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**The Evidences of
the Christian
Religion, with
Additional
Discourses . . .**

Joseph Addison



The Evidences of the Christian Religion, with Additional Discourses . . .

Author(s): Addison, Joseph (1672-1719)

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Description: Although he was a celebrated playwright during the 18th century, modern English speakers remember Joseph Addison for his perfection of the English essay as a genre in his magazine, *The Spectator*. *The Spectator* would publish short papers on philosophical, theological, or other topics meant to start lively discussions among its readership. Addison left *The Evidences of the Christian Religion*, along with other essays, unfinished upon his death. What he did complete, however, addresses some of the very same topics other theologians and philosophers had addressed. Addison describes the attributes of God as derived from rational argumentation, he promotes the praise of God, and finally, he defends the authority of Scripture and the immortality of the soul from the popular deistic philosophies of his day.

Kathleen O'Bannon

CCEL Staff

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THE
EVIDENCES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
WITH
ADDITIONAL DISCOURSES ON THE
FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, viz.

Of God, and his Attributes. Dignity of the Scripture Language.
The Power and wisdom of God in the Cre- Against Atheism and Infidelity.
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The Providence of God.
The Worship of God. Against the Modern Freethinkers.
Advantages of Revelation above Natural Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State.
Reason.
Excellency of the Christian Institution. Death and Judgment.

Collected from the Writings of
The Right Hon. JOSEPH ADDISON, Esq.

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1812.



Prefatory Material

PREFACE.

THE character of Mr. Addison, and his writings, for justness of thought, strength of reasoning, and purity of style, is too well established to need a recommendation; but their greatest ornament, and that which gives a lustre to all the rest, is his appearing throughout a zealous advocate for virtue and religion against profaneness and infidelity. And because his excellent discourses upon those subjects lie dispersed among his other writings, and are by that means not so generally known and read as they deserve, it was judged to be no unseasonable service to religion at this time to move the Bookseller to publish them together in a distinct volume, in hopes that the politeness and beauty peculiar to Mr. Addison's writings would make their way to persons of a superior character, and a more liberal education; and that, as they come from the hands of a layman, they may be the more readily received and considered by young gentlemen as a proper manual of religion.

Our modern sceptics and infidels are great pretenders to reason and philosophy, and are willing to have it thought that none who are really possessed of those talents, can easily assent to the truth of Christianity. But it falls out very unfortunately for them and their cause, that those persons within our own memory, who are confessed to have been the most perfect reasoners and philosophers of their time, are also known to have been firm believers, and they laymen; I mean Mr. Boyle, Mr. Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, and Mr. Addison; who, modestly speaking, were as good thinkers and reasoners as the best among the sceptics and infidels at this day. Some of them might have their particular opinions about this or that point in Christianity, which will be the case as long as men are men; but the thing here insisted on is, that they were accurate reasoners, and, at the same time, firm believers.

Mr. Boyle, the most exact searcher into the works of nature that any age has known, and who saw atheism and infidelity beginning to shew themselves in the loose and voluptuous reign of King Charles II. pursued his philosophical inquiries with religious views, to establish the minds of men in a firm belief and thorough sense of the infinite power and wisdom of the great Creator.

This account we have from one who was intimately acquainted with him, (Dr. Burnet) and preached his funeral sermon. "It appeared to those who conversed with him in his inquiries into nature, that his main design in that (on which, as he had his own eye most constantly, so he took care to put others often in mind of it,) was to raise in himself and others vaster thoughts of the greatness and glory, and of the wisdom and goodness of God. This was so deep in his thoughts, that he concludes the article of his will, which relates to that illustrious body, the Royal Society, in these words: Wishing them a happy success in their laudable attempts to discover the true nature of the works of God and praying that they, and all other searchers into physical truths, may cordially refer their attainments to the glory of the great Author of nature, and the comfort of mankind." The same person also



speaks thus of him: “He had the profoundest veneration for the great God of heaven and earth that ever I observed in any person. The very name of God was never mentioned by him without a pause, and a visible stop in his discourse.”

And of the strickness and exemplariness of the whole course of his life, he says, “I might here challenge the whole tribe of Libertines to come and view the usefulness, as well as the excellence of the Christian religion, in a life that was entirely dedicated to it.”

Against the Atheists he wrote his *Free Inquiry into the received Notion of Nature*, (to confute the pernicious principle of ascribing effects to nature, which are only produced by the infinite power and wisdom of God;) and also his *Essay about final Causes of Things Natural*, to shew that all things in nature were made and contrived with great order, and every thing for its proper end and use, by an all wise Creator.

Against the Deists he wrote a treatise of things above reason; in which he makes it appear that several things, which we judge to be contrary to reason, because above the reach of our understanding, are not therefore to be thought unreasonable because we cannot comprehend them, since they may be apparently reasonable to a greater and more comprehensive understanding. And he wrote another treatise, to show the possibility of the resurrection of the same body.

The veneration he had for the holy scriptures, appears not only from his studying them with great exactness, and exhorting others to do the same, but more particularly from a distinct treatise, which he wrote on purpose to defend the scripture style, and to answer all the objections which profane and irreligious persons have made against it. And speaking of morality, considered as a rule of life, he says, “I have formerly taken pains to peruse books of morality, yet since they have only a power to persuade, but not to command, and sin and death do not necessarily attend the disobedience of them, they have the less influence: for since we may take the liberty to question human writers, I find that the methods they take to impose their writings upon us may serve to countenance either truth or falsehood.”

His zeal to propagate Christianity in the world appears by many and large benefactions to that end, which are enumerated in his funeral sermon: “He was at the charge of the translation and impression of the New Testament into the Malayan language, which he sent over all the East-Indies. He gave a noble reward to him that translated Grotius’s incomparable book of the *Truth of the Christian Religion* into Arabic; and was at the charge of a whole impression, which he took care to order to be distributed in all the countries where that language is understood. He was resolved to have carried on the impression of the New Testament in the Turkish language; but the company thought it became them to be the doers of it, and so suffered him only to give a large share towards it.—He was at seven hundred pounds charge in the edition of the Irish Bible, which he ordered to be distributed in Ireland; and he contributed largely both to the impression of the Welsh Bible, and of the Irish Bible in Scotland. He gave, during his life, three hundred pounds to advance the design



of propagating the Christian religion in America; and as soon as he heard that the East-India Company were entertaining propositions for the like design in the East, he presently sent an hundred pounds for a beginning and an example, but intended to carry it much farther, when it should be set on foot to purpose. He had designed, though some accidents did, upon great considerations, divert him from settling it during his life, but not from ordering it by his will, that a liberal provision should be made for one who should, in a very few well-digested sermons, every year, set forth the truth of the Christian religion in general, without descending to the subdivisions amongst Christians; and who should be changed every third year, that so the noble study and employment might pass through many hands, by which means many might become masters of the argument.



In his younger years he had thoughts of entering into holy orders: and one reason that determined him against it was, that he believed he might in some respects be more serviceable to religion, by continuing a layman. “His having no interests with relation to religion, besides those of saving his own soul, gave him as he thought, a more unsuspected authority in writing or acting on that side. He knew the profane crew fortified themselves against all that was said by men of our profession, with this, that it was their trade, and that they were paid for it; he hoped therefore that he might have the more influence the less he shared in the patrimony of the church.”

Mr. Locke, whose accurate talent in reasoning is much celebrated, even by the sceptics and infidels of our times, showed his zeal for Christianity, first, in his middle age, by publishing a discourse on purpose to demonstrate the reasonableness of believing Jesus to be the promised Messiah; and, after that, in the last years of his life, by a very judicious commentary upon several of the epistles of St. Paul.

He speaks of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his apostles in the strongest manner, both as facts unexceptionably true, and as the clearest evidences of a divine mission. His words are these: “The evidences of our Saviour’s mission from heaven is so great, in the multitude of his miracles he did before all sorts of people (which the divine providence and wisdom had so ordered, that they never were nor could be denied by any of the enemies and opposers of Christianity,) that what he delivered cannot but be received as the oracles of God, and unquestionable verity.” And again, “After his resurrection, he sent his apostles amongst the nations, accompanied with miracles; which were done in all parts so frequently, and before so many witnesses of all sorts in broad daylight, that, as I have often observed, the enemies of Christianity have never dared to deny them; no not Julian himself, who neither wanted skill nor power to inquire into the truth; nor would have failed to have proclaimed and exposed it, if he could have detected any falsehood in the history of the gospel, or found the least ground to question the matter of fact published by Christ and his apostles. The number and evidence of the miracles done by our Saviour and his followers, by the power and force of truth, bore down this mighty and accomplished emperor, and all



his parts in his own dominions. He durst not deny so plain matter of fact; which being granted, the truth of our Saviour's doctrine and mission unavoidably follows, notwithstanding whatsoever artful suggestions his wit could invent, or malice should offer to the contrary.

To those who ask, "What need was there of a Saviour? what advantage have we by Jesus Christ?" Mr. Locke replies, "It is enough to justify the fitness of any thing to be done by resolving it into the wisdom of God, who has done it; whereof our narrow understandings and short views may utterly incapacitate us to judge. We know little of this visible, and nothing at all of the state of that intellectual world (wherein are infinite numbers and degrees of spirits out of the reach of our ken or guess), and therefore know not what transactions there were between God and our Saviour in reference to his kingdom. We know not what need there was to set up a Head and a Chieftain in opposition to THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD, THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, &c. whereof there are more than obscure intimations in scriptures. And we shall take too much upon us, if we should call God's wisdom or providence to account, and pertyly condemn for needless all that our weak and perhaps biased understanding cannot account for." And then shews at large the necessity there was of the gospel revelation, to deliver the world from the miserable state of darkness and ignorance that mankind were in, 1. As to the true knowledge of God, 2. As to the worship to be paid him, 3. As to the duties to be performed to him. To which he adds the mighty aids and encouragements to the performance of our duty, 1. From the assurance the gospel gives of future rewards and punishments; and, 2. From the promise of the Spirit of God to direct and assist us.

The holy scriptures are every where mentioned by him with the greatest reverence. He calls them the Holy Books, the Sacred Text, Holy Writ, and Divine Revelation and exhorts Christians "to betake themselves in earnest to the study of the way to salvation, in those holy writings wherein God has revealed it from heaven, and proposed it to the world; seeking our religion where we are sure it is in truth to be found, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." And, in a letter written the year before his death to one who asked this question, "What is the shortest and surest way, for a young Gentleman to attain to a true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it?" his answer is, "Let him study the holy scripture, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its Author; salvation for its end; and truths without any mixture of error, for its matter." A direction that was copied from his own practice, in the latter part of his life, and after his retirement from business; when, for fourteen or fifteen years, he applied himself especially to the study of the holy Scriptures, and employed the last years of his life hardly in any thing else. He was never weary of admiring the great views of that sacred book, and the just relation of all its parts. He every day made discoveries in it, that gave him fresh cause of admiration."



Of St. Paul in particular, upon several of whose epistles he drew up a most useful commentary, he says, "That he was miraculously called to the ministry of the gospel, and declared to be a chosen vessel:—That he had the whole doctrine of the gospel from God by immediate revelation:—That for his information in the Christian knowledge, and the mysteries and depths of the dispensation of God by Jesus Christ, God himself had condescended to be his instructor and teacher:—That he had received the light of the gospel from the Fountain and Father of light himself:—and, That an exact observation of his reasonings and inferences, is the only safe guide for the right understanding of him, under the Spirit of God, that directed these sacred writings."

And the death of this great man was agreeable to his life; for we are informed by one who was with him when he died, and had lived in the same family for seven years before, that the day before his death he particularly exhorted all about him to read the holy scriptures: That he desired to be remembered by them at evening prayers; and being told, that if he would, the whole family should come and pray by him in his chamber, he answered, he should be very glad to have it so, if it would not give too much trouble: That an occasion offering to speak of the goodness of God, he especially exalted the love which God shewed to man, in justifying him by faith in Jesus Christ; and returned God thanks in particular for having called him to the knowledge of that divine Saviour.

About two months before his death he drew up a letter to a gentleman (who afterwards distinguished himself by a very different way of thinking and writing) and left this direction upon it, "To be delivered to him after my decease." In it are these remarkable words, "This life is a scene of vanity that soon passes away, and affords no solid satisfaction, but in the consciousness of doing well, and in the hopes of another life. This is what I can say upon experience, and what you will find to be true, when you came to make up the account."

Sir Isaac Newton, universally acknowledged to be the ablest philosopher and mathematician that this or perhaps any other nation has produced, is also well known to have been a firm believer, and a serious Christian. His discoveries concerning the frame and system of the universe were applied by him, as Mr. Boyle's inquiries into nature had been, to demonstrate, against Atheists of all kinds, the being of a God, and illustrate his power and wisdom in the creation of the world. Of which a better account cannot be given, than in the words of an ingenious person who has been much conversant in his philosophical writings: "At the end of his mathematical principles of natural philosophy he has given us his thoughts concerning the Deity, wherein he first observes, that the similitude found in all parts of the universe, makes it undoubted that the whole is governed by one supreme Being, to whom the original is owing of the frame of nature, which evidently is the effect of choice and design. He then proceeds briefly to state the best metaphysical notions concerning God. In short, we cannot conceive either of space or time otherwise than as necessarily existing; this being therefore, on whom all others depend, must certainly exist by the same necessity of nature;



consequently wherever space and time is found there God must also be. And as it appears impossible to us that space should be limited, or that time should have had a beginning, the Deity must be both immense and eternal “

This great man applied himself, with the utmost attention, to the study of the holy scriptures, and considered the several parts of them with an uncommon exactness; particularly, as to the order of time, and the series of prophecies and events relating to the Messiah. Upon which head he left behind him an elaborate discourse, to prove, that the famous prophecy of Daniel’s weeks, which has been so industriously perverted by the Deists of our times, was an express prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Mr. Addison, so deservedly celebrated for an uncommon accuracy in thinking and reasoning, has given abundant proof of his firm belief of Christianity, and his zeal against infidels of all kinds, in the writings that are here published of which it is certainly known that a great part of them were his own compositions.

I mention not these great names, nor the testimonies they have given of their firm belief of the truth of Christianity, as if the evidences of our religion were to be finally resolved into human authority, or tried in any other way than by the known and established rules of right reason; but my design in mentioning them is,

1. To shew the very great assurance of those who would make the belief of revelation inconsistent with the due use of our reason; when they have known so many eminent instances, in our own time, of the greatest masters of reason, not only believing revelation, but zealously concerned to establish and propagate the belief of it.

2. The remembrance of this will also be a means, on one hand, to hinder well meaning people from being misled by the vain boasts of our modern pretenders to reason; and, on the other hand, to check the inclination of the wicked and vicious to be misled, when both of them have before their eyes such fresh and eminent instances of sound reasoning, and a firm faith, joined together in one and the same mind.

3. Further, as these were persons generally esteemed for virtue and goodness, and notwithstanding their high attainments, remarkable for their modesty and humility; their examples shew us, that a strong and clear reason naturally leads to the belief of revelation, when it is not under the influences of vice or pride.

4. And finally, as they are all laymen, there is no room for the enemies of revealed religion, to allege that they were prejudiced by interest, or secular considerations of any kind. A suggestion that has really no weight, when urged against the writings of the clergy in defence of revelation, since they do not desire to be trusted upon their own authority, but upon the reasons they offer; lawyers and physicians are not less trusted, because they live by their professions; but it is a suggestion that easily takes hold of weak minds, and especially such as catch at objections, and are willing to be caught by them. And, considering the diligence of the adversary in making proselytes, and drawing men from the faith of Christ;



equal diligence is required of those who are to maintain that faith, not only to leave men no real ground, but even no colour or pretence for their infidelity.

The following discourses, except that concerning the Evidences of Christian Religion, were all published in separate papers some years ago, and afterwards collected into volumes, with marks of distinction at the end of many of them, to point out the writers. Mr. Addison's are there distinguished by some one of the letters of the word CLIO; and the same marks of distinction are here continued; as are also the rest, where any letter was found at the end of the discourse.

* * Mr. Addison *having left his treatise on the truth of the Christian religion unfinished, the Publisher, to make it somewhat more complete, selected, from the Spectator, several papers (mostly the author's) on the being and perfections of God, the nature of religion, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; and printed them with it. But though the treatise and the other papers are well calculated to prove the truth of, and recommend the Christian religion to, the faith and practice of mankind; yet their influences will be but small, till men are awakened out of that insensibility into which they are fallen, and brought to believe how much they are interested in the great truths Christianity reveals. To beget thought and excite inquiry it was judged the following extract from Mons. Pascal's Thoughts, against an atheistical indifference, would neither be an improper, nor an unacceptable introduction to the subsequent papers.*



INTRODUCTION.

IT were to be wished that the enemies of religion would at least bring themselves to apprehend its nature before they oppose its authority. Did religion make its boast of beholding God with a clear and perfect view, and of possessing him without a covering or veil, the argument would bear some colour, when men should alledge, that none of the things about them do indeed afford this pretended evidence, and this degree of light. But since religion, on the contrary, represents men as in a state of darkness, and of estrangement from God; since it affirms him to have withdrawn himself from their discovery, and to have chosen in his word, the very style and appellation of *Deus absconditus*; lastly, since it employs itself alike, in establishing these two maxims, that God has left in his church certain characters of himself, by which they who sincerely seek him shall not fail of a sensible conviction—and yet that he has, at the same time, so far shaded and obscured these characters as to render them imperceptible to those who do not seek him with their whole heart; what advantage is it to men who profess themselves negligent in the search of truth, to complain so frequently that nothing reveals and displays it to them? For this very obscurity under which they labour, and which they make an exception against the church, does itself evince one of the two grand points which the church maintains, (without affecting the other) and is so far from overthrowing its doctrines, as to lend them a manifest confirmation and support.

If they would give their objections any strength, they ought to urge, that they have applied their utmost endeavour, and have used all means of information, even those which the church recommends, without satisfaction. Did they express themselves thus, they would indeed attack religion in one of its chief pretensions. But I hope to shew, in the following papers, that no rational person can speak after this manner, and I dare assert that none ever did. We know very well how men, under this indifference of spirit, behave themselves in the case. They suppose themselves to have made the mightiest efforts towards the instruction of their minds, when they have spent some hours in reading the scriptures, and have asked some questions of a clergyman concerning the articles of faith. When this is done, they declare to all the world they have consulted books and men without success. I shall be excused, if I refrain from not telling such men (what I have often told them) that this neglect of theirs is insupportable. It is not a foreign or a petty interest which is here in debate; we are ourselves the parties, and all our hopes and fortunes are the depending stake.

The immortality of the soul is a thing which so deeply concerns, so infinitely imports us, that we must have utterly lost our feeling, to be altogether cold and remiss in our enquiries about it. And all our actions, or designs, ought to bend so very different a way, according as we are either encouraged or forbidden to embrace the hope of eternal rewards, that it is impossible for us to proceed with judgment and discretion, otherwise than as we keep this point always in view, which ought to be our ruling object and final aim.




Thus is it our highest interest, no less than our principal duty, to get light into a subject on which our whole conduct depends. And therefore, in the number of wavering and unsatisfied men, I make the greatest difference imaginable between those who labour with all their force to obtain instruction, and those who live without giving themselves any trouble, or so much as any thought, in this affair.

I cannot but be touched with a hearty compassion for those who sincerely groan under this dissatisfaction; who look upon it as the greatest of misfortunes, and who spare no pains to deliver themselves from it, by making these researches their chief employment and most serious study. But as for those who pass their life without reflecting on its issue, and who, for this reason alone, because they find not in themselves a convincing testimony, refuse to seek it elsewhere, and to examine to the bottom, whether the opinion proposed be such as we are wont to entertain by popular simplicity and credulity, or such as though obscure in itself, yet is built on solid and immoveable foundations, I consider them after quite another manner. The carelessness which they betray in an affair where their person, their interest, their whole eternity, is embarked, rather provokes my resentment than engages my pity; nay, it strikes me with amazement and astonishment; it is a monster to my apprehension. I speak not this as transported with the pious zeal of a spiritual and rapturous devotion. On the contrary, I affirm, that the love of ourselves, the interest of mankind, and the most simple and artless reason, do naturally inspire us with these sentiments; and that to see thus far, is not to exceed the sphere of unrefined, uneducated men.

It requires no great elevation of soul to observe, that nothing in this world is productive of true contentment; that our pleasures are vain and fugitive, our troubles innumerable and perpetual; and that after all, death, which threatens us every moment, must, in the compass of a few years, (perhaps of a few days) put us into the eternal condition of *happiness*, or *misery*, or *nothing*. Between us and these three great periods, or states, no barrier is interposed but life, the most brittle thing in all nature; and the happiness of heaven being certainly not designed for those who doubt whether they have an immortal part to enjoy it, such persons have nothing left but the miserable chance of annihilation, or of hell.

There is not any reflection which can have more reality than this, as there is none which has greater terror. Let us set the bravest face on our condition, and play the heroes as artfully as we can, yet see here the issue which attends the goodliest life upon earth!

'Tis in vain for men to turn aside their thoughts from this eternity which awaits them, as if they were able to destroy it, by denying it a place in their imaginations. It subsists in spite of them; it advanceth unobserved: and death, which is to draw the curtain from it, will, in a short time, infallibly reduce them to the dreadful necessity of being forever nothing, or forever miserable.



We have here a doubt of the most affrighting consequence, and which therefore to entertain may be well esteemed the most grievous of misfortunes; but, at the same time, it is our indispensable duty not to lie under it without struggling for deliverance.

He then who doubts, and yet seeks not to be resolved, is equally unhappy and unjust. But if withal he appears easy and composed; if he freely declares his indifference; nay, if he takes a vanity in professing it, and seems to make this most deplorable condition the subject of his pleasure and joy, have not words to fix a name on so extravagant a creature. Where is the very possibility of entering into these thoughts and resolutions? what delight is there in expecting misery without end? what vanity in finding one's self encompassed with impenetrable darkness? or what consolation in despairing forever of a comforter?

To sit down with some sort of acquiescence under so fatal an ignorance, is a thing unaccountable beyond all expression: and they who live with such a disposition ought to be made sensible of its absurdity and stupidity, by having their inward reflections laid open to them, that they may grow wise by the prospect of their own folly. For behold how men are wont to reason, while they obstinately remain thus ignorant of what they are, and refuse all methods of instruction and illumination!

Who has sent me into the world, I know not; what the world is, I know not, nor what I am myself. I am under an astonishing and terrifying ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, what my senses, or my soul. This very part of me which thinks what I speak, which reflects upon every thing else, and even upon itself, yet is as mere a stranger to its own nature as the dullest thing I carry about me. I behold these frightful spaces of the universe with which I am encompassed; and I find myself chained to one little corner of the vast extent, without understanding why I am placed in this seat rather than any other; or why this moment of time, given me to live, was assigned rather at such a point, than at any other of the whole eternity which was before me, or of all that which is to come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which devour and swallow me up, like an atom; like a shadow, which endures but a single instant, and is never to return. The sum of my knowledge is, that I must shortly die; but that which I am most ignorant of, is this very death which I feel myself unable to decline.

As I know not whence I came, so I know not whither I go; only this I know, that at my departure out of the world, I must either fall forever into nothing, or into the hands of an incensed God, without being capable of deciding which of these two conditions shall eternally be my portion. Such is my state; full of weakness, obscurity, and wretchedness. And from all this I conclude, that I ought therefore to pass all the days of my life, without considering what is hereafter to befall me; and that I have nothing to do but to follow my inclinations, without reflection or disquiet, in doing all that which, if what men say of a miserable eternity prove true, will infallibly plunge me into it. 'Tis possible I might find some light to clear up my doubts; but I shall not take a minute's pains, nor stir one foot in



the search of it. On the contrary, I am resolved to treat those with scorn and derision who labour in this inquiry with care; and so to run, without fear or foresight, upon the trial of the grand event; permitting myself to be led softly on to death, utterly uncertain as to the eternal issue of my future condition.

In earnest, 'tis a glory to religion to have so unreasonable men for its professed enemies; and their opposition is of so little danger, that it serves to illustrate the principal truths which our religion teaches. For the main scope of Christian faith is to establish these two principles, the corruption of nature; and the redemption by Jesus Christ. And these opposers, if they are of no use towards demonstrating the truth of the redemption, by the sanctity of their lives, yet are, at least, admirably useful in shewing the corruption of nature, by so unnatural sentiments and suggestions.

Nothing is so important to any man as his own estate and condition; nothing so great, so amazing, as eternity. If therefore we find persons indifferent to the loss of their being, and to the danger of endless misery, 'tis impossible that this temper should be natural. They are quite other men in all other regards: they fear the smallest inconveniences; they see them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive; and he who passeth days and nights in chagrin or despair, for the loss of employment, or for some imaginary blemish in his honour, is the very same mortal who knows that he must lose all by death, and yet remains without disquiet, resentment or emotion. This wonderful insensibility with respect to things of the most fatal consequence, in a heart so nicely sensible of the meanest trifles, is an astonishing prodigy, an unintelligible enchantment, a supernatural blindness and infatuation.

A man in a close dungeon, who knows not whether sentence of death is passed upon him, who is allowed but one hour's space to inform himself concerning it, and that one hour sufficient, in case it have passed, to obtain its reverse, would act contrary to nature and sense, should he make use of this hour not to procure information, but to pursue his vanity or sport. And yet such is the condition of the persons whom we are now describing: only with this difference, that the evils with which they are every moment threatened do infinitely surpass the bare loss of life, and that transient punishment which the prisoner is supposed to apprehend. Yet they run thoughtless upon the precipice, having only cast a veil over their eyes, to hinder them from discerning it, and divert themselves with the officiousness of such as charitably warn them of their danger.

