were finally answered by it. So also *the evil spirit from the Lord*, which is said to have troubled Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. was probably nothing but his own melancholy, or ill-humour, which was relieved by music.

All that may be meant by the “fire of hell being prepared for the devil and his angels,” Matt. xxv. 41. may be, that this punishment was originally appointed for the destruction of all evil, and the instruments of evil; nor can this language, with this construction, be said to be more figurative than that of John, who says, that “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.” Rev. xx. 14.

As to the *demoniacs* mentioned in the New Testament, it is pretty evident, that their disorder was some species of madness, or lunacy, which, in the time of our Saviour, was usually ascribed, by Heathens as well as Jews, to the malignant influence, not of the *devil*, but of *demons*, or the souls of evil disposed persons, which were imagined to range about the earth, and to delight in mischief, an absurd and unphilosophical notion, but which it was not our Saviour’s business to correct.

The

The only story of this kind which is not pretty easy to be explained by this hypothesis, is that in which *a legion of demons* is said to have gone out of two men into a herd of swine, Matt viii. 28. Mark v. 1. Luke viii. 26. But if the swine only happened to be drowned about the same time that the two men were cured, it might have been sufficient to give rise to the story; which, it is to be observed, is not related by any person who was present at the transaction; Matthew not being called to follow Christ till after his return from this excursion beyond the sea of Galilee; so that there was sufficient room for exaggeration and mistake. Or, which I think most probable, the madness of these men might be transferred to the swine.

Much mistake, with respect to this subject, seems to have been occasioned by the ambiguity in the meaning of the words *fatan*, *angel**, and *devil*, which signify respectively, *adversary*, *messenger*, and *accuser*. Thus the *angels that sinned*, 2 Peter ii. 4. and Jude 6. may mean the messengers who were sent from the wilderness to spy out the land of Canaan, as the author of *the scripture meaning of the word Satan* has ingeniously conjectured, or it may refer to his his-

* It is not unusual with the sacred writers to call even the unconscious instruments of God's pleasure, such as natural causes, &c. *angels*, Pf. civ. 4. "Who maketh the wind his angels, and flaming fire his ministers." For so it may with most propriety be rendered.

tory of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, for their rebellion against Moses, were destroyed by the earth opening and swallowing them up. Indeed, the common interpretation of these passages is not agreeable to the constant tenor of the scriptures, in which no more than *one devil*, or Satan, is ever mentioned.

When *the devil* is said “to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” 1 Pet. v. 8. the best interpreters suppose that Nero, or some other known adversary, or accuser, is intended. Also, when St. Paul says, that “he desired to do” a certain thing “again and again, but that Satan hindered him,” 1 Theff. ii. 10. he might mean any human adversary, or some of his friends, influenced by worldly considerations.

These are only a few general hints upon the subject, nor do I know that any of them are peculiar to myself; but they appear to me to throw considerable light upon the subject, and to remove some difficulties from the scheme of revelation, which, I hope, will recommend them to others as well as to myself.

SECTION II.

Of abstinence from blood.

THE question concerning the lawfulness of eating blood, ought to have been considered under the head of precepts that are not of a moral nature; but, as it is a subject of much less importance than the rest, and of a more doubtful nature, I have thought proper to reserve the discussion of it to this Appendix, in which I shall endeavour to do justice to the arguments on both sides.

The prohibition to eat blood, given to Noah, seems to be obligatory on all his posterity; and as it accompanied the first express grant of animal food, it seems to be reserved, by way of acknowledgment to God, as the giver of life, and of the food which supports it. Also this respect paid to blood, which is shed when animals are killed for food, and which is the most apparent *vehicle of life*, may be intended to inculcate a respect for *life*, as the most valuable gift of God, and to warn us not to deprive any animal of it, and much less man, without necessity.

It is observable, that the awful denunciation of the judgment of God against murder, immediately follows

follows the prohibition to eat blood, as if it had been understood that they had some connection. Gen. ix. 3. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things; but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

It may likewise be added, as an additional argument for abstaining from blood, that it is far from being a wholesome aliment, especially in hot countries, promoting leprous and scorbutic disorders*.

Some have argued, that the precept given to Noah was only intended to prohibit the eating of the flesh of animals raw, or cut off without killing the animal; but the antient Jews understood it dif-

* What Dr. Lardner says upon this subject is pretty remarkable. "Blood appears to me to be very unwholesome. Indeed, I esteem it filthy, and highly disagreeable. So that I cannot bear the thought of eating it. If ever it comes to me in food, it is more than I know. And I suppose it is never brought, either alone, or mixed with other things, to the table of polite people." Remarks on Ward's Dissertation, p. 132.

ferently;

ferently; and when Moses repeats the injunction to the Jews in particular (where it cannot but be acknowledged, that he intended to express a prohibition of the use of blood itself) he gives precisely the same reason for it as in this case. Lev. xvii. 14. “Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: “for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof.” It is most probable, therefore, that the two commands differ only in terms, and that they have both the very same meaning.