Thus, not the zeal alone of those who heartily seek God demonstrates the truth of religion, but likewise the blindness of those who utterly forbear to seek him, and who pass their days under so horrible a neglect. There must needs be a strange turn and revolution in human nature, before men can submit to such a condition; much more, ere they can applaud and value themselves upon it. For, supposing them to have obtained an absolute certainty that there was no fear after death, but of falling into nothing; ought not this to be the subject



rather of despair than of jollity? And is it not therefore the highest pitch of senseless extravagance, while we want this certainty, to glory in our doubt and distrust?

And yet after all, it is too visible, that man has so far declined from his original nature, and as it were departed from himself, as to nourish in his heart a secret seed plot of joy, springing up from these libertine reflections. This brutal ease or indolence, between the fear of hell and of annihilation, carries somewhat so tempting in it, that not only those who have the misfortune to be sceptically inclined, but even those who cannot unsettle their judgment, do yet esteem it reputable to take up even a counterfeit diffidence. For we may observe the largest part of the herd to be of this latter kind, false pretenders to infidelity, and mere hypocrites in atheism. There are persons whom we have heard declare that the genteel way of the world consists in thus acting the bravo. This is that which they term throwing off the yoke, and which the greater number of them profess, not so much out of opinion, as out of gallantry and complaisance.

Yet, if they have the least reserve of common sense, it will not be difficult to make them apprehend, how miserably they abuse themselves, by laying so false a foundation of applause and esteem. For this is not the way to raise a character, even with worldly men, who as they are able to pass shrewd judgment on things, so they easily discern, that the only method of succeeding in our temporal affairs is to approve ourselves honest, faithful, prudent, and capable of advancing the interest of our friends; because men naturally love nothing but that which some way contributes to their use and benefit. But now what benefit can we any way derive from hearing a man confess, that he has eased himself of the burden of religion; that he believes no God, as the witness and inspector of his conduct; that he considers himself as absolute master of what he does, and accountable for it only to his own mind? Will he fancy that we shall be hence induced to repose a greater degree of confidence in him hereafter, or to depend on his comfort, his advice or assistance in the necessities of life? Can he imagine us to take any great delight or complacency, when he tells us, that he doubts whether our very soul be any thing more than a little wind and smoke; nay, when he tells it us with an air of assurance, and a voice that testifies the contentment of his heart? Is this a thing to be spoken of with pleasantry? or ought it not rather to be lamented with the deepest sadness as the most melancholic reflection that can strike our thoughts?

If they would compose them to serious consideration, they must perceive the method in which they are engaged to be so very ill chosen, so repugnant to gentility, and so remote even from that good air and grace which they pursue, that, on the contrary, nothing can more effectually expose them to the contempt and aversion of mankind, or mark them out for persons defective in parts and judgment. And indeed should we demand from them an account of their sentiments, and of the reasons which they have to entertain this suspicion in religious matters, what they offered would appear so miserably weak and trifling, as rather to confirm us in our belief. This is no more than what one of their own fraternity told them

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with great smartness, on such an occasion. If you continue (says he) to dispute at this rate, you'll infallibly make me a Christian. And the gentleman was in the right: for who would not tremble to find himself embarked in the same cause with so forlorn, so despicable companions.

And thus it is evident; that they who wear no more than the outward mask of these principles are the most unhappy counterfeits in the world; in as much as they are obliged to put a continual force and constraint on their genius, only that they may render themselves the most impertinent of all men living.

If they are heartily and sincerely troubled at their want of light, let them not dissemble the disease. Such a confession could not be reputed shameful; for there is really no shame, but in being shameless. Nothing betrays is much weakness of soul, as not to apprehend the misery of man, while living without God in the world: nothing is a surer token of extreme baseness of spirit, than not to hope for the reality of eternal promises: no man is so stigmatized a coward, as he that acts the bravo against Heaven. Let them, therefore, leave these impieties to those who are born with so unhappy a judgment as to be capable of entertaining them in nearest. If they cannot be Christian men, let them however be men of honour. And let them, in conclusion, acknowledge that there are but two sorts of persons who deserve to be styled reasonable, either those, who serve God with all their heart, because they know him; or those who seek him with all their heart, because as yet they know him not.

If then there are persons who sincerely inquire after God, and who, being truly sensible of their misery, affectionately desire to be rescued from it, it is to these alone that we can in justice afford our labour and service, for their direction in finding out that light of which they feel the want.

But as for those who live without either knowing God, or endeavouring to know him, they look on themselves as so little deserving their own care, that they cannot but be unworthy the care of others: and it requires all the charity of the religion which they despise, not to despise them to such a degree, as even to abandon them to their own folly. But since the same religion obliges us to consider them, while they remain in this life, as still capable of God's enlightening grace; and to acknowledge it as very possible, that, in the course of a few days, they may be replenished with a fuller measure of faith than we now enjoy, and we ourselves, on the other side, fall into the depths of their present blindness and misery; we ought to do for them what we desire should be done to us in their case, to intreat them that they would take pity on themselves, and would, at least, advance a step or two forward, if perchance they may come into the light. For which end it is wished, that they would employ, in the perusal of this piece, some few of these hours which they spend so unprofitably in other pursuits. 'Tis possible they may gain somewhat by the reading; at least they cannot be great losers. But if they shall apply themselves to it, with perfect sincerity, and with an un-



feigned desire of knowing the truth, I despair not of their satisfaction, or of their being convinced by so many proofs of our divine religion as they will here find laid together.”



**THE
EVIDENCES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

SECT. I.

I. General division of the following discourse, with regard to Pagan and Jewish authors, who mention particulars relating to our Saviour.

II. Not probable that any such should be mentioned by Pagan writers who lived at the same time, from the nature of such transactions.

III. Especially when related by the Jews.

IV. And heard at a distance by those who pretended to as great miracles of their own.

V. Besides, that no Pagan writers of that age lived in Judea, or its confines.

VI. And because many books of that age are lost.

VII. An instance of one record proved to be authentic.

VIII. A second record of probable, though not undoubted, authority.

I. THAT I may lay before you a full state of the subject under our consideration and methodise the several particulars that I touched upon in discourse with you, I shall first take notice of such Pagan authors as have given their testimony to the history of our Saviour; reduce these authors under their respective classes, and shew what authority their testimonies carry with them. Secondly, I shall take notice of ¹Jewish authors in the same light.

II. There are many reasons why you should not expect that matters of such a wonderful nature should be taken notice of by those eminent Pagan writers, who were contemporaries with Jesus Christ, or by those who lived before his disciples had personally appeared among them, and ascertained the report which had gone abroad concerning a life so full of miracles.

Supposing such things had happened at this day in Switzerland, or among the Grisons, who make a greater figure in Europe than Judea did in the Roman Empire, would they be immediately believed by those who live at a great distance from them? or would any certain account of them be transmitted into foreign countries, within so short a space of time as that of our Saviour's public ministry? Such kinds of news, though never so true, seldom gain credit, till some time after they are transacted, and exposed to the examination of the curious, who, by laying together circumstances, attestations, and characters of those who are concerned in them, either receive or reject what at first none but eye-witnesses could absolutely believe or disbelieve. In a case of this sort, it was natural for men of sense and learning to treat the whole account as fabulous: or, at farthest, to suspend their belief of it, until all things stood together in their full light.

III. Besides, the Jews were branded not only for superstitions different from all the religions of the Pagan world, but in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous people: so that whatever reports of such a nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the Heathen world as false, frivolous, and improbable.

1 The author did not live to write this second part.

IV. We may further observe, that the ordinary practice of magic in those times, with the many pretended prodigies, divinations, apparitions, and local miracles among the Heathens, made them less attentive to such news from Judea, till they had time to consider the nature, the occasion, and the end of our Saviour's miracles, and were awakened by many surprising events, to allow them any consideration at all.

V. We are indeed told by St. Matthew, that the fame of our Saviour, during his life, went throughout all Syria; and that there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, Judea, Decapolis, Idumea, from beyond Jordan, and from Tyre and Sidon. Now, had there been any historians of those times and places, we might have expected to have seen in them some account of those wonderful transactions in Judea; but there is not any single author extant, in any kind, of that age, in any of those countries.

VI. How many books have perished in which possibly there might have been mention of our Saviour? Look among the Romans, how few of their writings are come down to our times! In the space of two hundred years from our Saviour's birth when there was such a multitude of writers of all kinds, how small is the number of authors that have made their way to the present age.

VII. One authentic record, and that the most authentic Heathen record, we are pretty sure is lost, I mean the account sent by the governor of Judea, under whom our Saviour was judged, condemned, and crucified. It was the custom in the Roman Empire, as it is to this day, in all the governments of the world, for the prefects and viceroys of distant provinces, to transmit to their sovereign a summary relation of every thing remarkable in their administration. That Pontius Pilate, in his account, would have touched on so extraordinary an event in Judea, is not to be doubted: and that he actually did, we learn from Justin Martyr, who lived about a hundred years after our Saviour's death, resided, made converts, and suffered martyrdom at Rome, where he was engaged with philosophers, and in a particular manner with Crescens the Cynic, who could easily have detected, and would not fail to have exposed him, had he quoted a record not in being, or made any false citation out of it. Would the great apologist have challenged Crescens to dispute the cause of Christianity with him before the Roman senate, had he forged such an evidence? Or would Crescens have refused the challenge, could he have triumphed over him in the detection of such a forgery? To which we must add, that the apology which appeals to this record, was presented to a learned emperor, and to the whole body of the Roman senate. This father, in his apology, speaking of the death and suffering of our Saviour, refers the emperor for the truth of what he says to the acts of Pontius Pilate which I have here mentioned. Tertullian, who wrote his apology about fifty years after Justin, doubtless referred to the same record, when he tells the governor of Rome, that the emperor Tiberius having received an account out of Palestine in Syria, of the divine person who had appeared in that country, paid him a particular regard, and threatened to punish any who should accuse the Christians; nay, that the emperor would



have adopted him among the deities whom they worshipped, had not the senate refused to come in to his proposal. Tertullian, who gives us this history, was not only one of the most learned men of his age, but, what adds a greater weight to his authority in this case, was eminently skilful and well read in the laws of the Roman Empire. Nor can it be said, that Tertullian grounded his quotation upon the authority of Justin Martyr, because we find he mixes it with matters of fact which are not related by that author. Eusebius mentions the same ancient record, but as it was not extant in his time, I shall not insist upon his authority in this point. If it be objected that this particular is not mentioned in any Roman historian, I shall use the same argument in a parallel case, and see whether it will carry any force with it. Ulpian the Great Roman lawyer gathered together all the imperial edicts that had been made against the Christians; but did any one ever say that there had been no such edicts, because they were not mentioned in the histories of those Emperors? Besides, who knows but this circumstance of Tiberius was mentioned in other historians that have been lost; tho' not to be found in any still extant? Has not Suetonius many particulars of this Emperor omitted by Tacitus, and Herodian many that are not so much as hinted at by either! As for the spurious acts of Pilate, now extant, we know the occasion and time of their writing, and had there not been a true and authentic record of this nature, they would never have been forged.

VIII. The story of Abgarus, king of Edessa, relating to the letter which he sent to our Saviour, and to that which he received from him, is a record of great authority; and though I will not insist upon it, may venture to say, that had we such an evidence for any fact in Pagan history, an author would be thought very unreasonable who should reject it. I believe you will be of my opinion, if you will peruse, with other authors who have appeared in vindication of these letters as genuine, the additional arguments which have been made use of by the late famous and learned Dr. Grabe, in the second volume of his *Spicilegium*.



SECT. II.

- I. What facts in the history of our Saviour might be taken notice of by Pagan authors.
- II. What particular facts are taken notice of, and by what Pagan authors.
- III. How Celsus represented our Saviour's miracles.
- IV. The same representation made of them by other unbelievers, and proved unreasonable.
- V. What facts in our Saviour's history not to be expelled from Pagan writers.

I. WE come now to consider what undoubted authorities are extant among Pagan writers: and here we must premise, that some parts of our Saviour's history may be reasonably expected from Pagans. I mean such parts as might be known to those who lived at a distance from Judea, as well as to those who were the followers and eye-witnesses of Christ.

II. Such particulars are most of these which follow, and which are all attested by some one or other of those Heathen authors, who lived in or near the age of our Saviour and his disciples. "That Augustus Cæsar had ordered the whole empire to be censed or taxed," which brought our Saviour's reputed parents to Bethlehem: this is mentioned by several Roman historians, as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion. "That a great light, or a new star, appeared in the east, which directed the wise men to our Saviour:" this is recorded by Chalcidius. "That Herod, the king of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children," being so jealous of his successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account: this character of him is given by several historians: and this cruel fact mentioned by Macrobius, a Heathen author, who tells it as a known thing, without any mark or doubt upon it. "That our Saviour had been in Egypt:" this Celsus, though he raises a monstrous story upon it, is so far from denying, that he tells us, our Saviour learned the arts of magic in that country. "That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that our Saviour was brought in judgment before him and by him condemned and crucified:" this is recorded by Tacitus. "That many miraculous cures and works, out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought by him; this is confessed by Julian the apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them not only Pagans, but professed enemies and persecutors of Christianity. "That our Saviour foretold several things which came to pass according to his predictions;" this was attested by Phlegon in his annals, as we are assured by the learned Origen against Celsus. "That at the time when our Saviour died, there was a miraculous darkness, and a great earthquake:" this is recorded by the same Phlegon the Trallian, who was likewise a Pagan, and freeman to Adrian the emperor. We may here observe, that a native of Trallium, which was not situate at so great a distance from Palestine, might very probably be informed of

such remarkable events as had passed among the Jews in the age immediately preceding his own times, since several of his countrymen with whom he had conversed might have received a confused report of our Saviour before his crucifixion, and probably lived within the shake of the earthquake, and the shadow of the eclipse, which are recorded by this author. “That Christ was worshipped as a God among the Christians; that they would rather suffer death than blaspheme him: that they received a sacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness,” conformable to the advice given by St. Paul: “That they had private assemblies of worship, and used to join together in hymns;” this is the account which Pliny the younger gives of Christianity in his days, about seventy years after the death of Christ, and which agrees in all its circumstances with the accounts we have in holy writ, of the first state of Christianity after the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour. “That St. Peter, whose miracles are many of them recorded in holy writ, did many wonderful works,” is owned by Julian the apostate, who therefore represents him as a great magician, and one who had in his possession a book of magical secrets, left him by our Saviour. “That the devils or evil spirits were subject to them,” we may learn from Porphyry, who objects to Christianity, that since Jesus had begun to be worshipped, Esculapius, and the rest of the Gods, did no more converse with men. Nay, Celsus himself affirms the same thing in effect, when he says, that the power which seemed to reside in Christians proceeded from the use of certain names, and the invocation of certain demons. Origen remarks on this passage, that the author doubtless hints at those Christians who put to flight evil spirits, and healed those who were possessed with them: a fact which had been often seen, and which he himself had seen, as he declares in another part of his discourse. against Celsus. But at the same time he assures us, that this miraculous power was exerted by the use of no other name but that of Jesus; to which were added several passages in this history, but nothing like any invocation to demons.

III. Celsus was so hard set with the report of our Saviour’s miracles, and the confident attestations concerning him, that though he often intimates that he did not believe them to be true, yet knowing he might be silenced in such an answer, provides himself with another retreat, when beaten out of this, viz. that our Saviour was a magician. Thus he compares the feeding of so many thousands, at two different times, with a few loaves and fishes, to the magical feasts of those Egyptian impostors, who would present their spectators with visionary entertainments, that had in them neither substance nor reality: which, by the way, is to suppose, that a hungry and fainting multitude were filled by an apparition, or strengthened and refreshed with shadows. He knew very well that there was so many witnesses and actors, if I may call them such, in these two miracles, that it was impossible to refute such multitudes, who had doubtless sufficiently spread the fame of them, and was therefore in this place forced to resort to the other solution, that it was done by magic. It was not enough to say that a miracle, which appeared to so many thousand eye-witnesses, was a forgery of Christ’s

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disciples; and therefore supposing them to be eye-witnesses, he endeavours to shew how they might be deceived.

IV. The unconverted Heathens, who were pressed by the many authorities that confirmed our Saviour's miracles, as well as the unbelieving Jews, who had actually seen them, were driven to account for them after the same manner: for, to work by magic, in the Heathen way of speaking, was, in the language of the Jews, to cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, who knew that unbelievers, in all ages, would put this perverse interpretation on his miracles, has branded the malignity of those men, who, contrary to the dictates of their own hearts, started such an unreasonable objection as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and declared not only the guilt, but the punishment of so black a crime. At the same time he condescended to shew the vanity and emptiness of this objection against his miracles, by representing, that they evidently tended to the destruction of those powers, to whose assistance the enemies of his doctrine then ascribed them: an argument, which, if duly weighed, renders the objection so very frivolous and groundless, that we may venture to call it even blasphemy against common sense. Would magic endeavour to draw off the minds of men from the worship which was paid to stocks and stones; to give them an abhorrence of those evil spirits, who rejoiced in the most cruel sacrifices, and in offerings of the greatest impurity; and, in short, to call upon mankind to exert their whole strength in the love and adoration of that one Being, from whom they derived existence, and on whom only they were taught to depend every moment for the happiness and continuance of it? Was it the business of magic to humanize our natures with compassion, forgiveness, and all the instances of the most extensive charity? Would evil spirits contribute to make men sober, chaste, and temperate; and, in a word, to produce that reformation which was wrought in the moral world by those doctrines of our Saviour that received their sanction from his miracles? Nor is it possible to imagine, that evil spirits would enter into a combination with our Saviour to cut off all their correspondence and intercourse with mankind, and to prevent any for the future from addicting themselves to those rites and ceremonies which had done them so much honour. We see the early effect which Christianity had on the minds of men in this particular, by that number of books which were filled with the secrets of magic, and made a sacrifice to Christianity by the converts mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. We have likewise an eminent instance of the inconsistency of our religion with magic in the history of the famous Aquila. This person, who was a kinsman of the emperor Trajan, and likewise a man of great learning, notwithstanding he had embraced Christianity; could not be brought off from the studies of magic by the repeated admonitions of his fellow Christians; so that at length they expelled him their society, as rather chusing to loose the reputation of so considerable a proselyte, than communicate with one who dealt in such dark and infernal practices. Besides, we may observe, that all the favourers of magic were the most professed and bitter enemies to the Christian religion. Not to mention Simon



Magus, and many others, I shall only take notice of those two great persecutors of Christianity, the emperors Adrian and Julian the apostate, both of them initiated in the mysteries of divination, and skilled in all the depths of magic, I shall only add, that evil spirits cannot be supposed to have concurred in the establishment of a religion which triumphed over them, drove them out of the places they possessed, and divested them of their influence on mankind: nor would I mention this particular, though it be unanimously reported by all the ancient Christian authors, did it not appear, from the authorities above cited, that this was a fact confessed by Heathens themselves.

V. We now see what a multitude of Pagan testimonies may be produced for all of those remarkable passages which might have been expected from them; and indeed of several, that, I believe, do more than answer your expectations, as they were not subjects, in their own nature, so exposed to public notoriety. It cannot be expected they should mention particulars, which were transacted amongst the disciples only, or among some few even of the disciples themselves, such as the transfiguration, the agony in the garden, the appearance of Christ after his resurrection, and others of the like nature. It was impossible for a Heathen author to relate these things; because, if he had believed them, he would no longer have been a Heathen, and by that means his testimony would not have been thought of so much validity. Besides, his very report of facts, so favourable to Christianity, would have prompted men to say that he was probably tainted with their doctrine. We have a parallel case in Hecatæus, a famous Greek historian, who had several passages in his book conformable to the history of the Jewish writers, which, when quoted by Josephus, as a confirmation of the Jewish history, when his Heathen adversaries could give no other answer to it, they would need suppose that Hecatæus was a Jew in his heart, though they had no other reason for it, but because his history gave greater authority to the Jewish than the Egyptian records.

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SECT. III.

- I. Introduction to a second list of Pagan authors, who give testimony of our Saviour.
- II. A passage concerning our Saviour from a learned Athenian.
- III. His Conversion from Paganism to Christianity makes his evidence stronger than if he had continued a Pagan.
- IV. Of another Athenian philosopher converted to Christianity.
- V. Why their conversion, instead of weakening, strengthens their evidence in defence of Christianity.
- VI. Their belief in our Saviour's history founded at first upon the principles of historical faith.
- VII. Their testimonies extended to all the particulars of our Saviour's history.
- VIII. As related by the four Evangelists.

I. TO this list of Heathen writers, who make mention of our Saviour, or touch upon any particulars of his life, I shall add those authors who were at first Heathens, and afterwards converted to Christianity; upon which account, as I shall here shew, their testimonies are to be looked upon as the more authentic. And, in this list of evidences, I confine myself to such learned Pagans as came over to Christianity in the three first centuries, because those were the times in which men had the best means of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history; and because, among the great number of philosophers who came in afterwards, under the reigns of Christian emperors, there might be several of them who did it partly out of worldly motives.

II. Let us now suppose that a learned Heathen writer, who lived within sixty years of our Saviour's crucifixion, after having shewn that false miracles were generally wrought in obscurity, and before few or no witnesses, speaking of those which were wrought by our Saviour, has the following passage. "But his works were always seen, because they were true; they were seen by those who were healed, and by those who were raised from the dead. Nay, these persons who were thus healed, and raised, were seen not only at the time of their being healed and raised, but long afterwards. Nay, they were seen not only all the while our Saviour was upon earth, but survived after his departure out of this world; nay, some of them were living in our days."

III. I dare say you would look upon this as a glorious attestation for the cause of Christianity, had it come from the hand of a famous Athenian philosopher. These forementioned words, however, are actually the words of one who lived about sixty years after our Saviour's crucifixion, and was a famous philosopher in Athens. But it will be said he was a convert to Christianity: now consider this matter impartially, and see if his testimony is not much more valid for that reason. Had he continued a Pagan philosopher, would not the world have it said that he was not sincere in what he writ, or did not believe it; for if so, would not they



have told us he would have embraced Christianity? This was indeed the case of this excellent man; he had so thoroughly examined the truth of our Saviour's history, and the excellency of that religion which he taught, and was so entirely convinced of both, that he became a proselyte and died a martyr.

IV. Aristides was an Athenian philosopher, at the same time famed for his learning and wisdom, but converted to Christianity. As it cannot be questioned that he perused and approved the apology of Quadratus, in which is the passage just now cited, he joined with him in an apology of his own to the same emperor on the same subject. This apology, though now lost, was extant in the time of Ado. Vinesis, A. D. 870, and highly esteemed by the most learned Athenians, as that author witnesses. It must have contained great arguments for the truth of our Saviour's history, because in it he asserted the divinity of our Saviour which could not but engage him in the proof of his miracles.

V. I do allow, that generally speaking, a man is not so acceptable and unquestioned an evidence, in facts which make for the advancement of his own party. But we must consider, that, in the case before us, the persons to whom we appeal were of an opposite party, till they were persuaded of the truth of those very facts which they report. They bear evidence to a history in defence of Christianity; the truth of which history was their motive to embrace Christianity. They attest facts which they had heard while they were yet Heathens, and had they not found reason to believe them, they would have still continued Heathens, and have made no mention of them in their writings.

VI. When a man is born under Christian parents, and trained up in the profession of that religion from a child, he generally guides himself by the rules of Christian faith, in believing what is delivered by the evangelists; but the learned Pagans of antiquity, before they became Christians, were only guided by the common rules of faith; that is, they examined the nature of the evidence which was to be met with in common fame, traditions, and the writings of those persons who related them, together with the number, concurrence, veracity, and private characters of those persons; and being convinced upon all accounts that they had the same reason to believe the history of our Saviour, as that of any other person to which they themselves were not actually eye-witnesses, they were bound, by all the rules of historical faith, and of right reason, to give credit to this history. This they did accordingly, and in consequence of it published the same truths themselves, suffered many afflictions, and very often death itself in the assertion of them. When I say, that an historical belief of the acts of our Saviour induced these learned Pagans to embrace his doctrine, I do not deny that there were many other motives which conduced to it, as the excellency of his precepts, the fulfilling of prophecies, the miracles of his disciples, the irreproachable lives and magnan-



imous sufferings of their followers, with other considerations of the same nature; but whatever other collateral arguments wrought more or less with philosophers of that age, it is certain, that a belief in the history of our Saviour was one motive with every new convert, and that upon which all others turned, as being the very basis and foundation of Christianity.



VII. To this I must further add, that as we have already seen many particular facts which are recorded in holy writ, attested by particular Pagan authors, the testimony of those I am now going to produce, extends to the whole history of our Saviour, and to that continued series of actions which are related of him and his disciples in the books of the New Testament.

VIII. This evidently appears from their quotations out of the evangelists, for the confirmation of any doctrine or account of our blessed Saviour. Nay, a learned man of our nation, who examined the writings of our most ancient fathers in another view, refers to several passages in Irenæus, Tertullian, Clements of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian; by which he plainly shews that each of these early writers ascribed to the four evangelists by name, their respective histories; so that there is not the least room for doubting of their belief in the history of our Saviour as recorded in the gospels. I shall only add, that three of the five fathers here mentioned, and probably four, were Pagans converted to Christianity, as they were all of them very inquisitive and deep in the knowledge of Heathen learning and philosophy.



SECT. IV.

I. Character of the times in which the Christian religion was propagated.

II. And of many who embraced it.

III. Three eminent and early instances.

IV. Multitudes of learned men who came over to it.

V. Belief in our Saviour's history the first motive to their conversion.

VI. The names of several Pagan philosophers who were Christian converts.

I. IT happened very, providentially, to the honour of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures.

II. Several of these, therefore, when they had informed themselves of our Saviour's history, and examined, with unprejudiced minds, the doctrines and manners of his disciples and followers, were struck and convinced, that they professed themselves of that sect; notwithstanding, by this profession, that juncture of time, they bid farewell to all the pleasures of this life, renounced all the views of ambition, engaged in an uninterrupted course of severities, and exposed themselves to public hatred and contempt, to sufferings of all kinds, and to death itself.

III. Of this sort we may reckon those three early converts to Christianity, who each of them was a member of a senate famous for its wisdom and learning. Joseph the Arimathean was of the Jewish sanhedrim, Dionysius of the Athenian, Areopagus, and Flavius Clemens, of the Roman senate; nay, at the time of his death, consul of Rome. These three were so thoroughly satisfied of the truth of the Christian religion, that the first of them, according to all the reports of antiquity, died a martyr for it; as did the second, unless we disbelieve Aristides, his fellow citizen and contemporary; and the third, as we are informed both by Roman and Christian authors.

IV. Among those innumerable multitudes, who, in most of the known nations of the world, came over to Christianity at its first appearance, we may be sure there were great numbers of wise and learned men, besides those whose names are in the Christian records, who, without doubt, took care to examine the truth of our Saviour's history before they would leave the religion of their country, and of their forefathers, for the sake of one that would not only cut them off from the allurements of this world, but subject them to every thing terrible or disagreeable in it. Tertullian tells the Roman governors, that their corporations, councils, armies, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, and courts of judicature, were filled with Christians; as Arnobius asserts, that men of the finest parts and learning, orators,

grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, despising the sentiments they had been once fond of, took up their rest in the Christian religion.

V. Who can imagine that men of this character did not thoroughly inform themselves of the history of that person whose doctrines they embraced? For however consonant to reason his precepts appeared, how good soever were the effects which they produced in the world, nothing could have tempted men to acknowledge him as their God and Saviour, but their being firmly persuaded of the miracles he wrought, and the many attestations of his divine mission, which were to be met with in the history of his life. This was the groundwork of the Christian religion; and, if this failed, the whole superstructure sunk with it. This point, therefore, of the truth of our Saviour's history, as reckoned by the evangelists, is every where taken for granted in the writings of those who, from Pagan philosophers, became Christian authors, and who, by reason of their conversion, are to be looked upon as of the strongest collateral testimony for the truth of what is delivered concerning our Saviour.

VI. Besides innumerable authors that are lost, we have the undoubted names, works, or fragments of several Pagan philosophers, which shew them to have been as learned as any unconverted Heathen authors of the age in which they lived. If we look into the greatest, nurseries of learning in those ages of the world, we find in Athens, Dionysius, Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras; and in Alexandria, Dionysius Clements, Ammonius, and Anatolius, to whom we may add Origen; for though his father was a Christian martyr, he became, without all controversy, the most learned and able philosopher of his age, by his education at Alexandria, in that famous seminary of arts and sciences.



SECT. V.

I. The learned Pagans had means and opportunities of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history.

II. From the proceedings,

III. The charmers, sufferings,

IV. And miracles of the persons who published it.

V. How these first apostles perpetrated their tradition, by ordaining persons to succeed them.

VI. How their successors in the three first centuries preserved their tradition.

VII. That five generations might derive this tradition from Christ, to the end of the third century.

VIII. Four eminent Christians that delivered it down successively to the year of our Lord 254.

IX. The faith of the four above mentioned persons the same with that of the churches of the east, of the west and of Egypt.

X. Another person added to them, who brings us to the year 343, and that many other lists might be added in as direct and short a succession.

XI. Why the tradition of the three first centuries, was more authentic than that of any other age, proved from the conversation of the primitive Christians.

XII. From the manner of initiating men into their religion.

XIII. From the correspondence between the churches.

XIV. From the long lives of several of Christ's disciples, of which two are instances.

I. IT now therefore only remains to consider, whether these learned men had means and opportunities of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history; for unless this point can be made out, their testimonies will appear invalid, and their inquiries ineffectual.

II. As to this point, we must consider, that many thousands had seen the transactions of our Saviour in Judah; and that many hundred thousands had received an account of them from the mouths of those who were actually eye-witnesses. I shall only mention among these eyewitnesses, the twelve apostles, to whom we must add St. Paul, who had a particular call to this high office, tho' many other disciples and followers of Christ had also their share in the publishing this wonderful history. We learn from the ancient records of Christianity, that many of the apostles and disciples made it the express business of their lives, travelled into the remotest parts of the world, and in all places gathered multitudes about them, to acquaint them with the history and doctrines of their crucified Master. And indeed, were all christian records of these proceedings intirely lost, as many have been, the effect plainly evinces the truth of them; for how else, during the apostles' lives could Christianity have



spread itself with such an amazing progress through the several nations of the Roman empire? how could it fly like lightning, and carry conviction with it from one end of the earth to the other?

III. Heathens therefore of every age, sex, and quality, born in the most different climates, and bred up under the most different institutions, when they saw men of plain sense, without the help of learning, armed with patience and courage, instead of wealth, pomp, or power, expressing in their lives those excellent doctrines of morality, which they taught as delivered to them from our Saviour, avering that they had seen his miracles during his life, and conversed with him after his death: when, I say, they saw no suspicion of falshood, treachery, or worldly interest in their behaviour and conversation, and that they submitted to the most ignominious and cruel deaths, rather than retract their testimony; or even be silent in matters which they were to publish by our Saviour's especial command, there was no reason to doubt of the veracity of these facts which they related, or of the divine mission in which they were employed.

IV. But even those motives to faith in our Saviour would not have been sufficient to have brought about, in so few years, such an incredible number of conversions, had not the apostles been able to exhibit still greater proofs of the truths which they taught. A few persons of an odious and despised country could not have filled the world with believers, had they not shown undoubted credentials from the divine person who sent them on such a message. Accordingly we are assured that they were invested with the power of working miracles, which was the most short and the most convincing argument that could be produced, and only one that was adapted to the reason of all mankind, to the capacities of the wise and ignorant, could overcome every cavil, and every prejudice. Who would not believe that our Saviour healed the sick, and raised the dead, when it was published by those who themselves often did the same miracles, in their presence, and in his name? Could any reasonable person imagine that God Almighty would arm men with such powers to authorise a lie, and establish a religion in the world, which was displeasing to him, or that evil spirits would lend them such an effectual assistance to beat down vice and idolatry?

V. When the apostles had formed many assemblies in several parts of the Pagan world, who gave credit to the glad tidings of the gospel, that, upon their departure, the memory of what they had related might not perish, they appointed out of these new converts men of the best sense and of the most unblemished lives to preside over these several assemblies, and to inculcate, without ceasing, what they had heard from the mouths of these eye-witnesses.

VI. Upon the death of any of these substitutes to the apostles and disciples of Christ, his place was filled up with some other person of eminence for his piety and learning, and generally a member of the same church, who, after his decease, was followed by another in the same manner by which means the succession was continued in an uninterrupted line.



Irenæus informs us, that every church preserved a catalogue of its bishops in the order that they succeeded one another, and (for an example) produces the catalogue of those who governed the church of Rome in that character, which contains eight or nine persons, though but at a very small remove from the times of the apostles.

Indeed the lists of bishops, which are come down to us in other churches, are generally filled with greater numbers than one would expect. But the succession was quick in the three first centuries, because the bishop very often ended in the martyr; for when a persecution arose in any place, the first fury of it fell upon this order of holy men, who abundantly testified, by their deaths and sufferings, that they did not undertake these offices out of any temporal views: that they were sincere and satisfied in the belief of what they taught; and that they firmly adhered to what they had received from the apostles, as laying down their lives in the same hope, and upon the same principles. None can be supposed so utterly regardless of their own happiness as to expire in torment, and hazard their eternity, to support any fables and inventions of their own, or any forgeries of their predecessors, who had presided in the same church, and which might have been easily detected by the tradition of that particular church, as well as by the concurring testimony of others. To this purpose, I think it is very remarkable, that there was not a single martyr among those many heretics who disagreed with the apostolical church, and introduced several wild and absurd notions into the doctrines of christianity. They durst not stake their present and future happiness on their own chimerical imaginations, and did not only shun persecution, but affirmed that it was unnecessary for their followers to bear their religion through such fiery trials.

VII: We may fairly reckon, that this first age of apostles and disciples, with that second generation of many who were their immediate converts, extended itself to the middle of the second century and several of the third generation from these last mentioned, which was but the fifth from Christ, continued to the end of the third century. Did we know the ages and numbers of the members in every particular church which was planted by the apostles, I doubt not but in most of them there might be found five persons, who, in a continued series, would reach through these three centuries of years, that is, till the 265th from the death of our Saviour.

VIII. Among the accounts of those very few out of innumerable multitudes, who had embraced Christianity, I shall single out four persons eminent for their lives, their writings and their sufferings, that were successively contemporaries, and bring us down as far as to the year of our Lord 254. St. John who was the beloved disciple, and conversed the most intimately with our Saviour, lived till Anno Dom. 100. Polycarp who was the disciple of St. John, and had conversed with others of the apostles and. disciples of our Lord, lived till Anno 167, though his life was shortened by martyrdom. Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, and had conversed with many of the immediate disciples of the apostles, lived, at the lowest computation of his age, till the year 202, when he was likewise cut off by martyr-

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dom, in which year the great Origen was appointed regent of the cathecatic school at Alexandria; and as he was the miracle of that age, for industry, learning, and philosophy, he was looked on as the champion of Christianity, till the year 254, when, if he did not suffer martyrdom, as some think he did, he was certainly actuated by the spirit of it, as appears in the whole course of his life and writings; nay, he had often been put to the torture, and had undergone trials worse than death. As he conversed with the most eminent Christians of his time in Egypt, and in the east brought over multitudes both from heresy and heathanism, left behind him several disciples of great fame and learning, there is no question but there were considerable numbers of those who knew him, and had been his hearers, scholars, or proselytes, that lived till the end of the third century, and to the reign of Constantine the Great.

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IX. It is evident to those who read the lives and writings of Polycarp, Irenæus, and Origen, that these three fathers believed the accounts which are given of our Saviour in the four evangelists, and had undoubted arguments, that not only St. John, but many others of our Saviour's disciples, published the same accounts of him. To which we must subjoin this further remark, that what was believed by these fathers on this subject, was likewise the belief of the main body of Christians in those successive ages when they flourished since Polycarp cannot but be looked upon, if we consider the respect that was paid him, as the representative of the eastern churches in this particular, Irenæus of the western upon the same account, and Origen of those established in Egypt.

X. To these I might add Paul the famous hermit, who retired from the Decian persecution five or six years before Origen's death, and lived till the year 343. I have only discovered one of those channels by which the history of our Saviour might be conveyed pure and unadulterated through those several ages that produced those Pagan philosophers, whose testimonies I make use of for the truth of our Saviour's history. Some or other of these philosophers came into the Christian faith during its infancy, in the several periods of these three first centuries, when they had such means of informing themselves in all the particulars of our Saviour's history. I must further add, though I have here only chosen this single link of martyrs, I might find out others among those names which are still extant, that delivered down this account of our Saviour in a successive tradition, till the whole Roman empire became Christians; as there is no question but numberless series of witnesses might follow one another in the same order, and in as short a chain, and that perhaps in every single church, had the names and ages of the most eminent primitive Christians been transmitted to us with the like certainty.

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XI. But to give this consideration more force, we must take notice, that the tradition of the first ages of Christianity had several circumstances peculiar to it, which made it more authentic than any other tradition in any other age of the world. The Christians, who carried their religion thro' so many general and particular persecutions, were incessantly comforting

and supporting one another, with the example and history of our Saviour and his apostles. It was the subject not only of their solemn assemblies, but of their private visits and conversations. Our virgins, says Tatian, who lived in the second century, “discourse over their distaffs on divine subjects.” Indeed, when religion was woven into the civil government, and flourished under the protection of the emperors, men’s thoughts and discourses were, as they are now, full of secular affairs; but in the three first centuries of Christianity, men who embraced this religion, had given up all their interests in this world, and lived in a perpetual preparation for the next, as not knowing how soon they might be called to it; so that they had little else to talk of, but the life and doctrines of that divine person, which was their hope, their encouragement, and glory. We cannot therefore imagine that there was a single person arrived at any degree of age or consideration, who had not heard and repeated, above a thousand times in his life, all the particulars of our Saviour’s birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

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XII. Especially if we consider that they could not then be received as Christians till they had undergone several examinations. Persons of riper years, who flocked daily into the church during the three first centuries, were obliged to pass through many repeated instructions, and give a strict account of their proficiency, before they were admitted to baptism. And as for those who were born of Christian parents, and had been baptized in their infancy, they were with the like care prepared and disciplined for confirmation, which they could not arrive at, till they were found, upon examination, to have made a sufficient progress in the knowledge of Christianity.

XIII. We must further observe, that there was not only in those times this religious conversation among private Christians, but a constant correspondence between the churches that were established by the apostles or their successors in the several parts of the world. If any new doctrine was started, or any fact reported of our Saviour, a strict enquiry was made among the churches, especially those planted by the apostles themselves, whether they had received any such doctrine or account of our Saviour, from the mouths of the apostles, or the tradition of those Christians who had preceded the present members of the churches which were thus consulted. By this means, when any novelty was published, it was immediately detected and censured.

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XIV. St. John, who lived so many years after our Saviour, was appealed to in these emergencies as the living oracle of the church; and as his oral testimony lasted the first century, many have observed, that, by a particular providence of God, several of our Saviour’s disciples, and of the early converts of his religion, lived to a very great age, that they might personally convey the truth of the gospel to those times, which were very remote from the first publication of it. Of these, besides St. John, we have a remarkable instance in Simeon,

who was one of the seventy sent forth, by our Saviour, to publish the gospel before his crucifixion, and a near kinsman of our Lord. This venerable person, who had probably heard with his own ears our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, presided over the church established in that city, during the time of its memorable siege, and drew his congregation out of those dreadful and unparalleled calamities which befel his countrymen, by following the advice our Saviour had given, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and the Roman standards, or abomination of desolation, set up. He lived till the year of our Lord 107, when he was martyred under the emperor Trajan.



SECT. VI.

- I. The tradition of the apostles secured by other excellent instructions;
- II. But chiefly by the writings of the evangelists.
- III. The diligence of the disciples and first Christian converts to send abroad these writings.
- IV. That the written account of our Saviour was the same with that delivered by tradition;
- V. Proved from the reception of the gospel by those churches which were established before it was written.
- VI. From the uniformity of what was believed in the several churches.
- VII. From a remarkable passage in Irenæus.
- VIII. Records which are now lost of use to the three first centuries, for confirming the history of our Saviour.
- IX. Instances of such records.

I. THUS far we see how the learned Pagans might apprize themselves, from oral information, oral information, of the particulars of our Saviour's history. They could hear, in every church planted in every distant part of the earth, the account which was there received and preserved among them, of the history of our Saviour. They could learn the names, and characters of those first missionaries that brought to them these accounts and the miracles by which God Almighty attested their reports. But the apostles and disciples of Christ, to preserve the history of his life, and to secure their accounts of him from error and oblivion, did not only set aside certain persons for that purpose, as has been already shewn, but appropriated certain days to the commemoration of those facts which they had related, concerning him. The first day of the week was in all its returns a perpetual memorial of his resurrection as the devotional exercises adapted to Friday and Saturday were to denote to all ages that he was crucified on the one of those days and that he rested in the grave on the other. You may apply the same remark to several of the annual festivals instituted by the apostles themselves, or at furtherest by their immediate successors, in memory of the most important particulars in our Saviour's history to which we must add the sacraments instituted by our Lord himself, and many of those rites and ceremonies which obtained in the most early times of the church. These are to be regarded as standing marks of such facts as were delivered by those who were eye-witnesses to them, and which were contrived with great wisdom to last till time should be no more. These, without any other means, might have, in some measure, conveyed to posterity the memory of several transactions in the history of our Saviour, as they were related by his disciples. At least, the reason of these institutions, though they might be forgotten, and obscured by a long course of years, could not but be very well known by those who lived in the three first centuries; and a means of informing



the inquisitive Pagans in the truth of our Saviour's history, that being the view in which I am to consider them.

II. But lest such a tradition, though guarded by so many expedients, should wear out by the length of time, the four evangelists, within above fifty, or, as Theodoret affirms, thirty years after our Saviour's death, while the memory of his actions was fresh among them, consigned to writing that history, which for some years had been published only by the mouths of the apostles and disciples. The further consideration of these holy penmen will fall under another part of this discourse.

III. It will be sufficient to observe here, that in the age which succeeded the apostles, many of their immediate disciples sent or carried in person the books of the four evangelists, which had been written by the apostles, or at least approved by them, to most of the churches which they had planted in the different parts of the world. This was done with so much diligence, that when Pantænus, a man of great learning and piety, had travelled into India for the propagation of Christianity, about the year of our Lord 200, he found among that remote people the gospel of St. Matthew, which, upon his return from that country, he brought with him to Alexandria. This gospel is generally supposed to have been left in those parts by St. Bartholomew, the apostle of the Indies, who probably carried it with him, before the writings of the three other evangelists were published.

IV. That the history of our Saviour as recorded by the evangelists, was the same with that which had been before delivered by the apostles and disciples, will further appear in the prosecution of this discourse, and may be gathered from the following considerations.

V. Had these writings differed from the sermons of the first planters of Christianity, either in history or doctrine, there is no question but they would have been rejected by those churches which they had already formed. But so consistent and uniform was the relation of the apostles, that those histories appeared to be nothing else but their tradition and oral attestations made fixed and permanent. Thus was the fame of our Saviour, which in so few years had gone through the whole earth, confirmed and perpetuated by such records as would preserve the traditionary account of him to after ages, and rectify it, if at any time, by passing through several generations, it might drop any part that was material, or contract any thing that was false or fictitious.

VI. Accordingly we find the same Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, who had wrought many miracles in Palestine, who was crucified, rose again, and ascended into heaven: I say, the same Jesus Christ had been preached, and was worshipped, in Germany, France, Spain, and Great Britain; in Parthia, Media, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Asia, and Pamphylia; in Italy, Egypt, Afric, and beyond Cyrene, India, and Persia; and, in short, in all the islands and provinces that are visited by the rising or the setting sun. The same account of our Saviour's life and doctrine was delivered by thousands of preachers, and believed in



thousands of places, who all, as fast as it could be conveyed to them, received the same account in writing from the four evangelists.

VII. Irenæus to this purpose very aptly remarks, that those barbarous nations, who in his time were not possessed of the written gospels, and had only learned the history of our Saviour from those who had converted them to Christianity before the gospels were written, had among them the same accounts of our Saviour which are to be met with in the four evangelists: an incontestible proof of the harmony and concurrence between the holy scripture and the tradition of the churches in those early times of Christianity.

VIII. Thus we see what opportunities the learned and inquisitive Heathens had of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history during the three first centuries, especially as they lay nearer one than another to the fountain-head: beside which, there were many uncontroverted traditions, records of Christianity, and particular histories, that then threw light into those matters, but are now entirely lost, by which, at that time, any appearance of contradiction, of seeming difficulties, in the history of the evangelists, were fully cleared up and explained; though we meet with fewer appearances of this nature in the history of our Saviour, as related by the four evangelists, than in the accounts of any other person, published by such a number of different historians, who lived at so great a distance from the present age.

IX. Among those records which are lost, and were of great use to the primitive Christians, is the letter to Tiberius, which I have already mentioned; that of Marcus Aurelius, which I shall take notice of hereafter; the writings of Hegesippus, who had drawn down the history of Christianity to his own time, which was not beyond the middle of the second century; the genuine Sybilline oracles, which, in the first age of the church, were easily distinguished from the spurious: the records preserved in particular churches, with many others of the same nature.



SECT. VII.

I. The sight of miracles in those ages, a further confirmation of Pagan philosophers in the Christian faith.

II. The credibility of such miracles.

III. A particular instance.

IV. Martyrdom, why considered as a standing miracle.

V. Primitive Christians thought many of the martyrs were supported by a miraculous power.

VI. Proved from the nature of their sufferings.

VII. How martyrs further induced the Pagans to embrace Christianity.

I. THERE were other means which I find had a great influence on the learned of the three first centuries, to create and confirm in them the belief of our blessed Saviour's history, which ought not to be passed over in silence. The first was, the opportunity they enjoyed of examing those miracles, which were on several occasions performed by Christians, and appeared in the church more or less during these first ages of Christianity. These had great weight with the men I am now speaking of, who, from learned Pagans, became fathers of the church; for they frequently boast of them in their writings, as attestations given by God himself to the truth of their religion.

II. At the same time that these learned men declare how disingenuous, base, and wicked it would be, how much beneath the dignity of philosophy, and contrary to the precepts of Christianity, to utter falsehoods or forgeries in the support of a cause, though never so just in itself, they confidently assert this miraculous power which then subsisted in the church; nay, tell us, that themselves had been eye witnesses of it at several times, and in several instances; nay, appeal to the Heathens themselves for the truth of several facts they relate; nay, challenge them to be prefect at their assemblies, and satisfy themselves if they doubt of it; nay, we find that Pagan authors have in some instances confessed this miraculous power.

III. The letter of Marcus Aurelius, whose army was preserved by a refreshing shower, at the same time that his enemies were discomfited by a storm of lightning, and which the Heathen historians themselves allow to have been supernatural, and the effect of magic; I say, this letter, which ascribed this unexpected assistance to the prayers of the Christians, who then served in the army, would have been thought an unquestionable testimony of the miraculous power I am speaking of, had it been still preserved. It is sufficient for me in this place to take notice, that this was one of those miracles which had its influence on the learned converts, because it is related by Tertullian, and the very letter appealed to. When their learned men saw sickness and frenzy cured, the dead raised, the oracles put to silence, the demons and evil spirits forced to confess themselves no gods, by persons who only made use of prayer and adjurations in the name of their crucified Saviour, how could they doubt



of their Saviour's power on the like occasions, as represented to them by the traditions of the church, and the writings of the evangelists?

IV. Under this head, I cannot omit that which appears to me a standing miracle in the three first centuries I mean, that amazing and supernatural courage or patience which was shewn by innumerable multitudes of martyrs, in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted on them. I cannot conceive a man placed in the burning iron chair at Lyons, amid the insults and mockeries of a crowded amphitheatre, and still keeping his seat; or stretched upon a gate of iron, over coals of fire, and breathing out his soul among the exquisite sufferings of such a tedious execution, rather than renounce his religion or blaspheme his Saviour. Such trials seem to me above the strength of human nature, able to overbear duty, reason, faith, conviction, nay, and the most absolute certainty of a future state. Humanity, unassisted in an extraordinary manner, must have shaken off the present pressure, and have delivered itself out of such a dreadful distress, by any means that could have been suggested by it. We can easily imagine, that many persons, in so good a cause, might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake, or the block but to expire leisurely among the most exquisite tortures, when they might come out of them, even by a mental reservation, or an hypocrisy, which was not without a possibility of being followed by repentance, and forgiveness, has something in it so far beyond the force and natural strength of mortals, that one cannot but think there was some miraculous power to support the sufferer.



V. We find the church of Smyrna, in that admirable letter, which gives an account of the death of Polycarp, their beloved bishop, mentioning the cruel torments of other early martyrs for Christianity, are of opinion that our Saviour stood by them in a vision, and personally conversed with them, to give them strength and comfort during the bitterness of their long continued agonies: and we have the story of a young man, who, having suffered many tortures, escaped with life, and told his fellow Christians that the pain of them had been rendered tolerable, by the presence of an angel who stood by him, and wiped off the tears and sweat which ran down his face whilst he lay under his sufferings. We are assured at least, that the first martyr for Christianity was encouraged in his last moments, by a vision of that divine person for whom he suffered, and into whose pretence he was then hastening.



VI. Let any man calmly lay his hand upon his heart, and, after reading these terrible conflicts in which the ancient martyrs and confessors were engaged, when they passed through such new inventions and varieties of pain as tired their tormentors, and ask himself, however zealous and sincere he is in his religion, whether, under such acute and lingering tortures, he could still have held fast his integrity, and have professed his faith to the last; without a supernatural assistance of some kind or other. For my part, when I consider that

it was not an unaccountable obstinacy in a single man, or in any particular set of men, in some extraordinary juncture; but that there were multitudes of each fact, of every age, of different countries and conditions, who, for near 300 years together, made this glorious confession of their faith in the midst of tortures, and in the hour of death; I must conclude, that they were either of another make from what men are at present, or that they had such miraculous supports as were peculiar to those times of Christianity; when without them the very name of it might have been extinguished.