It might have been imagined that, by christianity, the Gentiles, at least, had been exempted from the observance of this precept; but among other things which were before held innocent or indifferent by them, but which were proper to be observed after their conversion to christianity, the apostles expressly included this, when they were solemnly assembled in council, in order to write to the disciples at Antioch, who had applied to them about their obligation to observe the laws of Moses. And though it is not expressly said, that they were particularly directed by God to decide in this manner, yet it seems to be implied, when they say, that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost*, as well as to themselves, Acts xv. 28. “It seemed good to the “Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no “greater burden than these necessary things; that “ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from “blood, and from things strangled, and from for-
“nication;

“ nication : from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye
“ shall do well.”

It is said by some, and especially Dr. Lardner, that this was only a temporary provision, designed to prevent giving offence to the Jews; but, in answer to this, it may be said, that there is no intimation, or hint, of its being temporary, or any mention made of a time when the prohibition was to cease; and the apostle John wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, when it cannot be pretended, that there was any necessity for observing so much tenderness with respect to the Jews.

Moreover, it is not impossible, but that our Lord himself might refer to this decree of the apostles, and thereby give his sanction to it, when, in his message to the church at Thyatira, he says, Rev. ii. 24. “ I will put upon you none other burden. “ But that which ye have already, hold fast till I “ come.” No moral precept is ever properly called a burden in the scriptures; and, therefore, they are probably some observances of a ceremonial nature, that are referred to; and the very same word, βαρῶν, *burden*, is made use of, both by the apostles, and by our Lord on this occasion*.

It

* It appears to me rather extraordinary, that Dr. Lardner should be of opinion, that our Lord refers to this apostolical decree in the Revelation, which he supposes to have been written in the year 95 or 96, a long time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and

It may seem extraordinary, that the prohibition of *fornication* should be joined to that of eating blood, in the same decree; but it should be considered, that fornication was not thought to be an immorality by the Gentiles; and even the Jews had not the same ideas of chastity and purity in this respect, which are enjoined upon christians. Dr. Lardner supposes that, by fornication in the apostolical decree, we are to understand marriage with heathens, from which the apostle Paul so earnestly dissuades the christians at Corinth.

Dr. Lardner also supposes, that, “ the decree
“ is not to be understood as a precept or com-
“ mandment, but as advice and counsel, concern-
“ ing matters of prudence and expedience, confi-
“ dering the circumstances of things and persons
“ in that time.” Remarks on Ward’s Dissertations, page 141. But it cannot be denied, that it becomes all christians to yield to such advice and

and yet that it should have been intended to continue in force only till his religion had made greater progress in the world; as if that was the meaning of his coming: whereas, I do not think, that any thing else in the language of the New Testament would lead us to conclude, that this phrase was applicable to any other than some *determinate event*, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, or the time of the final judgment. See Remarks on Ward’s Dissertations, p. 122.

counsel,

counsel, if it extend to them. And if, as he allows, it did extend to christians after the destruction of Jerusalem, I do not see that there is not equal reason why it should extend to us. And *one* of the reasons for abstaining from blood, which was hinted at when the prohibition was given to Noah, is of as much weight now as ever it was.

It has been urged as an argument against the perpetuity of the apostolical decree in the Acts, that the apostle Paul never quotes, or alludes to it in his writings. But, admitting it to be temporary, no person will maintain that it was not designed to extend beyond the time of his epistles; and yet, though the unlawfulness of *fornication* be allowed to be perpetual, Paul did not avail himself of any argument drawn from that decree when he wrote on that subject to the Corinthians, who, of all the Greeks, were most remarkably addicted to that vice.

If we interpret this prohibition of the apostles by the practice of the primitive christians, who can hardly be supposed not to have rightly understood the nature and extent of it, we cannot but conclude, that it was intended to be absolute and perpetual; for blood was not eaten by any christians for many centuries. When the christians were charged with meeting in the night, and drinking
blood,

blood, by way of binding one another to secrecy, in some immoral practices, Tertullian observes with respect to it, that it was well known that no christian would eat blood at all; infomuch, that it was usual with heathens, when they wanted to know whether any person was a christian, to set blood-puddings before him as a very sufficient test.

Blood is not eaten by christians in any part of the East, or by the Greeks, or Ruffians, who are of the Greek church, to this day; nor indeed was the use of blood introduced into this western part of the world till very late. When the Pomeranians were converted to christianity, which was in 1120, they were particularly enjoined to abstain from blood, as a badge of their profession. It was not allowed to be eaten in the West in the time of Bede, or a century afterwards; and blood was not eaten in any part of Switzerland till Calvin introduced the practice from some other place. See Curcellæus on this subject. Dr. Lardner, however, says, that little regard was paid to these regulations of the apostolical decree by the Latin christians, from the end of the fourth century. Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, p. 136.