VII. It is certain that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians had a great share in the conversion of those learned Pagans who lived in the ages of persecution, which, with some intervals and abatements, lasted near three hundred years after our Saviour. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and others, tell us, that this first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion which could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the fear of death, nay, raised an earnest desire of it though it appeared in all its terrors. This they found had not been effected by all the doctrines of those philosophers whom they had thoroughly studied, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of these dying and tormented martyrs engaged them to search into the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The more they searched, the more they were convinced; till their conviction grew so strong, they themselves embraced the same truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.



SECT. VIII.

I. The completion of our Saviour's Prophecies confirmed Pagans in their belief of the gospel.

II. Origen's observation on our Saviour's disciples being brought before kings and governors;

III. On their being persecuted for their religion;

IV. On their preaching the gospel to all nations.

V. On the destruction of Jerusalem, and ruin of the Jewish œconomy.

VI. These arguments strengthened by what has happened since Origen's time.

I. THE second of these extraordinary means, of great use to the learned and inquisitive Pagans of the first three centuries, for evincing the truth of the history of our Saviour, was the completion of such prophecies as are recorded of him in the evangelists. They could not indeed form any arguments from what he foretold, and was fulfilled during his life, because both the prophecy and the completion were over before they were published by the evangelists; though as Origen observes, what end could there be in forging some of these predictions, as that of St. Peter's denying his Master, and all his disciples forsaking him in the greatest extremity, which reflects so much shame on the great apostle, and on all his companions? Nothing but a strict adherence to truth, and to matters of fact, could have prompted the evangelists to relate a circumstance so disadvantageous to their own reputation, as that father has well observed.

II. But to pursue his reflections on this subject: There are predictions of our Saviour recorded by the evangelists, which were not completed till after their deaths, and had no likelihood of being so, when they were pronounced by our blessed Saviour. Such was that wonderful notice he gave them, that they should be brought before governors, and kings, for his sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, [Mat. x. 28.](#) with the other like prophecies, by which he foretold that his disciples were to be persecuted. Is there any other doctrine in the world, says this father, whose followers are punished? can the enemies of Christ say, that he knew his opinions were false and impious, and that therefore he might well conjecture and foretel what would be the treatment of those persons who would embrace them? Supposing his doctrines were really such, why should this be the consequence? What likelihood that men should be brought before kings and governors for opinions and tenets of any kind, when this never happened even to the Epicureans, who absolutely denied a providence; nor to the Peripatetics themselves, who laughed at the prayers and sacrifices which were made to the Divinity? Are there any but the Christians who, according to this prediction of our Saviour, being brought before kings and governors for his sake, are pressed to their latest gasp of breath, by their respective judges, to renounce Christianity, and to

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procure their liberty and rest, by offering the same sacrifices, and taking the same oaths that others did?

III. Consider the time when our Saviour pronounced those words, [Mat. x. 32. 33.](#) “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Had you heard him speak after this manner, when as yet his disciples were under no such trials, you would certainly have said within yourself, if these speeches of Jesus are true, and if, according to his prediction, governors and kings undertake to ruin and destroy those who shall profess themselves his disciples, we will believe, not only that he is a prophet, but that he has received power from God sufficient to preserve and propagate his religion; and that he would never talk in such a peremptory and discouraging manner, were he not assured that he was able to subdue the most powerful opposition, that could be made against the faith and doctrine which he taught.

IV. Who is not struck with admiration, when he represents to himself our Saviour at that time foretelling, that his Gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, or, as Origen, (who rather quotes the sense than the words) to serve for a conviction to kings, and people, when, at the same time, he finds that his Gospel has accordingly been preached to Greeks and Barbarians, to the learned and to the ignorant, and that there is no quality or condition of life able to exempt men from submitting to the doctrine of Christ? As for us, says this great author, in another part of his book against Celsus, “When we see every day those events exactly accomplished which our Saviour foretold at so great a distance; that his Gospel is preached in ail the world, [Mat. xxiv. 14.](#) that his disciples go and teach all nations, [Mat. xxviii. 19.](#) and that those who have received his doctrine, are brought for his sake before governors, and before kings, [Mat. x. 18.](#) we are filled with admiration, and our faith in him is confirmed more and more. What clearer and stronger proofs can Celsus ask for the truth of what he spoke?”

V. Origen insists likewise with great strength on that wonderful prediction of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, pronounced at a time, as he observes, when there was no likelihood nor appearance of it. This has been taken notice of, and inculcated by so many others, that I shall refer you to what this father has said on the subject in the first book against Celsus. And as o the accomplishment of this remarkable prophecy, I shall only observe, that whoever reads the account given us by Josephus, without knowing his character, and compares it with what our Saviour foretold, would think the historian had been a Christian, and that he had nothing else in view but to adjust the event to the prediction.

VI. I cannot quit this head without taking notice, that Origen would still have triumphed more in the foregoing arguments, had he lived an age longer, to have seen the Roman emperors, and all their governors and provinces, submitting themselves to the Christian religion,



and glorying in its profession, as so many kings and sovereigns still place their relation to Christ at the head of their titles.

How much greater confirmation of his faith would he have received, had he seen our Saviour's prophecy stand good in the destruction of the temple, and the dissolution of the Jewish œconomy, when Jews and Pagans united all their endeavours, under Julian the apostate, to baffle and falsify the prediction? The great preparations that were made for rebuilding the temple, with the hurricane, earthquake, and eruptions of fire, that destroyed the work, and terrified those employed in the attempt from proceeding in it, are related by many historians of the same age, and the substance of the story testified both by Pagan and Jewish writers, as Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zamath David. The learned Chrystome, in a sermon against the Jews, tells them, this fact was then fresh in the memories even of their young men; that it happened but twenty years ago, and that it was attested by all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where they might still see the marks of it in the rubbish of that work, from which the Jews, desisted in so great a fright, and which even Julian had not the courage to carry on. This fact, which is in itself so miraculous, and so indisputable, brought over many of the Jews to Christianity, and shows us, that after our Saviour's prophecy against it, the temple could not be preserved from the plow passing over it by all the care of Titus, who would fain have prevented its destruction, and that instead of being re-edified by Julian, all his endeavours towards it did but still more literally accomplish our Saviour's prediction, that not one stone should be left upon another.

The ancient Christians were so entirely persuaded of the force of our Saviour's prophecy, and of the punishment which the Jews had drawn upon themselves and upon their children, for the treatment which the Messiah had received at their hands, that they did not doubt but they would always remain an abandoned and despised people, an hissing and an astonishment, among the nations, as they are to this day. In short that they had lost their peculiarity of being God's people, which was now transferred to the body of Christians, and which preserved the church of Christ among all the conflicts, difficulties, and persecutions, in which it was engaged, as it had preserved the Jewish government and œconomy for so many ages, whilst it had the same truth and vital principle in it, notwithstanding it was so frequently in danger of being utterly abolished and destroyed. Origen, in his fourth book against Celsus, mentioning their being cast out of Jerusalem, the place to which their worship was annexed, deprived of their temple and sacrifice, their religious rites and solemnities, and scattered over the face of the earth, ventures to assure them, with a face of confidence, that they would never be re-established since they had committed that horrid crime against the Saviour of the world. This was a bold assertion in the good man, who knew how this people had been so wonderfully re-established in former times, when they were almost swallowed up, and in the most desperate state of desolation, as in their deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes. Nay, he knew that, within less than an

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hundred years before his own time, the Jews had made such a powerful effort for their re-establishment under Barchocap, in the reign of Adrian, as shook the whole Roman empire. But he founded his opinion on a sure word of prophecy, and on the punishment they had so justly incurred; and we find by a long experience of 1500 years, that he was not mistaken, nay, that his opinion gathers strength daily, since the Jews are now at a greater distance from any probability of such a re-establishment than they were when Origen wrote.



SECT. IX.

I. The lives of primitive Christians another means of bringing learned Pagans into, their religion.

II. The change and reformation of their manners.

III. This looked upon as supernatural by the learned Pagans.

IV. And strengthened the accounts given of our Saviour's life and history.

V. The Jewish prophecies of our Saviour an argument for the Heathens' belief:

VI. Pursued:

VII. Purfued.

I. THERE was one other means enjoyed by the learned Pagans of the three fist centuries, for satisfying them in the truth of our Saviour's history which I might have flung under one of the foregoing heads but as it is so shining a particular, and does so much honour to our religion, I shall make a distinct article of it, and only consider it with regard to the subject I am upon: I mean the lives and manners of those holy men who believed in Christ during the first ages of Christianity. I should be thought to advance a paradox, should I affirm that there were more Christians in the world during those times of persecution than there are at present in these which we call the flourishing times of Christianity. But this will be found an indisputable truth, if we form our calculation upon the opinions which prevailed in those days, that every one who lives in the habitual practice of any voluntary sin actually cuts himself off from the benefits and profession of Christianity, and whatever he may call himself, is in reality no Christian, nor ought to be esteemed as such.

II. In the time that we are now surveying, the Christian religion shewed its full force and efficacy on the minds of men, and by many examples demonstrated what great and generous souls it was capable of producing. It exalted and refined its proselytes, to a very high degree of perfection, and set them far above the pleasures, and even the pains, of this life. It strengthened the infirmity, and broke the fierceness of human nature. It lifted up the minds of the ignorant to the knowledge and worship of him that made them, and inspired the vicious with a rational devotion, a strict purity of heart, and an unbounded love to their fellow-creatures. In proportion as it spread thro' the world it seemed to change mankind into another species of beings. No sooner was a convert initiated into it, but, by an easy figure, he became a new man, and both acted and looked upon himself as one regenerated and born a second time into another state of existence.

III. It is not my business to be more particular in the accounts of primitive Christianity which have been exhibited so well by others, but rather to observe, that the Pagan converts, of whom I am now speaking, mention this great reformation of those who had been the greatest sinners, with that sudden and surprising change which it made in the lives of the most profligate, as having something in it supernatural, miraculous, and more than human.

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Origen represents this power in the Christian religion, as no less wonderful than that of curing the lame and blind, or cleansing the leper. Many others represented it in the same light, and looked upon it as an argument, that there was a certain divinity in that religion which showed itself in such strange and glorious effects.

IV. This therefore was a great means not only of recommending Christianity to honest and learned Heathens, but of confirming them in the belief of our Saviour's history, when they saw multitudes of virtuous men daily forming themselves upon his example, animated by his precepts, and actuated by that Spirit which he had promised to send among his disciples.

V. But I find no argument made a stronger impression on the minds of these eminent Pagan converts, for strengthening their faith in the history of our Saviour, than the predictions relating to him in those old prophetic writings, which were deposited among the hands of the greatest enemies to Christianity, and owned by them to have been extant many ages before his appearance. The learned Heathen converts were astonished to see the whole history of their Saviour's life published before he was born, and to find that the evangelists and prophets, in their accounts of the Messiah, differed only in point of time; the one foretelling what should happen to him, and the other describing those very particulars as what had actually happened. This our Saviour himself was pleased to make use of as the strongest argument of his being the promised Messiah, and without it would hardly have reconciled his disciples to the ignominy of his death, as in that remarkable passage which mentions his conversation with the two disciples on the day of his resurrection. St. [Luke xxiv. 13. to the end.](#)

VI. The Heathen converts, after having travelled through all human learning, and fortified their minds with the knowledge of arts and sciences, were particularly qualified to examine these prophecies with great care and impartiality, and without prejudice or prepossession. If the Jews, on the one side, put an unnatural interpretation on these prophecies, to evade the force of them in their controversies with the Christians; or if the Christians on the other side, overstrained several passages in their applications of them, as it often happens among men of the best understanding, when their minds are heated with any consideration that bears a more than ordinary weight with it the learned Heathens may be looked upon as neuters in the matter, when all these prophecies were new to them, and their education had left the interpretation of them free and indifferent. Besides, these learned men among the primitive Christians, knew how the Jews, who had preceded our Saviour, interpreted these predictions, and the several marks by which they acknowledged the Messiah would be discovered, and how those of the Jewish doctors, who succeeded him, had deviated from the interpretations and doctrines of their forefathers, on purpose to stifle their own conviction.

VII. This set of arguments had therefore an invincible force with those Pagan philosophers who became Christians, as we find in most of their writings. They could, not disbelieve



our Saviour's history, which so exactly agreed with every thing that had been written of him many ages before his birth, nor doubt of those circumstances being fulfilled in him, which could not be true of any person that lived in the world besides himself. This wrought the greatest confusion in the unbelieving Jews, and the greatest conviction in the Gentiles, who every where speak with astonishment of these truths they met with in this new magazine of learning which was opened to them, and carry the point so far as to think whatever excellent doctrine they had met with among Pagan writers had been stolen from their conversation with the Jews, or from the perusal of these writings which they had in their custody.



**ADDITIONAL
DISCOURSES.**

SECT. I.
OF GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES.

*Qui mare et terras variisque mundum
Temperat horis:
Unde nil majus generatur ipso,
Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum.*

Hor. Od. 12. Lib. I. V. 15.

Who guides below, and rules above,
The great Disposer and the mighty King:
Than he none greater, next him none,
That can be, is or was;
Supreme he singly fills the throne.

Creech.

SIMONIDES, being asked by Dionysius the tyrant what God was, desired a day's time to consider of it before he made his reply. When the day was expired, he desired two days; and afterwards, instead of returning his answer, demanded still double time to consider of it. This great poet and philosopher, the more he contemplated the nature of the Deity, found that he waded but the more out of his depth; and that he lost himself in the thought, instead of finding an end of it.

If we consider the idea which wise men, by the light of reason, have framed of the Divine Being, it amounts to this: that he has in him all the perfection of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual perfection but what we discover in our own souls, we join infinitude to each kind of these perfections, and what is a faculty, in a human soul, becomes an attribute in God. We exist in place and time, the Divine Being fills the immensity of space with his presence, and inhabits eternity. We are possessed of a little power and a little knowledge, the Divine Being is almighty and omniscient. In short, by adding infinity to any kind of perfection we enjoy, and by joining all these different kinds of perfections in one being, we form our idea of the great Sovereign of nature.

Though every one who thinks must have made this observation, I shall produce Mr. Locke's authority to the same purpose, out of his essay on human understanding. "If we examine the idea we have of the incomprehensible Supreme Being, we shall find, that we come by it the same way; and that the complex ideas we have both: of God and separate spirits, are made up of the simple ideas we receive from reflection: *v. g.* from having, by what we experience in ourselves, got the ideas of existence and duration, of knowledge and power,



of pleasure and happiness, and of several other qualities and powers, which it is better to have, than to be without; when we would frame an idea the most suitable we can to the Supreme Being, we enlarge every one of these with our idea of infinity; and so, putting them together, make our complex idea of God.”

It is not impossible that there may be many kinds of spiritual perfection, besides those which are lodged in an human soul; but it is impossible that we should have ideas of any kinds of perfection, except those of which we have some small rays and short imperfect strokes in ourselves. It would be therefore a very high presumption to determine whether the Supreme Being has not many more attributes than those which enter into our conceptions of him. This is certain, that if there be any kind of spiritual perfection which is not marked out in an human soul, it belongs, in its fulness, to the Divine Nature.

Several eminent philosophers have imagined that the soul, in her separate state, may have new faculties springing up in her, which she is not capable of exerting during her present union with the body; and whether these faculties may not correspond with other attributes in the Divine Nature, and open to us hereafter new matter of wonder and adoration, we are altogether ignorant. This, as I have said before, we ought to acquiesce in, that the Sovereign Being, the great author of nature, has in him all possible perfection, as well in kind as in degree; to speak according to our methods of conceiving. I shall only add under this head, that when we have raised our notion of this infinite Being as high as it is possible for the mind of man to go, it will fall infinitely short of what he really is. There is no end of his greatness; the most exalted creature he has made, is only capable of adoring it, none but himself can comprehend it.

The advice of the son of Sirach is very just and sublime in this light. “By his word all things consist. We may speak much, and yet come short: wherefore in sum, he is all. How shall we be able to magnify him? For he is great above all his works. The Lord is terrible and very great; and marvellous in his power. When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will he far exceed. And, when you exalt him, put fourth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he might tell us? and who can magnify him as he is? There are yet hid greater things than those be, for we have seen but a few of his works.”

I have here only considered the Supreme Being by the light of reason and philosophy. If we would see him in all the wonders of his mercy, we must have recourse to revelation, which represents him to us, not only as infinitely great and glorious, but as infinitely good and just in his dispensations towards men. But as this is a theory which falls under every one’s consideration, though indeed it can never be sufficiently considered, I shall here only take notice of that habitual worship and veneration which we ought to pay to this Almighty

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Being. We should often refresh our minds with the thought of him and annihilate ourselves before him in the contemplation of our own worthlessness, and of his transcendent excellency and perfection. This would imprint in our minds such a constant and uninterrupted awe and veneration as that which I am here recommending, and which is in reality a kind of incessant prayer, and reasonable humiliation of the soul before him who made it.



This would effectually kill in us all the little seeds of pride, vanity, and self-conceit, which are apt to shoot up in the minds of such whose thoughts turn more on those comparative advantages which they enjoy over some of their fellow-creatures, than on that infinite distance which is placed between them and the supreme model of all perfection. It would likewise quicken our desires and endeavours of uniting ourselves to him by all the acts of religion and virtue.

Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions.

I find the following passage in an excellent sermon, preached at the funeral of a gentleman, who was an honour to his country, and a more diligent as well as successful inquirer into the works of nature than any other our nation has ever produced. “He had the profoundest veneration for the great God of heaven and earth that I have ever observed in any person. The very name of God was never mentioned by him without a pause, and a visible stop in his discourse; in which, one that knew him most particularly above twenty years, has told me, that he was so exact, that he does not remember to have observed him once to fail in it.”



Every one knows the veneration which was paid by the Jews to a name so great, wonderful, and holy. They would not let it enter even in their religious discourses. What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most impertinent passions? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humour? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries. It would be an affront to reason to endeavour to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice. The very mention of it exposes it sufficiently to those in whom the light of nature, not to say religion, is not utterly extinguished.

—Deum namque ire per omnes
Terrasque, tractusque maris, calumque profundum.
Virg. Georg. 4. ver. 221.

For God:he whole created mass inpires;

Through heaven, and earth, and ocean's depths he throws
His influence round, and kindles as he goes.

Dryden,

I WAS yesterday, about sun set, walking in the open field, till the night insensibly fell upon me. I at first amused myself with all the richness and variety of colours which appeared in the western part of the heaven: in proportion as they faded away and went out, several stars and planets appeared one after another, till the whole firmament was in a glow. The blueness of æther was exceedingly heightened and enlivened by the season of the year, and by the rays of all those luminaries that passed through it. The Galaxy appeared in its most beautiful white. To complete the scene, the full moon rose at length in that clouded majesty, which Milton takes notice of, and opened to the eye a new picture of nature, which was more finely shaded and disposed among softer light than that which the sun had before discovered to us.

As I was surveying the moon walking in her brightness, and taking her progress among the constellations, a thought rose in me, which I believe very often perplexes and disturbs men of serious and contemplative natures. David himself fell into it in that reflection: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" In the same manner, when I considered that infinite host of stars, or, to speak more philosophically, of suns, which were then shining upon me, with those innumerable sets of planets or worlds which were moving round their respective suns: when I still enlarged the idea, and supposed another heaven of suns and worlds rising still above this which we discovered, and these still enlightened by a superior firmament of luminaries, which are planted at so great a distance, that they may appear to the inhabitants of the former as the stars do to us: in short, while I pursued this thought, I could not but reflect on that little insignificant figure which I myself bore amidst the immensity of God's works.

Were the sun, which enlightens this part of the creation, with all the host of the planetary worlds that move about him, utterly extinguished and annihilated, they would not be missed more than a grain of sand upon the sea-shore. The space they possess is so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole, that it would scarce make a blank in the creation. The chasm would be imperceptible to any eye that could take in the whole compass of nature, and pass from one end of the creation to the other; and it is possible there may be such a sense in ourselves hereafter, or in creatures which are at present more exalted than ourselves. We see many stars, by the help of glasses, which we cannot discover with our naked eyes: and the finer our telescopes are, the more, still, are our discoveries. Huygenius carries this thought so far, that he does not think it impossible there may be stars whose light has not yet travelled down to us since their first creation. There is no question but the universe has certain bounds



set to it: but when we consider that it is the work of infinite power, prompted by infinite goodness, with an infinite space to exert itself in, how can our imagination set any bounds to it?

To return therefore to my first thought, I could not but look upon myself with secret horror, as a being that was not worth the smallest regard of one who had so great a work under his care and superintendency. I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the immensity of nature, and lost among that infinite variety of creatures, which, in all probability, swarms through all these immeasurable regions of matter.

In order to recover myself from this mortifying thought, I considered it took its rise from those narrow conceptions which we are apt to entertain of the divine nature. We ourselves cannot attend to many different objects at the same time. If we are careful to inspect some things, we must of course neglect others. This imperfection which we observe in ourselves is an imperfection that cleaves in some degree to creature of the highest capacities, as they are creatures, that is, beings of finite and limited natures. The presence of every created being is confined to a certain measure of space, and consequently his observation is stinted to a certain number of objects. The sphere in which we move, and act, and understand, is of a wider circumference to one creature than another, according as we rise one above another in the scale of existence. But the widest of these our spheres has its circumference. When therefore we reflect on the divine nature, we are so used and accustomed to this imperfection in ourselves, that we cannot forbear, in ascribing it to him in whom there no shadow of imperfection. Our reason indeed assures us, that his attributes are infinite; but the poorness of our conception is such that it cannot forbear setting bounds to every thing it contemplates, till our reason comes again to our succour, and throws down all those little prejudices which arise in us unawares, and are natural to the mind of man.

We shall therefore utterly extinguish this melancholy thought of our being overlooked by our Maker in the multiplicity of his works, and the infinity of those objects among which he seems to be incessantly employed, if we consider, in the first place, that he is omnipresent: and in the second, that he is omniscient.

If we consider him in his omnipresence, his being passes through, actuates and supports the whole frame of nature. His creation, and every part of it, is full of him. There is nothing he has made that is either so distant, so little, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit. His substance is within the substance of every being, whether material or immaterial, and as intimately present to it as that being is to itself. It would be an imperfection in him, were he able to remove out of one place into another, or to withdraw himself from any thing he has created, or from any part of that space which is diffused and spread abroad to infinity. In short, to speak of him in the language of the old philosopher, he is a Being whose centre is every where and his circumference no where.

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In the second place, he is omniscient as well as omnipresent. His omniscience indeed necessarily and naturally flows from his omnipresence; he cannot but be conscious of every motion that arises in the whole material world, which he thus essentially pervades, and of every thought that is stirring in the intellectual world, to every part of which he is thus intimately united. Several moralists have considered the creation as the temple of God, which he has built with his own hands, and which is filled with his presence. Others have considered infinite space as the receptacle, or rather the habitation of the Almighty. But the noblest and most exalted way of considering this infinite space, is that of Sir Isaac Newton, who calls it the cenforium of the Godhead. Brutes and men have their cenforiola or little cenforiums by which they apprehend the presence, and perceive the actions of a few objects that lie contiguous to them. Their knowledge and observation turns within a very narrow circle. But as God Almighty cannot but perceive and know every thing in which he resides, infinite space gives room to infinite knowledge, and is as it were an organ to omniscience.

Were the soul separate from the body, and with one glance of thought should start beyond the bounds of the creation, should it for millions of years continue its progress through infinite space with the same activity, it would still find itself within the embrace of its creator, and encompassed round with the immensity of the Godhead. While we are in the body, he is not less present with us because he is concealed from us. "O that I knew where I might find him!" says Job. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." In short, reason, as well as revelation, assures us that he cannot be absent from us notwithstanding he is undiscovered by us.

In this consideration of God Almighty's omnipresence and omniscience, every uncomfortable thought vanishes. He cannot but regard every thing that has being, especially such of his creatures who fear they are not regarded by him. He is privy to all their thoughts, and to that anxiety of heart in particular, which is apt to trouble them on this occasion: for as it is impossible he should overlook any of his creatures, so we may be confident that he regards, with an eye of mercy, those who endeavour to recommend themselves to his notice, and, in an unfeigned humility of heart, think themselves unworthy that he should be mindful of them.

HIS ATTRIBUTES.

—*Cælum quid querimus ultra?* Luc. lib. ix.

Than heav'n what further can we seek?

IN your paper of Friday the 9th instant you had occasion to consider the ubiquity of the Godhead, and at the same time to shew, that as he is present to every thing, he cannot but be attentive to every thing, and privy to all the modes and parts of its existence; or, in other words, that his omniscience and omnipresence are coexistent, and run together through the whole infinitude of space. This consideration might furnish us with many incentives to devotion, and motives to morality; but as this subject has been handled by several excellent writers, I shall consider it in a light wherein I have not seen it placed by others.

First, How disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being, who is thus present with his Maker, but at the same time receives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from this his presence!

Secondly, How deplorable is the condition of an intellectual being, who feels no other effects from this his pretence but such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation!

Thirdly, How happy is the condition of that intellectual being, who is sensible of his Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and loving kindness!

First, How disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being who is thus present with his Maker, but at the same time receives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from this his presence! Every particle of matter is actuated by this Almighty Being which passes through it. The heavens and the earth, the stars and planets, move and gravitate by virtue of this great principle within them. All the dead parts of nature are invigourated by the presence of their creator, and made capable of exerting their respective qualities. The several instincts in the brute creation, do likewise operate and work towards the several ends which are agreeable to them by this divine energy. Man only, who does not cooperate with this Holy Spirit, and is unattentive to his presence, receives none of those advantages from it, which are perspective of his nature, and necessary to his well being. The divinity is with him, and in him, and every where about him, but of no advantage to him. It is the same thing to a man with out religion, as if there were no God in the world. It is indeed impossible for an infinite Being to remove himself from any of his creatures, but though he cannot withdraw his essence from us which would argue an imperfection in him, he can withdraw from us all the joys and consolations of it. His, presence may perhaps be necessary to support us in our existence but he may leave this our existence to itself, with regard to its happiness or misery. For, in this sense he may cast us away from his presence, and take his Holy Spirit



from us. This single consideration one would think sufficient to make us open our hearts to all those infusions of joy and gladness which are so near at hand, and ready to be poured in upon us; especially when we consider, *secondly*, The deplorable condition of an intellectual being who feels no other effects from his Maker's presence, but such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation!

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We may assure ourselves, that the great Author of nature will not always be as one, who is indifferent to any of his creatures. Those who will not feel him in his love, will be sure at length to feel him in his displeasure. And how dreadful is the condition of that creature, who is only sensible of the being of his Creator, by what he suffers from him! He is as essentially present in hell as in heaven, but the inhabitants of the former place behold him only in his wrath, and shrink within the flames to conceal themselves from him. It is not in the power of imagination to conceive the fearful effects of omnipotence incensed.

But I shall only consider the wretchedness of an intellectual being, who, in this life, lies under the displeasure of him, that, at all times, and in all places, is intimately united with him. He is able to disquiet the soul, and vex it in all its faculties. He can hinder any of the greatest comforts of life from refreshing us, and give an edge to every one of its calamities. Who then can bear the thought of being an outcast from his presence, that is, from the comforts of it, or feeling it only in its terrors? How pathetic is that expostulation of Job, when, for the trial of his patience, he was made to look upon himself in this deplorable condition! "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am become a burden to myself?" But, *thirdly*, how happy is the condition of that intellectual being, who is sensible of his Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and loving-kindness!

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The blessed in heaven behold him face to face; that is, are as sensible of his presence as we are of the presence of any person whom we look upon with our eyes. There is doubtless a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another, as our senses do material objects and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied or placed in glorified bodies, will, by this faculty in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the divine presence. We who have this veil of flesh standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know that the spirit of God is present with us, by the effects which he produceth in us. Our outward senses are too gross to apprehend him; we may however taste and see how gracious he is, by his influence upon our minds, by those virtuous thoughts he awakens in us, by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls, and by these ravishing joys and inward satisfactions, which are perpetually springing up, and diffusing themselves among all the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in our very essence, and is as a soul within the soul, to irradiate its understanding, to rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy therefore is an intellectual being, who, by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul! Though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature

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looks black upon him, he has light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors which encompass him. He knows that his helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing else can be, which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory and the lifter up of his head. In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of Beings; and perceives within himself such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than any thing that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the hour of death he considers the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else but the breaking down of that partition, which stands betwixt his soul, and the light of that Being, who is always present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fulness of joy.

If we would be thus happy, and thus sensible of our Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and goodness, we must keep such a watch over all our thoughts, that, in the language of the scripture, his soul may have pleasure in us. We must take care not to grieve his Holy Spirit, and endeavour to make the meditations of our hearts always acceptable in his sight, that he may delight thus to reside and dwell in us. The light of nature could direct Seneca to this doctrine in a very remarkable passage among his epistles; *Sacer inest in nobis spiritus bonorum malorumque custos, et observator, et quem admodum nos illum tractamus, ita et ille nos.* "There is a holy spirit residing in us, who watches and observes both and evil men, and will treat us after the same manner that we treat him." But I shall conclude this discourse with those more emphatical words in divine revelation, "If a man love me; he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

—Si verbo audaria detur,

Non metuam magni dixisse palatia cæli.

Ov. Met. Lib. L Ver. 175.

This place, the brightest mansion of the sky,
I'll call the palace of the Deity.

Dryden.

SIR,

I CONSIDERED in my two last letters that awful and tremendous subject, the ubiquity or omnipresence of the Divine Being. I have shewn that he is equally present in all places throughout the whole extent of infinie space. This doctrine is so agreeable to reason, that we meet with it in the writings of the enlightened Heathens, as I might show at large, were it not already done by other hands. Bat though the Deity be thus essentially present through all the immensity of space, there is one part of it in which he discovers himself in a most



transcendent and visible glory. This is that place which is marked out in scripture under the different appellations of paradise, the third heaven, the throne of God, and the habitation of his glory. It is here where the glorified body of our Saviour resides, and where all the celestial hierarchies and the innumerable host of angels are represented as perpetually surrounding the seat of God with hallelujahs and hymns of praise. This is that presence of God which some of the divines call his glorious and others his majestic presence. He is indeed as essentially present in all other places as in this; but it is here where he resides in a sensible magnificence, and in the midst of those splendors which can affect the imagination of created beings.

It is very remarkable that this opinion of God Almighty's presence in heaven, whether discovered by the light of nature, or by a general tradition from our first parents, prevails among all the nations of the world, whatsoever different notions they entertain of the Godhead. If you look into Homer, who is the most ancient of the Greek writers, you see the supreme power seated in the heavens, and encompassed with inferior deities, among whom the muses are represented as singing incessantly about his throne. Who does not see here the main strokes and out lines of this great truth we are speaking of? The same doctrine is shadowed out in many other Heathen authors, though at the same time, like several other revealed truths, dashed and adulterated with a mixture of fables and human inventions. But, to pass over the notions of the Greeks and Romans, those more enlightened parts of the Pagan world, we find that there is scarce a people among the late discovered nations who are not trained up in an opinion that heaven is the habitation of the divinity whom they worship.

As in Solomon's temple there was the *sanctum sanctorum*, in which a visible glory appeared among the figures of the cherubims, and into which none but the High-priest himself was permitted to enter, after having made an atonement for the sins of the people; so, if we consider the whole creation as one great temple, there is in it this holy of holies, into which the High-priest of our salvation entered, and took his place among angels and archangels, after having made a propitiation for the sins of mankind.

With how much skill must the throne of God be erected? With what glorious designs is that habitation beautified, which is contrived and built by him who inspired Hiram with wisdom? How great must be the majesty of that place, where the whole art of creation has been employed, and where God has: chosen to shew himself in the most magnificent manner? What must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom? A spirit cannot but be transported after an ineffable manner with the sight of those objects, which were made to affect him, by that Being who knows the inward frame of a soul, and how to please and ravish it in all its most secret powers and faculties. It is to this majestic presence of God we may apply those beautiful expressions in holy writ; "Behold! even to the moon, and it shineth not: yea, the stars are not pure in his sight." The light of the sun,



and all the glories of the world in which we live, are but as weak and sickly glimmerings, or rather darkness itself, in comparison of those splendors which encompass the throne of God.

As the glory, of this place is transcendent beyond imagination, so, probably is the extent of it. There is light behind light, and glory within glory. How far that space may reach, in which God thus appears in perfect majesty, we cannot possibly conceive. Though it is not infinite, it may be indefinite; and though not immeasurable in itself, it may be so with regard to any created eye or imagination. If he has made these lower regions of matter so inconceivably wide and magnificent for the habitation of mortal and perishable beings, how great may we suppose the courts of his house to be, where he makes his residence in a more especial manner, and displays himself in the fulness of his glory, among an innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect.

This is certain, that our imagination can not be raised too high, when we think on a place where omnipotence and omniscience have so signally exerted themselves; because that they are able to produce a scene infinitely more great and glorious than what we are able to imagine. It is not impossible but, at the consummation of all things these outward apartments of nature, which are now suited to those beings who inhabit them, may be taken in and added to that glorious place of which I am here speaking, and by that means made a proper habitation for beings who are exempt from mortality, and cleared of their imperfections: for so the scripture seems intimate, when it speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I have only considered this glorious place with regard to the sight and imagination, though it is highly probable that our other senses may here likewise enjoy their highest gratifications. There is nothing which more ravishes and transports the soul than harmony; and we have great reason to believe, from the descriptions of this place in holy scripture, that this is one of the entertainments of it. And if the soul of man can be so wonderfully affected with those strains of music which human art is capable of producing, how much more will it be raised and elevated by those in which is exerted the whole power of harmony. The senses are faculties of the human soul, though they can not be employed, during this our vital union, without proper instruments in the body.

Why therefore should we exclude the satisfaction of these faculties, which we find by experience are inlets of great pleasure to the soul, from among those entertainments which are to make up our happiness hereafter. Why should we suppose that our hearing and seeing will not be gratified with those objects which are most agreeable to them, and which they cannot meet with in these lower regions of nature; objects which neither eye have seen, nor ear heard, nor, can it enter into the heart of man to conceive? "I knew a man in Christ, (says St. Paul, speaking of himself) above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth) such an one caught up to the

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third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter.” By this is meant, that what he heard was so infinitely different from any thing which he had heard in this world, that it was impossible to express it in such words as might convey a notion of it to his hearers.

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It is very natural for us to take delight in inquiries concerning any foreign country, where we are some time or other to make our abode and as we all hope to be admitted into this glorious place, it is both a laudable and useful curiosity to get what information we can of it, whilst we make use of revelation for our guide. When these everlasting doors shall be opened to us we may be sure that the pleasures and beauties of this place will infinitely transcend our present hope and expectations; and that the glorious appearance of the throne of God will rise infinitely beyond whatever we are able to conceive of it. We might here entertain ourselves with many other speculations on this subject, from those several hints which we find of it in the holy scriptures; as whether there may not be different mansions and apartments of glory, to beings of different natures; whether, as they excel one another in perfection, they are not admitted nearer to the throne of the Almighty, and enjoy greater manifestations of his presence; whether there are not solemn times and occasions, when all the multitude of heaven celebrate the presence of their Maker in more extraordinary forms of praise and adoration; as Adam, though he had continued in a state of innocence, would, in the opinion of our divines, have kept holy the Sabbath day, in a more particular manner than any other of the seven. These, and the like speculations, we may very innocently indulge, so long as we make use of them to inspire us with a desire of becoming inhabitants of this delightful place.

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I have in this, and in two foregoing letters, treated on the most serious subject that can employ the mind of man, the omnipresence of the Deity; a subject which, if possible, should never depart from our meditations. We have considered the divine Being as he inhabits infinitude, as he dwells among his works, as he is present to the mind of man, and as he discovers himself in a more glorious manner among the regions of the blessed. Such a consideration should be kept awake in us at all times, and in all places, and possess our minds with a perpetual awe and reverence. It should be interwoven with all our thoughts and perceptions become one with the consciousness of our own being. It is not to be reflected on in the coldness of philosophy, but ought to sink us into the lowest prostration before him, who is so astonishing great, wonderful and holy.

—Assidus labuntur tempora motu O
Non secus ac flumen. Neque enim consistere flumen
Nec levis bora potest: set ut unda impellitur unda,
Urgeturque prior venienti, urgetque priorem,
Tempora sic fugiunt pariter, pariterque, sequuntur:

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Et nova sunt semper. Namquod fuit ante, relictum est;
Fitque quod haud fuerat; momentaque cuncta novantur.

Ov. Met. Lib. XIII. 179.

Ev'n times are in perpetual flux, and run
Like rivers from their fountain, rolling on,
For time, no more than streams, is at a stay;
The flying hour is ever on her way;
And as the fountain still supplies her store,
The wave behind impels the wave before;
Thus in successive course the minutes run,
And urge their predecessor minutes on,
Still moving, ever new: for former things
Are set aside, like abdicated kings:
And every moment alters what was done,
And innovates some act, till then unknown.

Dryden.

WE consider infinite space as an expansion without a circumference; we consider eternity, or infinite duration, as a line that has neither a beginning nor end. In our speculations of infinite space, we consider that particular place in which we exist, as a kind of centre to the whole expansion. In our speculations of eternity, we consider the time which is present to us as the middle, which divides the whole line into two equal parts. For this reason, many witty authors compare the present time to an isthmus or narrow neck of land that rises in the st of an ocean immeasurably diffused on either side of it.

Philosophy, and indeed common sense, naturally throws eternity into divisions; which we may call, in English, that eternity which is past, and that eternity which is to come. The learned terms of *æternitas a parte ante* and *aternitas a parte post*, may be more amusing to the reader, but can have no other idea affixed to them than what is conveyed to us by those words, an eternity that is past, and an eternity that is to come. Each of these eternities is bounded at the one extreme; or, in other words, the former has an end, and the latter a beginning.

Let us first of all consider that eternity which is past, reserving that which is to come for the subject of another paper. The nature of this eternity is utterly inconceivable by the mind of man; our reason demonstrates to us that it has been, but at the same time can frame no idea of it but what is big with absurdity and contradiction. We can have no other conception of any duration which is past than that all of it was once present, and whatever was was

once present, is at some certain distance from us; and whatever is at any certain distance from us, be the distance never so remote, can not be eternity. The very notion of any duration being past, implies that it was once present: for the idea of being once present is actually included in the idea of its being past. This therefore is a depth not to be sounded by human understanding. We are sure that there has been an eternity, and yet contradict ourselves, when we measure this eternity by any notion which we can frame of it.

If we go to the bottom of this matter, we shall find, that the difficulties we meet with in our conceptions of eternity proceed from this single reason, that we can have no idea of any other kind of duration than that by which we ourselves, and all other created beings, do exist; which is a successive duration made up of past, present, and to come. There is nothing which exists after this manner; all the parts of this existence were once actually present, and consequently may be reached by certain numbers of years applied to it. We may ascend as high as we please, and employ our being to that eternity which is to come, in adding millions of years to millions of years, and we can never come up to any fountainhead of duration, to any beginning in eternity; but the same time are sure, that whatever was once present does lie within the reach of numbers, though perhaps we can never be able to put enough of them together for that purpose. We may as well say that any thing may be actually present in any part of infinite space, which does not lie at a certain distance from us, as that any part of infinite duration was once actually present, and does not also lie at some determined distance from us. The distance in both cases may be immeasurable and indefinite as to our faculties, but our reason tells us that it cannot be so in itself. Here therefore is that difficulty which human understanding is not capable of surmounting. We are sure that something must have existed from eternity, and are at the same time unable to conceive, that any thing which exists, according to our notion of existence, can have existed from eternity.

It is hard for a reader, who has not rolled this thought in his own mind, to follow in such an abstracted speculation; but I have been the longer on it, because I think it is a demonstrative argument of the being and eternity of a God: and though there are many other demonstrations which lead us to this great truth, I do not think we ought to lay aside any proofs in this matter which the light of reason has suggested to us, especially when it is such a one as has been urged by men famous for their penetration and force of understanding, and which appears altogether conclusive to those who will be at the pains to examine it.

Having thus considered that eternity which is past, according to the best idea we can frame of it, I shall now draw up those several articles on this subject which are dictated to us by the light of reason, and which may be looked upon as the creed of a philosopher in this great point.

First, It is certain that no being could have made itself; for if so, it must have acted before it was, which is a contradiction.

Secondly, That therefore some being must have existed from all eternity.

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Thirdly, That whatever exists after the manner of created beings, or according to any notions which we have of existence, could not have existed, from eternity.

Fourthly, That this eternal being must therefore be the great Author of nature, the Ancient of days, who, being at an infinite distance in his perfections from all finite and created beings, exists in a quite different manner from them, and in a manner of which they can have no idea.

I know that several of the schoolmen, who would not be thought ignorant of any thing, have pretended to explain the manner of God's existence, by telling us, that he comprehends infinite duration in every moment, that eternity is with him a *punctum stans*, a fixed point; or which is as good sense, an infinite instant that nothing with reference to his existence is either past or to come: which the ingenious Mr. Cowley alludes in his description of heaven:

Nothing is there to come, and nothing past,
But an eternal NOW, does always last.

For my own part, I look upon these propositions as words that have no ideas annexed to them and think men had better own their ignorance, than advance doctrines by which they mean nothing, and which indeed are self contradictory. We cannot be too modest in our disquisitions, when we meditate on Him, who is invirioned with so much glory and perfection, who is the source of being, the fountain of all that existence which we and his whole creation derive from him. Let us therefore, with the utmost humility, acknowledge, that as some being must necessarily have existed from eternity; so this being does exist after an incomprehensible manner, since it is impossible for a being to have existed from eternity after our manner or notions of existence. Revelation confirms these natural dictates of reason in the accounts which it gives us of the divine existence, where it tells us, that he that the same yesterday, today, and forever; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending: that a thousand years are with him as one day; and one day as a thousand years; by which and the like expressions we are taught, that his existence, with relation to time or duration, is infinitely differently from the existence of any of his creatures, and consequently that it is impossible for us to frame any adequate conceptions of it.

In the first revelation which he makes of his own being, he intitles himself, *I am that I am*; and when Moses desires to know what name he shall give him, in his embassy to Pharoah, he bids him say, I AM hath sent you. Our great Creator, by this revelation of himself, does in a manner exclude every thing else from a real existence, and distinguishes himself from his creatures, as the only being which truly and really exists. The ancient Platonic notion, which was drawn from speculations of eternity, wonderfully agrees with this revelation which God, has made of himself. There is nothing, say they, which in reality exists, whose

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existence, as we call it, is pieced up of past, present, and to come. Such a fleeting and successive existence is rather a shadow of existence, and something which is like it, than existence itself. He only properly exists whose existence is entirely present; that is, in other words, who exists in the most perfect manner, and in such a manner, as we have no idea of.



I shall conclude this speculation with one useful inference. How can we sufficiently prostrate ourselves and fall down before our Maker, when we consider that ineffible goodness and wisdom which contrived this existence for finite natures? What must be the overflowings of that good will, which prompted our Creator to adapt existence to beings in whom it is not necessary, especially when we consider that he himself was before in the complete possession of existence and of happiness, and in the full enjoyment of eternity? What man can think of himself as called out, and separated from nothing, of his being made a conscious, a reasonable and a happy creature; in short, of being taken in as a sharer of existence, and a kind of partner in eternity, without being swallowed up in wonder, in praise, and adoration! It is indeed a thought too big for the mind of man, and rather to be entertained in the secrecy of devotion, and in the silence of the soul, than to be expressed by words. The Supreme Being has not given us powers or faculties sufficient to extoll and magnify such unutterable goodness.

It is however some comfort to us, that we shall be always doing what we shall be never able to do, and that a work which cannot be finished, will however be the work of an eternity.



SECT. II.

THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD IN THE CREATION.

Inde hominum pecudumque genus, vitaeque volantum,
Et que marmoreo sert monstra sub aquore pontus.

Virg. *Æn.* VI. v. 728.

Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,
And birds of air and monsters of the main.

Dryden.

THOUGH there is a great deal of pleasure in contemplating the material world, by which I mean that system of bodies into which nature has so curiously wrought the mass of dead matter, with the several relations which those bodies bear to one another; there is still, methinks, something more wonderful and surprising in contemplations on the world of life, by which, I mean all those animals with which every part of the universe is furnished. The material world is only the shell of the universe; the world of life are its inhabitants.

If we consider the parts of the material world which lie the nearest to us, and are therefore subject to our observations and inquiries, it is amazing to consider the infinity of animals with which it is stocked. Every part of matter is peopled; every green leaf swarms with inhabitants. There is scarce a single humour in the body of a man, or of any other animal, in which our glasses do not discover myriads of living creatures. The surface of animals is also covered with other animals, which are in the same manner the basis of other animals that live upon it; nay we find in the most solid bodies, as in marble itself, innumerable cells and cavities that are crowded with such imperceptible inhabitants, as are too little for the naked eye to discover. On the other hand, if we look into the more bulky parts of nature, we see the seas, lakes and rivers teeming with numberless kinds of living creatures: we find every mountain and marsh, wilderness and wood, plentifully stocked with birds and beasts, and every part of matter affording proper necessaries and conveniencies for the livelihood of multitudes which inhabit it.

The author of the plurality of worlds draws a very good argument from this consideration, for the peopling of every planet as indeed it seems very probable from the analogy of reason, that if no part of matter, which we are acquainted with, lies waste and useless, those great bodies which are at such a distance from us, should not be desert and unpeopled, but rather that they should be furnished with beings adapted to their respective situations.

Existence is a blessing to those beings only which are endued with perception, and is in a manner thrown away upon dead matter, any further than as it is subservient to beings that are conscious of their existence. Accordingly we find, from the bodies which lie under

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our observation, that matter is only made as the basis and support of animals, and that there is no more of the one, than what is necessary for the existence of the other.

Infinite goodness is of so communicative a nature, that it seems to delight in the conferring of existence upon every degree of perceptive being. As this is a speculation, which I have often pursued with great pleasure to myself, I shall enlarge further upon it, by considering that part of the scale of beings which comes within our knowledge.

There are some living creatures which are raised but just above dead matter. To mention only that species of shell-fish, which are formed in the fashion of a cone that grows to the surface of several rocks, and immediately die upon their being severed from the place where they grew. There are many other creatures but one remove from these, which have no other sense besides that of feeling and taste. Others have still an additional one of hearing; others of smell, and others of sight. It is wonderful to observe, by what gradual progress the world of life, advances through a prodigious variety of species, before a creature is formed that is complete in all its senses; and even among these three there is such a different degree of perfection in the sense which one animal enjoys beyond what appears in another, that though the sense in different animals be distinguished by the same common denomination, it seems almost of a different nature. If after this we look into the several inward perfections of cunning and sagacity, or what we generally call instinct, we find them rising after the same manner, imperceptibly one above another, and receiving additional improvements according to the species in which they are implated. This progress in nature is so very gradual, that the most perfect of an inferior species comes very near to the most imperfect of that which is immediately above it.

The exuberant and overflowing goodness of the Supreme Bang, whose mercies extend to all his works, is plainly seen, as I have before hinted, from his having made so very little matter, at least, what falls within our knowledge, that does not swarm with life: Nor is his goodness less seen in the diversity, than in the multitude of living creatures. Had he only made one species of animals, none of the rest would have enjoyed happiness of existence; he has, therefore, specified in his creation every degree of life, every capacity of being, The whole chasm of nature from a plant to a man is filled up with divers kinds of creatures rising one over another, by such a gentle and easy ascent, that the little transitions and deviations from one species to another, are almost insensible. This intermediate space is so well husbanded and managed, that there is scarce a degree of perception which does not appear in some one part of the world of life. Is the goodness or wisdom of the Divine Being more manifested than in this his proceeding?

There is a consequence besides those I have already mentioned, which seems very naturally deducible from the foregoing considerations. If the scale of being rises by such a regular progress, so high as men, we may by a parity of reason suppose that it still proceeds gradually through those beings which are of a superior nature to him: since there is an in-

finitely greater space and room for different degrees of perfection, between the Supreme Being and man, than between man, and the most despicable insect. This consequence of so great a variety of beings which are superior to us from that variety which is inferior to us, is made by Mr. Locke, in a passage which I shall here set down, after having premised, that notwithstanding there is such infinite room between man and his maker, for the creative power to exert itself in, it is impossible that it should ever be filled up, since there will be still an infinite gap or distance between the higher created being, and the power which produced him.

“That there should be more species of intelligent creatures above us, than there are of sensible and material below us, is probable to me from hence; that in all the visible corporeal world, we see no chasms, or no gaps. All quite down from us, the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of things, that in each remove differ very little one from the other. There are fishes that have wings, and are not strangers to the airy region: and there are some birds, that are inhabitants of the water: whose blood is cold as fishes and their flesh so like in taste, that the scrupulous are allowed them on fish days. There are animals so near of kin both to birds and beasts, that they are in the middle between both: amphibious animals link the terrestrial and aquatic together; seals live on land and at sea and porpoises have the warm blood and entrails of a hog, not to mention what is confidently reported of mermaids or sea-men. There are some brutes, that seem to have as much knowledge and reason, as some that are called men; and the animal and vegetable kingdoms are so nearly joined, that if you will take the lowest of one, and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them; and so on till we come to the lowest and the most inorganic parts of matter, we shall find every where that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees. And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the Architect, that the species of creatures should also, by gentle degrees, ascend upward from us toward his infinite perfection, as we see they gradually descend from us downwards; which if it be probable, we have reason then to be persuaded, that there are far more species of creatures above us than there are beneath us; we being in degrees of perfection much more remote from the infinite being of God, than we are from the lowest state of being, and that which approaches nearest to nothing. And yet of all those distinct species, we have no clear distinct ideas.”

In this system of being, there is no creature so wonderful in its nature, and which so much deserves our particular attention, as man, who fills up the middle space between, the animal and intellectual nature, the visible and invisible world, and is that link in the chain of beings, which has been often termed the *nexus utriusque mundi*. So that he who in one respect is associated with angels and archangels, may look upon a being of infinite perfection



as his father, and the highest order of spirits as his brethren; may in another respect say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister.

—*Facies non omnibus una.*
Nec divesa tamen.

Ovid. Met. Lib. II. V.

Though various features different aspects grace,
A certain likeness is in every face.