It is farther said, that the *liberal spirit* of christians is strongly against any such a distinction of meats as the prohibition of the use of blood supposes;

poses; and that even the very *letter* of the declaration of our Lord and his apostles excludes any such distinction. Thus we read, Matt. xv. 11. “Not
“ that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man:
“ but that which cometh out of the mouth, this
“ defileth a man.” And the apostle Paul represents him who *believeth that he may eat all things*, as not *weak*, but as of a stronger and more enlarged mind than he who thought and acted differently, Rom. xiv. 1. He also says, v. 17. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;” and v. 20. “All things are pure: but it is evil
“ for any man who eateth with offence.”

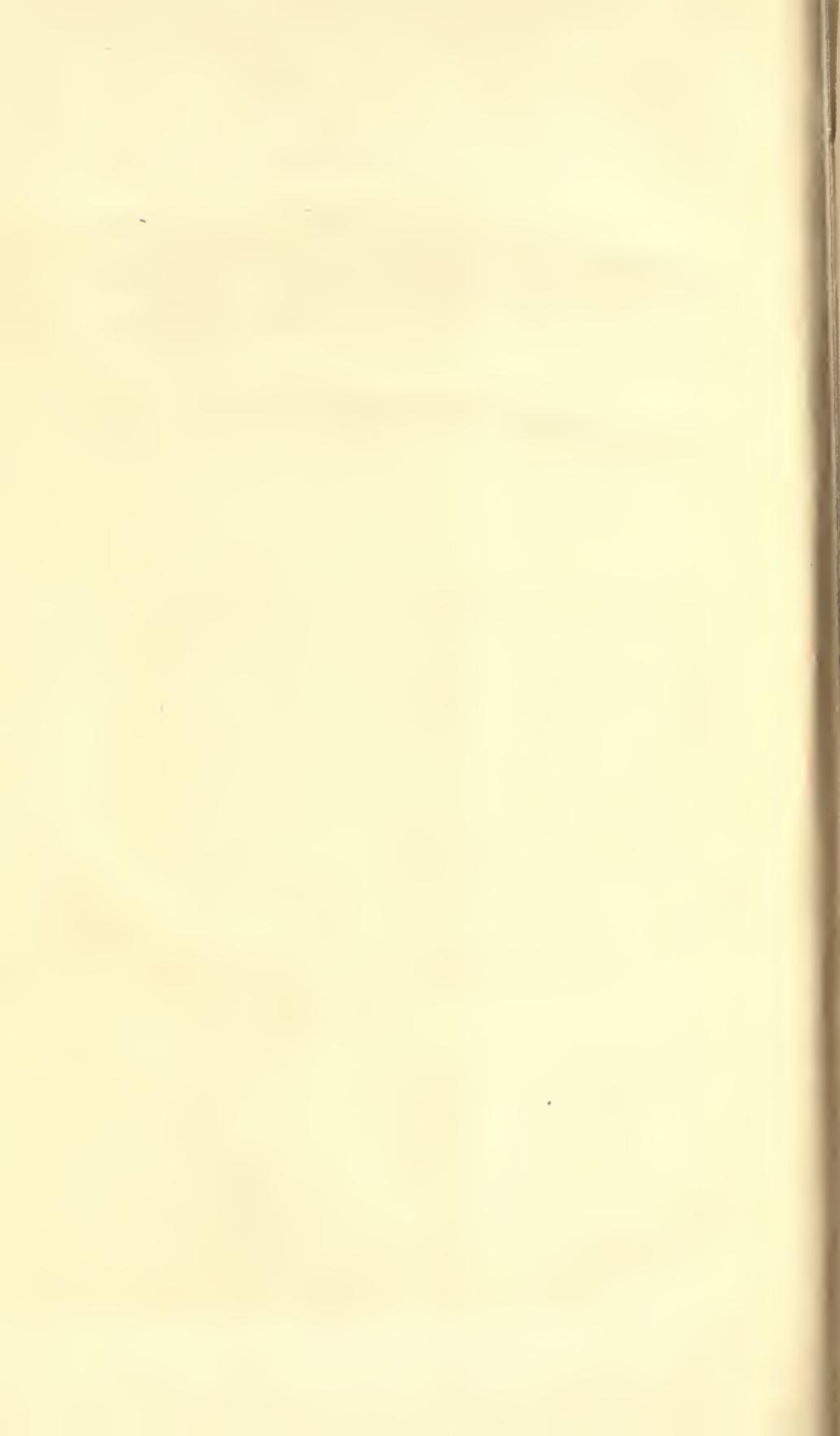
But our Saviour made the declaration above-mentioned, at a time when he himself strictly conformed even to the Jewish distinction of meats; and Paul might only allude to the same restrictions, to which, as well as to other Jewish rites, many christians then conformed. The same apostle, in the same general manner, makes light of all distinction of *days*, though, he no doubt, made a distinction of one day of rest.

Though, in discussing this subject, I have generally mentioned the arguments *for* the prohibition of blood before those *against* it, and have replied to the latter more than to the former, I would not have my reader conclude, that I am fully de-

terminated in my judgment with respect to it. Let him weigh what has been advanced on both sides, and decide for himself; not forgetting, that this question relates to the least of all positive precepts, and that all positive or ceremonial precepts are of little importance compared to the smallest moral duty.



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