THOSE who were skilful in anatomy among the ancients, concluded from the outward and inward make of an human body, that it was the work of a being transcendently wise and powerful. As the world grew more enlightened in this art, their discoveries gave them fresh opportunities of admiring the conduct of Providence in the formation of an human body. Galen was converted by his dissections, and could not but own a Supreme Being upon a survey of this his handy-work. There were, indeed, many parts of which the old anatomists did not know the certain use, but as they saw that most of those which were examined were adapted with admirable art to their several functions, they did not question but those whose uses they could not determine, were contrived with the same wisdom for respective ends and purposes. Since the circulation of the blood has been found out, and many other great discoveries have been made by our modern anatomists, we see new wonders in the human frame, and discern several important uses for those parts, which uses the ancients knew nothing of. In short, the body of a man is such a subject as stands the utmost test of examination. Though it appears formed with the nicest wisdom, upon the most superficial survey of it, it still mends upon the search, and produces our surprize and amazement in proportion as we pry into it. What I have here said of an human body, may be applied to the body of every animal, which has been the subject of anatomical observations.

The body of an animal is an object adequate to our senses. It is a particular system of Providence, that lies in a narrow compass. The eye is able to command it, and by successive enquiries can search into all its parts. Could the body of the whole earth, or indeed the whole universe, be thus submitted to the examination of our senses, were it not too big and disproportioned for our inquiries, too unwieldy for the management of the eye and hand, there is no question but it would appear to us as curious and well contrived a frame as that of an human body. We should see the same concatenation and subserviency, the same necessity and usefulness, the same beauty and harmony in all and every of its parts, as what we discover in the body of every single animal.

The more extended our reason is, and the more able to grapple with immense objects, the greater still are these discoveries which it makes of wisdom and providence in the work



of the creation. A Sir Isaac Newton, who stands up as the miracle of the present age, can look through a whole planetary system; consider it its weight, number and measure; and draw from it as many demonstrations of infinite power and wisdom, as a more confined understanding is able to deduce from the system of an human body.

But to return to our speculations on anatomy. I here consider the fabric and texture of the bodies of animals in one particular view; which, in my opinion, shews the hand of a thinking and all-wise being in their formation, with the evidence of a thousand demonstrations. I think we may lay this down as an incontestable principle, that chance never acts in a perpetual uniformity and consistence with itself. If one should always fling the same number with ten thousand dice, or see every throw just five times less, or five times more in number than the throw which immediately preceded it, who would not imagine there is some invisible power which directs the call? This is the proceeding which we find in the operations of nature. Every kind of animal is diversified by different magnitudes, each of which gives rise to a different species. Let a man trace the dog or lion kind, and he will observe how many of the works of nature are published, if I may use the expression, in a variety of editions. If we look into the reptile world, or into those different kinds of animals that fill the element of water, we meet with the same repetitions among several species, that differ very little from one another, but in size and bulk. You find the same creature that is drawn at large, copied out in several proportions, and ending in miniature. It would be tedious to produce instances of this regular conduct in Providence, as it would be superfluous to those who are versed the natural history of animals. The magnificent harmony of the universe is such, that we may observe innumerable divisions running upon the same ground. I might also extend this speculation to the dead parts of nature, in which we may find matter disposed into many similar systems, as well in our survey of stars and planets, as of stones, vegetables, and other sublunary parts of the creation. In a word, Providence has shewn the richness of its goodness and wisdom, not only in the production of many original species, but in the multiplicity of decents which it has made on every original species in particular.

But to pursue this thought still further: Every living creature, considered in itself, has many very complicated parts, that are exact copies of some other parts which it possesses, and which are complicated in the same manner. One eye would have been sufficient for the subsistence and preservation of an animal but, in order to better his condition we see another placed with a mathematical exactness in the same most advantageous situation, and in every particular, of the same size and texture. Is it possible for chance to be thus delicate and uniform in her operations should a million of dice turn up twice together the same number, the wonder would be nothing in comparison with this. But when we see this similitude and



resemblance in the arm, the hand, the fingers; when we see one half of the body entirely correspond with the other in all those minute strokes, without which a man might have very well subsisted; nay, when we often see a single part repeated an hundred times in the same body, notwithstanding it consists of the most intricate weaving of numberless fibres, and these parts differing still in magnitude, as the convenience of their particular situation requires; sure a man must have a strange cast of understanding, who does not discover the finger of God in so wonderful a work. These duplicates in those parts of the body, without which a man might have very well subsisted, though not so well as with them, are a plain demonstration of an all wise contriver; as those more numerous copyings, which are found among the vessels of the same body, are evident demonstrations that they could not be the work of chance. This argument receives additional strength, if we apply it to every animal and insect within our knowledge, as well as to those numberless living creatures that are objects too minute for a human eye; and if we consider how the several species in this whole world of life resemble one another, in very many particulars, so far as is convenient for their respective states of existence; it is much more probable that an hundred million of dice should be casually thrown a hundred million of times in the same number, than that the body of any single animal should be produced by the fortuitous concurrence of matter. And that the like chance should arise in innumerable instances, requires a degree of credulity that is not under the direction of common sense. We may carry this consideration yet farther, if we reflect on the two sexes in every living species, with their resemblances to each other, and those particular distinctions, that were necessary for the keeping up of this great world of life.

There are many more demonstrations of a Supreme Being, and of his transcendent wisdom, power, and goodness in the formation of the body of a living creature; for which I refer my reader to other writings, particularly to the sixth book of the poem, intitled *Creation*, where the anatomy of the human body is described with great perspicuity and elegance. I have been particular on the thought which runs through this speculation, because I have not seen it enlarged upon by others.

Jupiter est quodcunque vides.

Lucan. Lib. IX.

All, all, where'er you look, is full of God.

I HAD this morning a very valuable and kind present sent me of a translated work of a most excellent foreign writer, who makes a very considerable figure in the learned and Christian world. It is intitled, *A demonstration of the existence, wisdom, and omnipotence*

of God, drawn from the knowledge of nature, particularly of man, and fitted to the meanest capacity, by the archbishop of Cambray, author of *Telemachus* translated from the French by the same hand that englished that excellent piece. This great author, in the writings which he has before produced, has manifested an heart full of virtuous sentiments, great benevolence to mankind, as well as a sincere and fervent piety towards his creator. His talents and parts are a very great good to the world; and it is a pleasing thing to behold the polite arts subservient to religion, and recommending it from its natural beauty. Looking over the letters of my correspondents, I find one which celebrates this treatise, and recommends it to my readers,.

To the GUARDIAN:

Sir,

I THINK I have somewhere read, in the writings of one whom I take to be a friend of your's, a saying which struck me very much; and, as I remember, it was to this purpose; "The existence of a God is so far from being a thing that wants to be proved, that I think it the only thing of which we are certain." This is a sprightly and just expression; however, I dare say you will not be displeas'd that I put you in mind of saying something on the demonstration of the bishop of Cambray. A man of his talents views all things in a light different from that in which ordinary men see them and the devout disposition of his soul turns all those talents to the improvement of the pleasures of a good life. His style clothes philosophy in a dress almost poetic, and his readers enjoy in full perfection the advantage, while they are reading him, of being what he is. The pleasing representation of the animal powers in the beginning of his work, and his consideration of the nature of man with the addition of reason, in the subsequent discourse, impresses upon the mind a strong satisfaction in itself, and gratitude towards him who bestowed that superiority over the brute world. These thoughts had such an effect upon the author himself, that he has ended his discourse with a prayer. This adoration has a sublimity in it befitting his character; and the emotions of his heart flow from wisdom and knowledge. I thought it, would be proper for a Saturday's paper, and have translated it, to make you a present of it. I have not, as the translator was oblig'd to do, confin'd myself to an exact version from the original, but have endeavour'd to express the spirit of it by taking the liberty to render his thoughts in such a way, as I should have utter'd them, if they had been mine own. It has been observ'd, that the private letters of great men are the best pictures of their souls: but certainly their private devotions would be still more instructive, and I know not why they should not be as curious and entertaining.

If you insert this prayer, I know not but I may send you, for another occasion, one used by a very great wit of the last age, which has allusions to the errors of a very wild life and, I believe you will think, is written with an uncommon spirit. The person whom I mean was an excellent writer; and the publication of this prayer of his may be perhaps some kind of

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antidote against the infection in his other writings. But this supplication of the bishop has in it a more happy and untroubled spirit: it is (if that is not saying something too fond). the worship of an angel, concerned for those who had fallen, but himself still in the state of glory and innocence. The book ends with an act of devotion to this effect.

“O my God! if the greater number of mankind do not discover thee in that glorious flow of nature, which thou hast placed before our eyes, it is not because thou art far from every one of us; thou art present to us more than any object which we touch with our hands; but our senses and the passions which they produce in us, turn our attention from thee. Thy light shines in the midst of darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. Thou, O Lord, dost every where display thyself: thou shinest in all thy works, but art not regarded by heedless and unthinking man. The whole creation talks aloud of thee, and echoes with the repetitions of thy holy name. But such is our insensibility, that we are deaf to the great and universal voice of nature. Thou art every where about us, and within us, but we wander from ourselves, become strangers to our own souls, and do not apprehend thy presence. O thou; who art the eternal fountain of light and beauty, who art the ancient of days, without beginning and without end: O thou who art the life of all that truly live; those can never fail to find thee who seek for thee within themselves. But, alas! the very gifts which thou bestowest upon us do so employ our thoughts: that they hinder us from perceiving the hand which conveys them to us. We live by thee, and yet we live without thinking on thee: but, O Lord! what is life in the ignorance of thee? A dead unactive piece of matter, a flower that withers, a river that glides away, a palace that hastens to its ruin. A picture made up of fading colours, a mass of shining ore, strike our imaginations, and make us sensible of their existence: we regard them as objects capable of giving us pleasure, not considering that thou conveyest through them all the pleasure which we imagine they give us. Such vain empty objects, that are only the shadows of being, are proportioned to our low and grovelling thoughts. That beauty which thou hast poured out on thy creation is as a veil which hides thee from our eyes. As thou art a Being too pure and exalted to pass through our senses, thou art not regarded by men who have debased their nature, and have made themselves like to the beasts that perish. So infatuated are they, that notwithstanding they know what is wisdom and virtue, which have neither sound, nor colour, nor smell, nor taste, nor figure, nor any other sensible quality, they can doubt of thy existence, because thou art not apprehended by the grosser organs of sense. Wretches that we are! we consider shadows as realities, and truth as a phantom. That which is nothing is all to us, and that which is all appears to us nothing. What do we see in all nature, but thee, O my God! thou, and only thou, appearest in every thing. When I consider thee, O Lord, I am swallowed up and lost in contemplation of thee. Every thing besides thee, even my own existence, vanishes and disappears in the contemplation of thee. I am lost to myself, and fall into nothing, when I think on thee. The man who does not see thee has beheld nothing: he who does not taste thee has a relish of nothing. His

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being is vain, and his life but a dream.. Set up thyself, O Lord! set up thyself that we may behold thee. As wax consumes before the fire, and as the smoke is given away, so let thine enemies vanish out of thy presence. How unhappy is that soul, who, without the sense of thee, has no God, no hope, no comfort to support him! But how happy the man who searches, sighs, and thirsts after thee! But he only is fully happy on whom thou liftest up the light of thy countenance, whose tears thou hast wiped away, and who enjoys in thy loving kindness the completion of all his desires. How long, how long, O Lord! shall I wait for that day, when I shall possess, in thy presence, fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore? O my God, in this pleasing hope my bones rejoice and cry out, who is like unto thee! my heart melts away, and my soul faints within me, when I look up to thee, who art the God of my life, and my portion to all 'eternity.



SECT. III.
THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

Tisu carentem magna pars veri latet .
Sen. in Oedip.

Great part of truth is hidden from the blind.

IT is very reasonable to believe that part of the pleasure which happy minds shall enjoy in a future state will arise from an enlarged contemplation of the divine wisdom in the government of the world, and a discovery of the secret and amazing steps of Providence, from the beginning to the end of time. Nothing seems to be an entertainment more adapted to the nature of man, if we consider that curiosity is one of the strongest and most lasting appetites implanted in us, and that admiration is one of our most pleasing passions; and what a perpetual succession of enjoyments will be afforded to both these, in a scene so large and various as shall then be laid open to our view in the society of superior spirits, who perhaps will join with us in so delightful a prospect.

It is not impossible, on the contrary, that part of the punishment, of such as are excluded from bliss, may consist not only in their being denied this privilege but in having their appetites at the same time vastly increased, with out any satisfaction afforded to them. In these the vain pursuit of knowledge shall perhaps add to their infelicity, and bewilder them into labyrinths of error, darkness, distraction, and uncertainty of every thing but their own evil state. Milton has thus represented the fallen angels reasoning together in a kind of respite from their torments, and creating to themselves a new disquiet amidst their very amusements: he could not properly have described the sports of condemned spirits, without that cast of horror and melancholy he had so judiciously mingled with them.

Others apart sat on a hill retir'ed,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.

In our present condition, which is a middle state, our minds are, as it were, chequered with truth and falsehood: and as our faculties are narrow, and our views imperfect, it is impossible but our curiosity must meet with many repulses. The business of mankind in this life being rather to act, than to know, their portion of knowledge is dealt to them accordingly.

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From hence it is, that the reason of the inquisitive has so long been exercised with difficulties, in accounting for the promiscuous distribution of good and evil to the virtuous and the wicked in this world. From hence come all those pathetic complaints of so many tragical events, which happen to the wise and the good: and of such surprising prosperity which is often the reward of the guilty and the foolish; that reason is sometimes puzzled, and at a loss what to pronounce upon so mysterious a dispensation.

Plato expresses his abhorrence of some fables of the poets, which seem to reflect on the gods as the authors of injustice; and lays it down as a principle, that whatever is permitted to befall a just man, whether poverty, sickness, or any of those things which seem to be evils, shall either in life or death conduce to his good. My reader will observe how agreeable this maxim is to what we find delivered by a greater authority. Seneca has written a discourse purposely on this subject, in which he takes pains, after the doctrine of the Stoics, to shew, that adversity is not in itself an evil; and mentions a noble saying of Demetrius, "That nothing would be more unhappy than a man who had never known affliction." He compares prosperity to the indulgence of a fond mother to a child which often proves his ruin; but the affection of the Divine Being to that of a wise father, who would have his sons exercised with labour, disappointment, and pain, that they might gather strength, and improve their fortitude. On this occasion the philosopher rises into that celebrated sentiment, that there is not on earth a spectacle more worthy the regard of a Creator intent on his works, than a brave man superior to his sufferings; to which he adds, that it must be a pleasure to Jupiter himself to look down from heaven and see Cato, amidst the ruins of his country, preserving his integrity.

This thought will appear yet more reasonable, if we consider human life as a state of probation, and adversity as the post of honour in it, assigned often, to the best and most select spirits.

But what I would chiefly insist on here, is, that we are not at present in a proper situation to judge of the counsels by which Providence acts, since but little arrives at our knowledge, and even that little we discern imperfectly; or, according to the elegant figure in holy writ, "we see but in part, and as in a glass darkly." It is to be considered, that Providence, in its economy, regards the whole system of time and things together, so that we cannot discover the beautiful connexions between incidents, which lie widely separated in time, and by losing so many links of the chain, our reasonings become broken and imperfect. Thus those parts in the moral world which have not an absolute, may yet have a relative beauty, in respect of some other parts concealed from us, but open to his eye, before whom past, present, and to come, are set together in one point of view: and those events, the permission of which seems now to accuse his goodness, may, in the consummation of things, both magnify his goodness, and exalt his wisdom. And this is enough to check our presumption, since it is

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in vain to apply our measures of regularity to matters of which we know neither the antecedents nor the consequents, the beginning nor the end.

I shall relieve my readers from this abstracted thought, by relating here a Jewish tradition concerning Moses, which seems to be a kind of parable illustrating what I have last mentioned. That great prophet, it is said, was called up by a voice from heaven to the top of a mountain; where, in a conference with the Supreme Being, he was permitted to propose to him some questions concerning his administration of the universe. In the midst of this divine colloquy he was commanded to look down on the plain below. At the foot of the mountain there issued out a clear spring of water, at which a soldier alighted from his horse to drink. He was no sooner gone than a little boy came to the same place, and finding a purse of gold which the soldier had dropped, took it up, and went away with it. Immediately after this came an infirm old man, weary with age and travelling, and having quenched his thirst, sat down to rest himself by the side of the spring. The soldier missing his purse returns to search for it, and demands it of the old man, who affirms he had not seen it, and appeals to heaven in witness of his innocence. The soldier, not believing his protestation, kills him. Moses fell on his face with horror and amazement, when the divine voice thus prevented his expostulation; "Be not surprised, Moses, nor ask, why the judge of the whole earth has suffered this thing to come to pass: the child is the occasion that the blood of the old man is spilt; but know, that the old man, whom thou sawest, was the murderer of that child's father."

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Fortune favours still the wise and brave.

THE famous Gratian, in his little book wherein he lays down maxims for a man's advancing himself at court, advises his reader to associate himself with the fortunate, and to shun the company of the unfortunate; which, notwithstanding the baseness of the precept to an honest mind, may have something useful in it for those who push their interest in the world. It is certain, a great part of what we call good or ill fortune, rises out of right or wrong measures or schemes of life. When I hear a man complain of his being unfortunate in all his undertakings, I shrewdly suspect him for a weak man in his affairs. In conformity with this way of thinking, Cardinal Richlieu used to say, that unfortunate and imprudent were but two words for the same thing. As the Cardinal himself had a great share both of prudence and good fortune, his famous antagonist, the Count D'Olivarez, was disgraced at the court of Madrid, because it was alledged against him that he had never any success in his undertakings. This, says an eminent author; was indirectly accusing him of imprudence.

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Cicero recommended Pompey to the Romans for their general, upon three accounts, as he was a man of courage, conduct, and good fortune. It was perhaps for the reason above mentioned, namely, that a series of good fortune supposes a prudent management in the person to whom it befalls, that not only Sylla the dictator, but several of the Roman emperors,

as is fill to be seen upon their medals, among their other titles, give themselves that of Felix or Fortunate. The heathens indeed seem to have valued a man more for his good fortune than for any other quality, which I think is very natural for those who have not a strong belief of another world. For how can I conceive a man crowned with many distinguishing blessings, that has not some extraordinary fund of merit and perfection in him, which lies open to the Supreme eye, though perhaps it is not discovered by my observation? What is the reason Homer and Virgil's heroes do not form a resolution, or strike a blow, without the conduct and direction of some deity?—Doubtless because the poets esteemed it the greatest honour to be favoured by the gods, and thought the best way of praising a man was to recount those favours which naturally implied an extraordinary merit in the person on whom they descended.

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Those who believe a future state of rewards and punishments, act very absurdly if they form their opinions of a man's merit from his successes.

But certainly if I thought the whole circle of our being was concluded between our births and deaths, I should think a man's good fortune the measure and standard of his real merit, since Providence would have no opportunity of rewarding his virtue and perfections but in the present life. A virtuous unbeliever, who lies under the pressure of misfortunes, has reason to cry out, as they say Brutus did, a little before his death, "O virtue! I have worshipped thee as a substantial good, but I find thou art an empty name."

But to return to our first point, though prudence does undoubtedly in a great measure produce our good or ill fortune in the world, it is certain that there are many unforeseen accidents and occurrences, which very often pervert the finest schemes that can be laid by human wisdom. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Nothing less than infinite wisdom can have an absolute command over fortune: the highest degree of it which man can possess is by no means equal to fortuitous events, and to such contingencies as may rise in the prosecution of our affairs. Nay, it very often happens, that prudence, which has always in it a great mixture of caution, hinders a man from being so fortunate as he might possibly have been without it. A person who only aims at what is likely to succeed, and follows closely the dictates of human prudence, never meets with those great and unforeseen successes, which are often the effect of a sanguine temper, or a more happy rashness; and this perhaps may be the reason, that according to the common observation, fortune, like other females, delights rather in favouring the young than the old.

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Upon the whole, since man is so sighted a creature, and the accidents which may happen to him so various, I cannot but be of Dr. Tillotson's opinion in another case, that were there any doubt of a Providence, yet it certainly would be very desirable there should be such a being of infinite wisdom and goodness, on whose direction we might rely in the conduct of human life.

It is a great presumption to ascribe our successes to our own management, and not to esteem ourselves upon any blessing, rather as it is the bounty of Heaven than the acquisition of our own prudence. I am very well pleased with a medal which was struck by Queen Elizabeth, a little after the defeat of the invincible Armada, to perpetuate the memory of that extraordinary event. It is well known how the king of Spain, and others, who were the enemies of that great prince, to derogate from her glory, ascribed the ruin of their fleet rather to the violence of storms and tempests than to the bravery of the English. Queen Elizabeth, instead of looking upon this as a diminution of her honour, valued herself upon such a signal favour of Providence: and accordingly, in the reverse of the medal above mentioned, has represented a fleet beaten by a tempest, and falling foul upon one another, with that religious inscription, *Afflavit Deus, et dissipantur*; “He blew with his wind, and they were scattered.”

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It is remarked of a famous Grecian General, whose name I cannot at present recollect, and who had been a particular favourite of fortune, that upon recounting his victories among his friends, he added, at the end of several great actions, *And in this fortune had no share*. After which, it is observed in history, he never prospered in any thing he undertook.

As arrogance, and a conceitedness of our own abilities are very shocking and offensive to men of sense and virtue; we may be sure they are highly displeasing to that Being who delights in an humble mind, and by several of his dispensations, seems purposely to show us that our own schemes or prudence have no share in our advancements.

Since on this subject I have already admitted several quotations which have occurred to my memory upon writing this paper, I will conclude it with a little Persian fable. A drop of water fell out of a cloud into the sea, and finding itself lost in such an immensity of fluid matter, broke out into the following reflection; “Alas! what an insignificant creature am I in this prodigious ocean of waters; my existence is of no concern to the universe; I am reduced to a kind of nothing, and am less than the least of the works of God.” It so happened, that an oyster, which lay in the neighbourhood of this drop, chanced to gape and swallow it up in the midst of this its humble soliloquy. The drop, says the fable, lay a great while hardening in the shell, till by degrees it was ripened into a pearl which, falling into the hands of a diver, after a long series of adventures, is at present that famous pearl which is fixed on the top of the Persian diadem.

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*Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruina.*

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Hor. Lib. III. Ode 3. l. 7.

Should the whole frame of nature round him break,

In ruin and confusion hurl'd,
He, unconcern'd, would hear the mighty crack,
And stand secure amidst a falling world.

Anon.

MAN, considered in himself, is a very helpless and a very wretched being. He is subject every moment to the greatest calamities and misfortunes. He is beset with danger on all sides, and may become unhappy by numberless casualties, which he could not foresee, nor have prevented had he foreseen them.

It is our comfort, while we are obnoxious to so many accidents, that we are under the care of one who directs contingencies, and has in his hands, the management of every thing that is capable of annoying or offending us; who knows the assistance we stand in need of, and is always ready to bestow it on those who ask it of him.

The natural homage which such a creature bears to so infinitely wise and good a Being, is a firm reliance on him for the blessings and conveniencies of life: and an habitual trust in him for deliverance out of all such dangers and difficulties as may befall us.

The man who always lives in this disposition of mind, has not the same dark and melancholy views of human nature as he who considers himself abstractedly from this relation to the Supreme Being. At the same time that he reflects upon his own weakness and imperfection, he comforts himself with the contemplation of these divine attributes, which are employed for his safety and his welfare. He finds his want of foresight made up by the omniscience of him who is his support. He is not sensible of his own want of strength, when he knows that his helper is almighty. In short, the person who has a firm trust on the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every divine attribute and loses his own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection.

To make our lives more easy to us, we are commanded to put our trust in him, who is thus able to relieve and succour us; the divine goodness having made such a reliance a duty, notwithstanding we should have been miserable had it been forbidden us.

Among several motives which might be made use of to recommend this duty to us, I shall only take notice of those that follow.

The first and strongest is, that we are promised he will not fail those who put their trust in him.

But without considering the supernatural blessing which accompanies this duty, we may observe, that it has a natural tendency to its own rewards; or, in other words, that this firm trust and confidence in the great Disposer of all things, contributes very much to the

getting clear of any affliction, or to the bearing it manfully. A person who believes he has his succour at hand, and that he acts in sight of his friend, often exerts himself beyond his abilities, and does wonders that are not to be matched by one who is not animated with such a confidence of success. I could produce instances from history, of generals, who, out of a belief that they were under the protection of some invisible assistant, did not only encourage their soldiers to do their utmost, but have acted themselves beyond what they would have done, had they not been inspired by such a belief. I might, in the same manner, shew how such a trust in the assistance of an Almighty Being naturally produces patience, hope, cheerfulness, and all other dispositions of mind, that alleviate those calamities which we are not able to remove.

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The practice of this virtue administers great comfort to the mind of man in times of poverty and afflictions, but most of all in the hour of death. When the soul is hovering in the last moments of its separation, when it is just entering on another state of existence, to converse with scenes, and objects, and companions, that are altogether new; what can support her under such tremblings of thought, such fear, such anxiety, such apprehensions but the casting of all her cares upon him who first gave her being, who has conducted her through one stage of it, and will be always with her to guide and comfort her in her progress through eternity?

David has very beautifully represented this steady reliance on God Almighty, in his [23d Psalm](#); which is a kind of pastoral hymn, and filled with those allusions which are usual in that kind of writing. As the poetry is very exquisite, I shall present my reader with the following translation of it.

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I. The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noon-day walks he shall attend,
And all mid-night hours defend.

II. When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales, and dewy meads,
My weary wand'ring steps he leads.
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.

III. Though in the paths of death I tread,

With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid,
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

IV. Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious lonely wilds I stray,
Thy bounty shall my pains beguile;
The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden greens and herbage crown'd,
And streams shall murmur all around.



SECT. IV.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

Religentem esse sportet, religiosum nefas.

Incerti auctoris apud. Aul. Gell.

A man should be religious, not superstitious.

IT is of the last importance to season the passions of a child with devotion, which seldom dies in a mind that has received an early tincture of it. Though it may seem extinguished for a while by the cares of the world, the heats of youth, or the allurements of vice, it generally breaks out, and discovers itself again, as soon as discretion, consideration, age, or misfortunes, have brought the man to himself. The fire may be covered and overlaid, but cannot be entirely quenched or smothered.

A state of temperance, sobriety, and justice, without devotion, is a cold, lifeless, insipid condition of virtue; and is rather to be stiled philosophy than religion. Devotion opens the mind to great conceptions, and fills it with more sublime ideas than any that are to be met with in the most exalted science, and at the same time warms and agitates the soul more than sensual pleasure.

It has been observed by some writers, that man is more distinguished from the animal world by devotion than by reason, as several brute creatures discover their actions something like a faint glimmering of reason, though they betray, in no single circumstance of their behaviour, any thing that bears the least affinity to devotion. It is certain, the propensity of the mind to religious worship, the natural tendency of the soul to fly to some superior Being for succour in dangers and distresses, the gratitude to an invisible Superintendent, which arises in us upon receiving any extraordinary and unexpected good fortune, the acts of love and admiration with which the thought of men are so wonderfully transported, meditating upon the divine perfections, and the universal concurrence of all the nations under heaven in the great article of adoration, plainly shew that devotion or, religious worship must be the effect of a tradition from some first founder of mankind, or that it is conformable to the natural light of reason, or that it proceeds from an instinct implanted in the soul itself. For my part, I look upon all these to be the concurrent causes; but which ever of them shall be assigned as the principle of divine worship, it manifestly points to a Supreme Being as the first author of it.

I may take some other opportunity of considering those particular forms and methods of devotion which are taught us by Christianity; but shall here observe into what errors even this divine principle may sometimes lead us, when it is not moderated by that right reason which was given us as the guide of all our actions.

The two great errors into which a mistaken devotion may betray us are enthusiasm and superstition.

There is not a more melancholy object than a man who has his head turned with religious enthusiasm. A person that is crazed, though with pride or malice, is a sight very mortifying to human nature; but when the distemper arises from any indiscreet fervours of devotion, or too intense an application of the mind to its mistaken duties, it deserves our compassion in a more particular manner. We may however learn this lesson from it, that since devotion itself (which one would be apt to think could not be too warm) may disorder the mind, unless its heats are tempered with caution and prudence, we should be particularly careful to keep our reason as cool as possible, and to guard ourselves in all parts of life against the influence of passion, imagination, and stitution.

Devotion, when it does not lie under the check of reason, is very apt to degenerate into enthusiasm. When the mind finds herself very much inflamed with her devotions, she is too much inclined to think they are not of her own kindling, but blown up with something divine within her. If she indulges this thought too far, and humours the growing passion, she at last flings herself into imaginary raptures and ecstasies; and when once she fancies herself under the influence of a divine impulse, it is no wonder if she slights human ordinances, and refuses to comply with any established form of religion, as thinking herself directed by a much superior guide.

As enthusiasm is a kind of excess in devotion, superstition is the excess not only of devotion, but of religion in general according to an old Heathen saying, quoted by Aulus Gellius, *Religentem esse oportet, religiosum nefas*; A man should be religious, not superstitious; for, as the author tells us, Nigidius observed upon this passage, that the Latin words which terminate in *ofus*, generally imply vicious characters, and the having of any quality to an excess.

An enthusiast in religion is like an obstinate clown, a superstitious man like an insipid courtier. Enthusiasm has something in it of madness, superstition of folly. Most of the sects that fall short of the church of England have in them strong tinctures of enthusiasm, as the Roman Catholic Religion is one huge overgrown body of childish and idle superstitions.

The Roman Catholic church seems indeed irrecoverably lost in this particular. If an absurd dress or behaviour be introduced in the world, it will soon be found out and discarded: on the contrary, a habit or ceremony, though never so ridiculous, which has taken sanctuary in the church, sticks in it for ever. A Gothic bishop perhaps thought it proper to repeat such a form in such particular shoes or slippers: another fancied it would be very decent if such a part of public devotions were performed with a mitre on his head, and a crosier in his



hand: to this a brother Vandal, as wise as the others, adds an antic dress, which he conceived would allude very very aptly to such and such mysteries, till by degrees the whole office has degenerated into an empty show.

Their successors see the vanity and inconvenience of these ceremonies; but instead of reforming, perhaps add others which they think more significant, and which take possession in the same manner, and are never to be driven out after they have been once admitted. I have seen the Pope officiate at St. Peter's, where, for two hours together, he was busied in putting on or off his different accoutrements, according to the different, parts he was to act in them.

Nothing is so glorious in the eyes of mankind, and ornamental to human nature, setting aside the infinite advantages which arise from it, as a strong, steady, masculine piety; but enthusiasm and superstition are the weaknesses of human reason, that expose us to the scorn and derision of infidels, and sink us even below the beasts that perish.

Idolatry may be looked upon as another error arising from mistaken devotion; but because reflections on that subject would be of no use to an English reader, I shall not enlarge upon it.

*Omnibus in terris, quae sunt a Godibus usque
Auroram et Gangem, pauci dignoscere possunt
Vera bona, atque illis multum diversa, remota
Erroris nebula —*

Juv. Sat. 10. l. 1.

Look round the habitable world, how few
Know their own good; or, knowing it, pursue!

Dryden.

IN my last Saturday's paper I laid down some thoughts upon devotion in general, and shall here shew what were the notions of the most refined Heathens on this subject, as they are represented in Plato's dialogue upon prayer, entitled, *Alcibiades the second*, which doubtless gave occasion to Juvenal's tenth satire, and to the second satire of Persius; as the last of these authors has almost transcribed the preceding dialogue, entitled, *Alcibiades the first*, in his fourth satire.

The speakers in this dialogue upon prayer are Socrates and Alcibiades, and the substance of it (when drawn together out of the intricacies and digressions) as follows:

Socrates meeting his pupil Alcibiades, as he was going to his devotions, and observing his eyes to be fixed upon the earth with great seriousness and attention, tells him, that he had reason to be thoughtful on that occasion, since it was possible for a man to bring down evils upon himself, by his own prayers, and that those things which the gods send him in answer to his petitions might turn to his destruction this, says he, may not only happen

when a man prays for what he knows is mischievous in its own nature, as Oedipus implored the gods to sow dissension between his sons, but when he prays for what he believes would be for his good, and against what he believes would be to his detriment. This the philosopher shews must necessarily happen among us, since most men are blinded with ignorance, prejudice, or passion, which hinder them from seeing such things as are really beneficial to them. For an instance, he asks Alcibiades, whether he would not be thoroughly pleased and satisfied if that God to whom he was going to address himself, should promise to make him the sovereign of the whole earth! Alcibiades answers, that he should doubtless look upon such a promise as the greatest favour that could be bestowed upon him. Socrates then asks him, if after receiving this great favour he would be contented to lose his life? or if he would receive it though he was sure he should make an ill use of it? To both which questions Alcibiades answers in the negative. Socrates then shews him, from the examples of others, how these might probably be the effect of such a blessing. He then adds, that other reputed pieces of good fortune, as that of having a son, or procuring the highest post in a government, are subject to the like fatal consequences; which nevertheless, says he, men ardently desire, and would not fail to pray for, if they thought their prayers might be effectual for the obtaining of them.

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Having established this great point, that all the most apparent blessings in this life are obnoxious to such dreadful consequences, and that no man knows what in its events would prove to him a blessing or a curse, he teaches Alcibiades after what manner he ought to pray.

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In the first place, he recommends to him, as the model of his devotions, a short prayer, which a Greek poet composed for the use of his friends, in the following words; "O Jupiter! give us those things which are good for us: whether they are such things as we pray for, or such things as we do not pray for; and remove from us those things which are hurtful, though they are such things as we pray for."

In the second place, that his disciple may ask such things as are expedient for him, he shews him that it is absolutely necessary to apply himself to the study of true wisdom, and to the knowledge of that which is his chief good, and the most suitable to the excellency of his nature. In the third and last place, he informs him, that the best methods he could make use of to draw down blessings upon himself, and to render his prayers acceptable, would be to live in a constant practice of his duty towards the gods, and towards men. Under this head he very much recommends a form of prayer the Lacedemonians made use of, in which they petition the gods, "to give them all good things, so long as they were virtuous." Under this head likewise he gives a very remarkable account of an oracle to the following purpose.

When the Athenians, in the war with the Lacedemonians received many defeats both by sea and land, they sent a message to the Oracle of Jupiter Ammon, to ask the reason why they who erected so many temples to the gods, and adorned them with such costly offerings;

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why they who had instituted so many festivals, and accompanied them with such pomps and ceremonies; in short, why they who had slain so many hecatombs at their altars, should be less successful than the Lacedemonians, who fell so short of them in all these particulars. To this, says he, the oracle made the following reply; "I am better pleased with the prayer of the Lacedemonians than with all the oblations of the Greeks." As this prayer implied and encouraged virtue in those who made it; the philosopher proceeds to shew how the most vicious man might be devout, so far as victims could make him, but that his offerings were regarded by the gods as bribes, and his petitions as blasphemies. He likewise quotes on this occasion two verses out of Homer, in which the poet says, that the scent of the Trojan sacrifices was carried up to heaven by the winds; but that it was not acceptable to the gods, who were displeas'd with Priam and all his people.

The conclusion of this dialogue is very remarkable. Socrates having deterred Alcibiades from the prayers and sacrifice he was going to offer by setting forth the above mentioned difficulties of performing that duty as he ought, adds these words, "We must therefore wait till such time as we may learn how we ought to behave ourselves towards the gods and towards men." But when will that time come, says Alcibiades, and who is it will instruct us? For I would fain see this man whoever he is. It is one, says Socrates, who takes care of you; but as Homer tells us, that Minerva removed the mist from Diomedes' eyes, that he might plainly discover both gods and men; so the darkness that hangs upon your mind must be removed, before you are able to discern what is good and what is evil. Let him remove from my mind, says Alcibiades, the darkness, and what else he pleases; I am determin'd to refuse nothing he shall order me, whoever he is, so that I may become the better man by it. The remaining part of this dialogue is very obscure: there is something in it that would make us think Socrates hinted at himself, when he spoke of this Divine Teacher who was to come into the world; did he not own, that he himself was in this respect as much at a loss, and in as great distress as the rest of mankind.

Some learned men look upon this conclusion as a prediction of our Saviour, or at least that Socrates, like the High Priest, prophesied unknowingly, and pointed at that Divine Teacher who was to come into the world some ages after him. However that may be, we find that this great philosopher saw by the light of reason it, that it was suitable to the goodness of the divine Nature, to send a person into the world who should instruct mankind in the duties of religion, and, in particular, teach them how to pray.

Whoever reads this abstract of Plato's discourse on prayer, will I believe, naturally make this reflection, that the great founder of our religion, as well by his own example, as in the form of prayer which he taught his disciples, did not only keep up to those rules which the light of nature had suggested to this great philosopher, but instructed his disciples in the whole extent of this duty, as well as of all others. He directed them to the proper object of adoration, and taught them according to the third rule above mentioned, to apply themselves

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to him in their closets, without shew and ostentation; and to worship him in spirit and in truth. As the Lacedemonians in their form of prayer implored the gods in general, to give them all good things so long as they were virtuous, we ask in particular “that our offences may be forgiven us as we forgive those of others.” If we look into the second rule which Socrates has prescribed, namely, that we should apply ourselves to the knowledge of such things as are best for us, this too is explained at large in the doctrines of the gospel, where we are taught in several instances to regard those things as curses, which appear as blessings in the eye of the world; and on the contrary, to esteem those things as blessings, which to the generality of mankind appear as curses. Thus, in the form which is prescribed to us, we only pray for that happiness which is our chief good, and the great end of our existence, when we petition the Supreme Being for “the coming of his kingdom,” being solicitous for no other temporal blessing but our daily sustenance. On the other side, we pray against nothing but sin, and against evil in general, leaving it with Omniscience to determine what is really such. If we look into the first of Socrates’ rules of prayer, in which he recommends the abovementioned form of the ancient poet, we find that form not only comprehended, but very much improved in the petition, wherein we pray to the Supreme Being that “his will may be done:” which is of the same force with that form which our Saviour used, when he prayed against the most ignominious of deaths; “nevertheless not my will but thine be done.” This comprehensive petition is the most humble, as well as the most prudent, that can be offered up from the creature to its Creator, as it supposes the Supreme Being wills nothing but what is for our good, and that he knows better than ourselves what is so.

—Nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum.

Juv. Sat. 7. I 56.

’Tis what I only feel, but can’t express.

IF there were no other consequence of it, but barely that human creatures on this day assemble themselves before their Creator, without regard to their usual employments, their minds at leisure from the cares of this life, and their bodies adorned with the best attire they can bestow on them; I say, were this mere outward celebration of a Sabbath all that is expected from men, even that were a laudable distinction, and a purpose worthy the human nature. But when there is added to it the sublime pleasure of devotion, our being is exalted above itself; and he who spends a seventh day in the contemplation of the next life will not easily fall into the corruptions of this in the other six. They who never admit thoughts of this kind into their imaginations, lose higher and sweeter satisfactions than can be raised by any other entertainment. The most illiterate man who is touched with devotion, and uses frequent exercises of it, contracts a certain greatness of mind, mingled with a noble simplicity, that raises him above those of the same condition; and there is an indelible mark of goodness in those who sincerely possess it. It is hardly possible it should be otherwise; for the fervors of a pious mind will naturally contract such an earnestness and attention towards a better being,



as will make the ordinary passages of life go off with a becoming indifference. By this a man in the lowest condition will not appear mean, or in the most splendid fortune insolent.

As to all the intricacies and vicissitudes under which men are ordinarily entangled with the utmost sorrow and passion, one who is devoted to Heaven when he falls into such difficulties, is led by a clue through a labyrinth. As to this world he does not pretend to skill in the mazes of it, but fixes his thoughts upon one certainty, that he shall soon be out of it. And we may ask very boldly, what can be a more sure consolation than to have an hope in death? When men are arrived at thinking of their very dissolution with pleasure, how few things are there that can be terrible to them? Certainly nothing can be dreadful to such spirits, but what would make death terrible to them, falshood towards man, or impiety towards Heaven. To such as these, as there are certainly many such, the gratifications of innocent pleasures are doubled, even with reflections upon their imperfection. The disappointments which naturally attend the great promises we make ourselves in expected enjoyments, strike no damp upon such men, but only quicken their hopes of soon knowing joys, which are too pure to admit of allay or satiety.

It is thought among the politer sort of mankind, an imperfection to want a relish of any of those things which refine our lives. This is the foundation of the acceptance which eloquence, music and poetry make in the world; and I know not why devotion, considered merely as an exaltation of our happiness, should not at least be so far regarded as to be considered. It is possible the very inquiry would lead men into such thoughts and gratifications as they did not expect to meet within this place. Many a good acquaintance has been lost from a general prepossession in his disfavour, and a severe aspect has often hid under it a very agreeable companion.

There are no distinguishing qualities among men to which there are not false pretenders: but though none is more pretended to than that of devotion, there are, perhaps, fewer successful impostors in this kind than any other. There is something so natively great and good in a person that is truly devout, that an aukward man may as well pretend to be genteel, as an hypocrite to be pious. The constraint in words and actions are equally visible in both cases, and any thing set up in their room does but remove the endeavours the farther off their pretensions. But however the sense of true piety is elated, there is no other motive of action that can carry us through all the vicissitudes of life with alacrity and resolution. But piety, like philosophy, when it is superficial does but make men appear the worse for it; and a principle that is but half received, does but distract, instead of guiding our behaviour. When I reflect upon the unequal conduct of Lotius, I see many things that run directly counter to his interest; therefore I cannot attribute his labours for the public good to ambition. When I consider his disregard to his fortune, I cannot esteem him covetous. How then can I reconcile his neglect of himself, and his zeal for others? I have long suspected him to be a little pious: but no man ever hid his vice with greater caution than he does his virtue. It was

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the praise of a great Roman, that he had rather be, than appear, good. But such is the weakness of Lotius, that I dare say, he had rather be esteemed irreligious than devout. By I know not what impatience of railery he is wonderfully fearful of being thought too great a believer. A hundred little devices are made use of to hide a time of private devotion; and he will allow you any suspicion of his being ill employed, so you do not tax him with being well. But alas! how mean is such a behaviour? To boast of virtue is a most ridiculous way of disappointing the merit of it, but not so pitiful as that of being ashamed of it. How unhappy is the wretch who makes the most absolute and independent motive of action the cause of perplexity and inconstancy? How much another figure does Cælicola make with all who know him? His great and superior mind, frequently exalted by the raptures of heavenly meditation, is, to all his friends of the same use as if an angel were to appear at the decision of their disputes. They very well understand he is as much disinterested and unbiassed as such a being. He considers all applications made to him, as those addresses will affect his own application to Heaven. All his determinations are delivered with a beautiful humility; and he pronounces his decisions with the air of one who is more frequently a supplicant than a judge.

Thus humble, and thus great, is the man who is moved by piety, and exalted by devotion. But behold this recommended by the masterly hand of a great divine who I have heretofore made bold with.

“It is such a pleasure as can never cloy or overwork the mind; a delight that grows and improves under thought and reflexion, and while it exercises, does also endear itself to the mind. All pleasures that affect the body must needs weary, because they transport; and all transportation is a violence; and no violence can be lasting, but determines upon the falling of the spirits, which are not able to keep up that height of motion that the pleasure of the senses raises them to. And therefore how inevitably does an immoderate laughter end in a sigh, which is only nature’s recovering itself after a force done to it; but the religious pleasure of a well-disposed mind moves gently, and therefore constantly. It does not effect by rapture and extasy, but is like the pleasure of health, greater and stronger than those that call up the senses with grosser and more affecting impressions. No man’s body is as strong as his appetites; but Heaven has corrected the boundlessness of his voluptuous desires by stinting his strengths and contracting his capacities.—The pleasure of the religious man is an easy and a portable pleasure, such an one as he carries about in his bosom, without alarming either the eye or the envy of the world. A man putting all his pleasures into this one, is like a traveller putting all his goods into one jewel; the value is the same, and the convenience greater.”



SECT. V.

ADVANTAGES OF REVELATION ABOVE NATURAL REASON.

—*quicquid dignum sapiente bonoque est.*

Hor. Lib. I. Ep. 4. 1. 5.

—What benefits the wise and good. Creech.

RELIGION may be considered under two general heads. The first comprehends what we are to believe, the other what we are to practise. By those things which we are to believe, I mean whatever is revealed to us in the holy writings, and which we could not have obtained the knowledge of by the light of nature; by the things which we are to practise, I mean all those duties to which we are directed by reason or natural religion. The first of these I shall distinguish by the name of faith, the second by that of morality.

If we look into the mere serious part of mankind we find many who lay so great a stress upon faith, that they neglect morality; and many who build so much upon morality, that they do not pay a due regard to faith. The perfect man should be defective in neither of these particulars, as will be very evident to those who consider the benefits which arise from each of them, and which I shall make the subject of this day's paper.

Notwithstanding this general division of Christian duty into morality and faith, and that they have both their peculiar excellencies, the first has the preeminence in several respects.

First, Because the greatest part of morality (as I have stated the notion of it) is of a fixed eternal nature, and will endure when faith shall fail, and be lost in conviction.

Secondly, Because a person may be qualified to do greater good to mankind, and become more beneficial to the world, by morality without faith, than by faith without morality.

Thirdly, Because morality gives a greater perfection to human nature, by quieting the mind, moderating the passions, and advancing the happiness of every man in his private capacity.

Fourthly, Because the rule of morality is much more certain than that of faith: all the civilized nations in the world agreeing in the great points of morality as much as they differ in those of faith.

Fifthly, Because infidelity is not of so malignant a nature as immorality; or, to put the same reason in another light, because it is generally owned there may be salvation for a virtuous infidel, (particularly in the case of invincible ignorance,) but none for a vicious believer.

Sixthly, because faith seems to draw its principle, if not all its excellency, from the influence it has upon morality; as we shall see more at large, if we consider wherein consists the excellency of faith, or the belief of revealed religion; and this I think is,



First, In explaining and carrying to greater heights several points of morality.

Secondly, In furnishing new and stronger motives to enforce the practice of morality.

Thirdly, In giving us more amiable ideas of the Supreme Being, more endearing notions of one another, and a truer state of ourselves, both in regard to the grandeur and vileness of our natures.

Fourthly, By shewing us the blackness and deformity of vice, which, in the Christian system, is so very great, that he who is possessed of all perfection, and the sovereign judge of it, is represented by several of our divines, as having sin to the same degree that he loves the sacred person who was made the propitiation of it.

Fifthly, In being the ordinary and prescribed method of making morality effectual to salvation.

I have only touched on these several heads, which every one who is conversant in discourses of this nature will easily enlarge upon in his own thoughts, and draw conclusions from them which may be useful to him in the conduct of his life. One, I am sure, is so obvious that he cannot miss it, namely, that a man cannot be perfect in his scheme of morality who does not strengthen and support it with that of the Christian faith.

Besides this, I shall lay down two or three other maxims, which, I think, we may deduce from what has been said.

First, That we should be particularly cautious of making any thing an article of faith which does not contribute to the confirmation or improvement of morality.

Secondly, That no article of faith can be true and authentic which weakens or subverts the practical part of religion, or what I have hitherto called morality.

Thirdly, That the greatest friend of morality, or natural religion, cannot possibly apprehend any danger from embracing Christianity, as it is preserved pure and uncorrupt in the doctrines of our national church.

There is likewise another maxim, which I think may be drawn from the foregoing considerations, which is this, that we should in all dubious points, consider any ill consequences that may arise from them, supposing they should be erroneous, before we give up our assent to them.

For example, in that disputable point of persecuting men for conscience sake, besides the embittering their minds with hatred, indignation, and all the vehemence of resentment, and ensnaring them to profess what they do not believe, we cut them off from the pleasures and advantages of society, afflict their bodies, distress their fortunes, hurt their reputations, ruin their families, make their lives painful, or put an end to them. Sure when I see such dreadful consequences rising from a principle, I would be as fully convinced of the truth of it as of a mathematical demonstration, before I would venture to act upon it, or make it a part of my religion.



In this case the injury done our neighbour is plain and evident; the principle that puts us upon doing it of a dubious and disputable nature. Morality seems highly violated by the one; and whether or no a zeal for what a man thinks the true system of faith may justify it, is very uncertain. I cannot but think, if our religion produce charity, as well as zeal, it will not be for shewing itself by such cruel instances. But to conclude with the words of an excellent author, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another."

The fewer things we want the more we resemble God.

IT was the common boast of the Heathen philosophers, that by the efficacy of their several doctrines they made human nature resemble the divine. How much mistaken soever they might be in the several means they proposed for this end, it must be owned that the design was great and glorious. The finest works of invention and imagination are of very little weight when put in the balance with what refines and exalts the rational mind. Longinus excuses Homer very handsomely, when he says, the poet made his gods like men, that he might make his men appear like the gods. But it must be allowed that several of the ancient philosophers acted as Cicero wishes Homer had done: they endeavoured rather to make men like gods than gods like men.

According to this general maxim in philosophy, some of them have endeavoured to place men in such a state of pleasure, or indolence at least, as they vainly imagined the happiness of the Supreme Being to consist in. On the other hand, the most virtuous sect of philosophers have created a chimerical wise man, whom they made exempt from passion and pain, and thought it enough to pronounce him all-sufficient.

This last character, when divested of the glare of human philosophy that surrounds it, signifies no more than that a good and wise man should so arm himself with patience as not to yield tamely to the violence of passion and pain; that he should learn so to suppress and contract his desires as to have few wants; and that he should cherish so many virtues in his soul as to have a perpetual force of pleasure in himself.

The Christian religion requires, that after having framed the best idea we are able of the divine nature, it should be our next care to conform ourselves to it as far as our imperfections will permit. I might mention several passages in the sacred writings on this head, to which I might add many maxims and wise sayings of moral authors among the Greeks and Romans.

I shall only instance a remarkable passage to this purpose out of Julian's *Cæsars*. The emperor having represented all the Roman emperors, with Alexander, the Great, as passing in review before the gods, and striving for the superiority, lets them all drop, excepting Alexander, Cæsar, Augustus Cæsar, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Constantine. Each of these great heroes of antiquity lays in his claim for the upper place: and, in order to it, sets forth his actions after the most advantageous manner. But the gods, instead of being dazzled with the lustre of their actions, enquire, by Mercury, into the proper motive and governing

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principle that influenced them throughout the whole series of their lives and exploits. Alexander tells them that his aim was to conquer; Julius Cæsar, that his was to gain the highest post in his country; Augustus, to govern well; Trajan, that his was the same as that of Alexander, namely, to conquer. The question at length was put to Marcus Aurelius, who replied with great modesty, that it had always been his care to imitate the gods. This conduct seems to have gained him the most votes, and best place in the whole assembly. Marcus Aurelius being afterwards asked to explain himself, declares, that by imitating the gods, he endeavoured to imitate them in the use of his understanding, and of all other faculties; and in particular, that it was always his study to have as few wants as possible in himself, and to do all the good he could to others.

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Among the many methods by which revealed religion has advanced morality, this is one, that it has given us a more just and perfect idea of that Being whom every reasonable creature ought to imitate. The young man in a Heathen comedy might justify his lewdness by the example of Jupiter: as indeed there was scarce any crime that might not be countenanced by those notions of the Deity which prevailed among the common people in the Heathen world. Revealed religion sets forth a proper object for imitation, in that Being who is the pattern, as well as the source, of all spiritual perfection.

While we remain in this life we are subject to innumerable temptations, which, if listened to, will make us deviate from reason and goodness, the only things wherein we can imitate the Supreme Being. In the next life we meet with nothing to excite our inclinations that doth not deserve them. I shall therefore dismiss my reader with this maxim, viz. "Our happiness in this world proceeds from the suppression of our desires, but in the next world from the gratification of them."

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—*Quis enim virtutem amplectitur ipsam,
Præmia si tollas?*

Juv. Sat. x. I. 141.

For who would virtue, for herself, regard,
Or wed, without the portion of reward?

Dryden.

IT is usual with polemical writers to object ill designs to their adversaries. This turns their argument into satire, which, instead of shewing an error in the understanding, tends only to expose the morals of those they write against. I shall not act after this manner with respect to the freethinkers. Virtue, and the happiness of society, are the great ends which all men ought to promote, and some of that sect would be thought to have at heart above the rest of mankind. But supposing those who make that profession to carry on a good

design in the simplicity of their hearts, and according to their best knowledge, yet it is much to be feared those well-meaning souls, while they endeavoured to recommend virtue, have in reality been advancing the interests of vice, which, as I take to proceed from their ignorance of human nature, we may hope, when they become sensible of their mistake, they will, in consequence of that beneficent principle they pretend to act upon, reform their practice for the future.

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The sages, whom I have in my eye, speak of virtue as the most amiable thing in the world; but at the same time that they extol her beauty, they take care to lessen her portion. Such innocent creatures are they, and so great strangers to the world, that they think this a likely method to increase the number of her admirers.

Virtue has in herself the most engaging charms; and Christianity, as it places her in the strongest light, and adorned with all her native attractions, so it kindles a new fire in the soul, by adding to them the unutterable rewards which attend her votaries in an eternal state. Or, if there are men of a saturnine and heavy complexion, who are not easily lifted up by hope, there is the prospect of everlasting punishment to agitate their souls, and frighten them into the practice of virtue, and an aversion from vice.

Whereas your sober freethinkers tell you that virtue indeed is beautiful, and vice deformed; the former deserves your love, and the latter your abhorrence: but then it is for their own sake, or on account of the good and evil which immediately attend them, and are inseparable from their respective natures. As for the immortality of the soul, or eternal punishments and rewards, those are openly ridiculed, or rendered suspicious by the most sly and laboured artifice.

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I will not say these men act treacherously in the cause of virtue: but will any one deny that they act foolishly who pretend to advance the interests of it by destroying or weakening the strongest motives to it, which are accommodated to all capacities, and fitted to work on all dispositions, and enforcing those alone which can affect only a generous and exalted mind?

Surely they must be destitute of passion themselves, and unacquainted with the force it hath on the minds of others, who can imagine that the mere beauty of fortitude, temperance, and justice, is sufficient to sustain the mind of man in a severe course of self-denial against all the temptations of present profit and sensuality.

It is my opinion, the free-thinkers should be treated as a set of poor ignorant creatures, that have not sense to discover the excellency of religion: it being evident those men are no witches; nor likely to be guilty of any deep design, who proclaim aloud to the world that they have less motives of honesty than the rest of their fellow subjects; who have all the inducements to the exercise of any virtue which a free-thinker can possibly have and besides, the expectation of never-ending happiness or misery, as the consequence of their choice.

Are not men actuated by their passions? and are not hope and fear the most powerful of our passions? and are there any objects which can arouse and awaken our hopes and fears like those prospects that warm and penetrate the heart of a Christian, but are not regarded by a free-thinker?



It is not only a clear point, that a Christian breaks through stronger engagements whenever he surrenders himself to commit a criminal action, and is stung with a sharper remorse after it, than a free-thinker: but it should even seem that a man who believes no future state would act a foolish part in being thoroughly honest. For what reason is there why such a one should postpone his own private interest or pleasure to the doing his duty? If a Christian foregoes some present advantage for the sake of his conscience, he acts accountably, because it is with the view of gaining some greater future good. But he that, having no such view, should yet conscientiously deny himself a present good, in any incident where he may save appearance, is altogether as stupid as he that would trust him at such a juncture.

It will perhaps be said, that virtue is her own reward; that a natural gratification attends good actions, which is alone sufficient to excite men to the performance of them. But although there is nothing more lovely than virtue, and the practice of it is the surest way to solid natural happiness even in this life: yet titles, estates, and fantastical pleasures are more ardently sought after by most men than the natural gratifications of a reasonable mind; and it cannot be denied that virtue and innocence are not always the readiest methods to attain that sort of happiness. Besides, the fumes of passion must be allayed, and reason must burn brighter than ordinary, to enable men to see and relish all the native beauties and delights of a virtuous life. And though we should grant our free-thinkers to be a set of refined spirits capable only of being enamoured of virtue, yet what would become of the bulk of mankind, who have gross understandings, but lively senses and strong passions? What a deluge of lust, and fraud, and violence, would, in a little time, overflow the whole nation, if these wise advocates for morality were universally hearkened to? Lastly, opportunities do sometimes offer, in which a man may wickedly make his fortune, or indulge a pleasure, without fear of temporal damage, either in reputation, health, or fortune. In such cases, what restraint do they lie under who have no regards beyond the grave? the inward compunctions of a wicked, as well as the joys of an upright mind, being grafted on the sense of another state.



The thought that our existence terminates with this life doth naturally check the soul in any generous pursuit, contract her views, and fix them on temporary and selfish ends. It dethrones the reason, extinguishes all noble and heroic sentiments, and subjects the mind to the slavery of every present passion. The wise Heathens of antiquity were not ignorant of this; hence they endeavoured, by fables and conjectures, and the glimmerings of nature, to possess the minds of men with the belief of a future state, which has been since brought to light by the gospel, and is now most inconsistently decried by a few weak men, who would have us believe that they promote virtue by turning religion into ridicule.



Mens agitat molem .—Virg. *Æn.* vi. l. 727.

God actuates this universal frame.

TO one who regards things with a philosophical eye, and hath a soul capable of being delighted with the sense that truth and knowledge prevail among men, it must be a grateful reflection to think that the sublimest truths which among the Heathens, only here and there, one of brighter parts, and more leisure than ordinary, could attain to, are now grown familiar to the meaner inhabitants of these nations.

Whence came this surprising change, that regions formerly inhabited by ignorant and savage people should now outshine ancient Greece, and the other eastern countries, so renowned of old, in the most elevated notions of theology and morality? Is it the effect of our own parts and industry? Have our common mechanics more refined understanding than the ancient philosophers? It is owing to the God of truth, who came down from heaven, and condescended to be himself our teacher. It is as we are Christians, that we profess more excellent and divine truths than the rest of mankind.

If there be any of the free-thinkers who are not direct Atheists, charity would incline one to believe them ignorant of what is here advanced. And it is for their information that I write this paper; the design of which is to compare the ideas that Christians entertain of the being and attributes of a God, with the gross notions of the Heathen world. Is it possible for the mind of man to conceive a more august idea of the Deity than is set forth in the holy scriptures? I shall throw together some passages relating to this subject, which I propose only, as philosophical sentiments, to be considered by a free-thinker.

“Though there be that are called gods, yet to us there is but one God. He made the heaven, and heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein. He said, let them be, and it was so. He had stretched forth the heavens. He hath founded the earth, and hung it upon nothing. He hath shut up the sea with doors, and said hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. The Lord, is an invisible spirit, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. He is the fountain of life. He preserveth man and beast. He giveth food to all flesh. In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. The Lord taketh poor, and maketh rich. He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He killeth, and maketh alive. He woundeth, and healeth. By him kings reign, and princes decree justice; and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him. All angels, authorities, and powers, are subject to him. He appointeth the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down. He thundereth with his voice, and directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightnings unto the end of the earth. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, fulfil his word. The Lord is King for ever and ever, and his dominion is an everlasting dominion. The earth and the heavens shall perish; but thou, O Lord! remainest. They all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as

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a vellum shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. God is perfect in knowledge; his understanding is infinite. He is the Father of lights. He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. The Lord beholdeth all the children of men from the place of his habitation, and considereth all their works. He knoweth our down-sitting and up-rising. He compasseth our path, and counteth our steps. He is acquainted with all our ways; and when we enter our closet, and shut our door, he seeth us. He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them: and no thought can be withholden from him. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He is a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow. He is the God of peace, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort and consolation. The Lord is great, and we know him not; his greatness is unsearchable. Who but he hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with a span? Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty. Thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour. Heaven is thy throne, and the earth is thy footstool.”

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Can the mind of a philosopher rise to a more just and magnificent, and at the same time, a more amiable idea of the Deity, than is here set forth in the strongest images and most emphatical language? and yet this is the language of shepherds and fishermen. The illiterate Jews and poor persecuted Christians retained these noble sentiments, while the polite and powerful nations of the earth were given up to that sottish sort of worship of which the following elegant description is extracted from one of the inspired writers.

“Who hath formed a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing? The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea he is hungry and his strength faileth. He drinketh no water and is faint. A man planteth an ash, and the rain cloth nourish it. He burneth part thereof in the fire. He roasteth roast. He warmeth himself. And the residue thereof he maketh a god. He falleth down unto it, and worshipping it, and prayeth unto it, and faith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. None considereth in his heart, I have burned part of it in the fire, yea also, I have baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and than I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?”

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In such circumstances as these, for a man to declare for free-thinking, and disengage himself from the yoke of idolatry, were doing honour to human nature, and a work well becoming the great asserters of reason. But in a church, where our adoration is directed to the Supreme Being, and (to say the least) where is nothing either in the object or manner of worship that contradicts the light of nature, there, under the pretence of free-thinking, to rail at the religious institutions of their country, sheweth an undistinguishing genius that mistakes opposition for freedom of thought. And, indeed, notwithstanding the pretences

of some few among our free-thinkers, I can hardly think there are men so and inconsistent with themselves as to have a serious regard for natural religion, and at the same time use their utmost endeavours to destroy the credit of those sacred writings, which as they have been the means of bringing these parts of the world to the knowledge of natural religion, so in case they lose their authority over the minds of men, we should of course sink into the same idolatry which we see practised by other unenlightened nations.

If a person, who exerts himself in the modern way of free-thinking, be not a stupid idolater, it is undeniable, that he contributes all he can to the making other men so, either by ignorance or design; which lays him under the dilemma, I will not say of being a fool or knave, but of incurring the contempt or detestation of mankind.



SECT. VI.

EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION.

—*Aptissima quæque dabunt dii*

Charior est illis homo, quam sibi—Juv. S. 10 I. 345.

—The gods will grant

What their unerring wisdom sees thee want:

In goodness, as in greatness they excel;

Ah that we lov'd ourselves but half so well!

Dryden.

IT is owing to pride, and a secret affectation of a certain self-existence, that the noblest motive for action that ever was proposed to man, is not acknowledged the glory and happiness of their being. The heart is treacherous to itself, and we do not let our reflections go deep enough to receive religion as the most honourable incentive to good and worthy actions. It is our natural weakness, to flatter ourselves into a belief, that if we search into our inmost thoughts, we find ourselves wholly disinterested, and divested of any views arising from self-love and vain glory. But however spirits of superficial greatness may disdain at first sight to do any thing, but from a noble impulse in themselves, without any future regards in this or another being: upon stricter inquiry they will find to act worthily and expect to be rewarded only in another world, is as heroic a pitch of virtue as human nature can arrive at. if the tenor of our actions have any other motive, than the desire to be pleasing in the eye of the Deity, it will necessarily follow that we must be more than men, if we are not too much exalted in prosperity, and depressed in adversity; but the Christian world has a leader, the contemplation of whose life and sufferings must administer comfort in affliction, while the sense of his power and omnipotence must give them humiliation in prosperity.

It is owing to the forbidden and unlovely constraint with which men of low conceptions act when they think they conform themselves to religion, as well as to the more odious conduct of hypocrites, that the word Christian does not carry with it, at first view, all that is great, worthy, friendly, generous, and heroic. The man who suspends his hopes of the reward of worthy actions till after death, who can bestow unseen, who can overlook hatred, do good to his slanderer, who can never be angry at his friend, never revengeful to his enemy, is certainly formed for the benefit of society; yet these are so far from heroic virtues, that they are but the ordinary duties of a Christian.

When a man with a steady faith, looks back on the great catastrophe of this day, with what bleeding emotions of heart must he contemplate the life and sufferings of his Deliverer? When his agonies occur to him, how will he weep to reflect that he has often forgot them

for the glance of a wanton, for the applause of a vain world, for an heap of fleeting past pleasures, which are at present aching sorrows!

How pleasing is the contemplation of the lowly steps our Almighty Leader took in conducting us to his heavenly mansions! In plain and apt parable, similitude, and allegory, our great Master enforced the doctrine of our salvation; but they of his acquaintance, instead of receiving what they could not oppose, were offended at the presumption of being wiser than they: they could not raise their little ideas above the consideration of him, in those circumstances familiar to them, or conceive that he who appeared not more terrible or pompous, should have any thing more exalted than themselves; he in that place therefore would not longer ineffectually exert a power which was incapable of conquering the prepossession a their narrow and mean conceptions.

Multitudes followed him, and brought him the dumb, the blind, the sick, and maimed; whom when their Creator had touched, with a second life they saw, spoke, leaped, and ran. In affection to him, and admiration of his actions, the crowd could not leave him, but waited near him till they were almost as faint and helpless as others they brought for succour. He had compassion on them, and by a miracle supplied their necessities. Oh! the ecstatic entertainment, when they could behold their food immediately increase to the distributor's hand, and see their God in person feeding and refreshing his creatures! Oh envied happiness! But why do I say envied? as if our God did not still preside over our temperate meals, chearful hours, and innocent conversations.

But though the sacred story is every where full of miracles not inferior to this, and though in the midst of those acts of divinity he never gave the least hint of a design to become a secular Prince, yet had not hitherto the apostles themselves any other hopes than of worldly power, preferment, riches and pomp; for Peter, upon an accident of ambition among the apostles, hearing his Master explain that his kingdom was not of this world, was so scandalized, that he, whom he had so long followed, should suffer the ignominy, shame, and death which he foretold, that he took him aside, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord! this shall not be unto thee:" for which he suffered a severe reprehension from his Master, as having in his view the glory of man rather than that of God.

The great change of things began to draw near, when the Lord of nature thought fit as a Saviour and Deliverer to make his public entry into Jerusalem with more than the power of joy, but none of the ostentation and pomp of a triumph; he came humble, meek, and lowly; with an unfelt new extasy, multitudes strewed his way with garments and olive branches, crying with loud gladness and acclamation, "Hosannah to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" At this great King's accession to his throne, men were not ennobled, but saved; crimes were not remitted, but sins forgiven; he did not bestow medals, honours, favours, but health, joy, sight, speech. The first object the blind ever saw, was the author of sight; while the lame ran before, and the dumb repeated the Hosannah.

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Thus attended, he entered into his own house, the sacred temple, and, by his divine authority, expelled traders and worldlings that profaned it; and thus did he, for a time, use a great and despotic power, to let unbelievers understand, that it was not want of, but superiority to, all worldly dominion, that made him not exert it. But is this then the Saviour? is this the Deliverer? shall this obscure Nazarene command Israel, and sit on the throne of David? Their proud and disdainful hearts, which were petrified with the love and pride of this world, were impregnable to the reception of so mean a benefactor, and were now enough exasperated with benefits to conspire his death. Our Lord was sensible of their design, and prepared his disciples for it, by recounting to them now more distinctly what should befall him; but Peter, with an ungrounded resolution, and in a flush of temper, made a sanguine protestation, that though all men were offended in him, yet would not he be offended. It was a great article of our Saviour's business in the world, to bring us to a sense of our inability, without God's assistance, to do any thing great or good; he therefore told Peter, who thought so well of his courage and fidelity, that they would both fail him, and even he should deny him thrice that very night.

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“But what heart can conceive, what tongue utter the sequel? Who is that yonder, buffeted, mocked and spurned? Whom do they drag like a felon? Whither do they carry my Lord, my King, my Saviour, and my God? And will he die to expiate those very injuries? See where they have nailed the Lord and giver of life! how his wounds blacken, his body writhes, and heart heaves with pity and with agony! Oh Almighty Sufferer! look down, look down from thy triumphant infamy: lo, he inclines his head to his sacred bosom! hark, he groans! see, he expires! The earth trembles, the temple rends, the rocks burst, the dead arise: which are the quick? which are the dead! Sure nature, all nature is departing with her Creator.”

IF to inform the understanding and regulate the will, is the most lasting and diffusive benefit, there will not be found so useful and excellent an institution as that of the Christian priesthood which is now become the scorn of fools. That a numerous order of men should be consecrated to the study of the most sublime and beneficial truths, with a design to propagate them by their discourses and writings, to inform their fellow-creatures of the being and attributes of the Deity, to possess their minds with the sense of a future state, and not only to explain the nature of every virtue and moral duty, but likewise to persuade mankind to the practice of them by the most powerful and engaging motives, is a thing so excellent and necessary to the well being of the world, that no body but a modern free-thinker could have the forehead or folly to turn it into ridicule.

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The light in which these points should be exposed to the view of one who is prejudiced against the names, religion, church, priest, and the like, is, to consider the clergy as so many philosophers, the churches as schools, and their sermons as lectures, for the information and improvement of the audience. How would the heart of Socrates or Tully have rejoiced,

had they lived in a nation, where the law had made provision for philosophers to read lectures of morality and theology every seventh day, in several thousands of schools erected at the public charge throughout the whole country, at which lectures all ranks and sexes, without distinction, were obliged to be present for their general improvement? And what wicked wretches would they think those men, who should endeavour to defeat the purpose of so divine an institution?

It is indeed usual with that low tribe of writers, to pretend their design is only to reform the church, and expose the vices and not the order of the clergy. The author of a pamphlet printed the other day, (which, without my mentioning the title, will on this occasion occur to the thoughts of those who have read it) hopes to insinuate by that artifice what he is afraid or ashamed openly to maintain. But there are two points which clearly shew what it is he aims at. The first is, that he constantly uses the word priest in such a manner, as that his reader cannot but observe he means to throw an odium on the clergy of the church of England, from their being called by a name which they enjoy in common with Heathens and Imposters. The other is, his raking together and exaggerating with great spleen and industry, all those actions of churchmen, which either by their own illness, or the bad light in which he places them, tend to give men an ill impression of the dispensers of the Gospel: all which he pathetically addresses to the consideration of his wise and honest countryman of the laity. The sophistry and ill-breeding of these proceedings are so obvious to men who have any pretence to that character, that I need say no more either of them or their author.

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SECT. VII.

DIGNITY OF THE SCRIPTURE LANGUAGE.

With hymns divine the joyous banquet ends;
The Peans lengthen'd till the sun descends:
The Greeks restor'd the grateful notes prolong;
Apollo listens, and approves the song.

Pope.

THERE is a certain coldness and indifference in the phrases of our European languages, when they are compared with the Oriental forms of speech: and it happens very luckily, that the Hebrew idioms run into the English tongue with a particular grace and beauty. Our language has received innumerable elegancies and improvements, from that infusion of Hebraisms, which are derived to it out of the poetical pates in holy writ. They give a force and energy to our expressions, warm and animate our language, and convey our thoughts in more ardent and intense phrases, than any that are to be met with in our own tongue.

There is something so pathetic in this kind of diction, that it often sets the mind in a flame, and makes our hearts burn within us. How cold and dead does a prayer appear, that is composed in the most elegant and polite forms of speech, which are natural to our tongue, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase, which may be drawn from the sacred writings. It has been said by some of the ancients, that if the gods were to talk with men, they would certainly speak in Plato's style; but I think we may say with justice, that when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style as in that of the holy Scriptures.

If any one would judge of the beauties of poetry that are to be met with in the divine writings, and examine how kindly the Hebrew manners of speech mix and incorporate with the English language; after having perused the book of Psalms, let him read a literal translation of Horace or Pindar. He will find in these two last such an absurdity and confusion of style, with such a comparative poverty of imagination as will make him very sensible of what I have been here advancing.

Since we have therefore such a treasury of words, so beautiful in themselves, and so proper for the airs of music, I cannot but wonder that persons of distinction should give so little attention and encouragement to that kind of music which would have its foundation in reason, and which would improve our virtue in proportion as it raised our delight. The passions that are excited by ordinary composition generally flow from such silly and absurd occasions, that a man is ashamed to reflect upon them seriously; but the fear, the love, the sorrow, the indignation that are awakened in the mind by hymns and anthems, Make the



heart better and proceed from such causes as are altogether reasonable and praiseworthy. Pleasure and duty go hand in hand, and the greater our satisfaction is, the greater is our religion.

Music among those who were styled the chosen people, was a religious art. The songs of Zion, which, we have reason to believe, were in high repute among the courts of the eastern monarchs, were nothing else but psalms and pieces of poetry that adored or celebrated the Supreme Being. The greatest conqueror in this holy nation, after the manner of the old Grecian lyrics, did not only compose the words of his divine odes but generally let them to music himself: after which, his works, though they were consecrated to the tabernacle, became the national entertainment, as well as the devotion of his people.

The first original of the drama was a religious worship consisting only of a chorus, which was nothing else but an hymn to a deity. As luxury and voluptuousness prevailed over innocence and religion, this form of worship degenerated into tragedies: in which however the chorus so far remembered its first office, as to brand every thing that was vicious, and recommend every thing that was laudable; to intercede with heaven for the innocent, and to implore its vengeance on the criminal.

Homer and Hesiod intimate to us how this art should be applied, when they represent the muses as surrounding Jupiter, and warbling their hymns about his throne: I might shew from innumerable passages in ancient writers, not only that vocal and instrumental music were made use of in their religious worship; but that their most favourite diversions were filled with songs and hymns to their respective deities. Had we frequent entertainments of this nature among us, they would not a little purify and exalt our passions, give our thoughts a proper turn, and cherish those divine impulses in the soul, which every one feels that has not stifled them by sensual and immoderate pleasures.

Music, when thus applied, raises noble hints in the mind of the hearer, and fills it with great conceptions. It strengthens devotion, and advances praise into rapture. It lengthens out every act of worship, and produces more lasting and permanent impressions in the mind, than those which accompany any transient form of words that are uttered in the ordinary method of religious worship.

—Fungar inani
Munere—

Virg. *Æn.* vi. l. 885.

An unavailing duty I discharge.

DR. TILLOTSON, in his discourse concerning the danger of all known sin, both from the light of nature and revelation, after having given us the description of the last day out of holy writ, has this remarkable passage.

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“I appeal to any man, whither this be not a representation of things very proper and suitable to that great day, wherein he who made the world shall come to judge it; and whether the wit of man devised any thing so awful, and so agreeable to the majesty of God, and the solemn judgment of the whole world. The description which Virgil makes of the Elysian fields and the infernal regions, how infinitely do they fall short of the majesty of the holy scripture, and the description there made of heaven and hell, and of the great and terrible day of the Lord! so that in comparison they are childish and trifling; and yet perhaps he had the most regular and most governed imagination of any man that ever lived, and observed the greatest decorum in his characters and descriptions. But who can declare the great things of God but he to whom God shall reveal them.”



This observation was worthy a most polite man, and ought to be of authority with all who are such, so far as to examine whether he spoke that as a man of a just taste and judgment, or advanced it merely for the service of his doctrine as a clergyman.

I am very confident, whoever reads the gospels with an heart as much prepared in favour of them as when he sits down to Virgil or Homer, will find no passage there which is not told with more natural force than any episode in either of those wits, who were the chief of mere mankind.

The last thing I read was the [24th chapter of St. Luke](#), which gives an account of the manner in which our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, joined with two disciples, on the way to Emmaus, as an ordinary traveller, and took the privilege as such to enquire of them what occasioned a sadness he observed in their countenances, or whether it was from any public cause: their wonder that any man so near Jerusalem should be a stranger to what had passed there; their acknowledgment to one they meet accidentally that they had believed in this prophet; and that now, the third day after his death, they were in doubt as to their pleasing hope which occasioned the heaviness he took notice of, are all represented in a style which men of letters call the great and noble simplicity. The attention of the disciples, when he expounded the scriptures concerning himself, his offering to take his leave of them, their fondness of his stay, and the manifestation of the great guest whom they had entertained while he was yet at meat with them, are all incidents which wonderfully please the imagination of a Christian reader, and give to him something of that touch of mind which the brethren felt, when they said one to another, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”



I am very far from pretending to treat these matters as they deserve; but I hope those gentlemen who are qualified for it, and called to it, will forgive me, and consider that I speak as a mere secular man, impartially considering the effect which the sacred writings will have upon the soul of an intelligent reader; and it is some argument, that a thing is the immediate work of God when it so infinitely transcends all the labour of man. When I look upon Raphael’s picture of our Saviour appearing to his disciples after his resurrection, I cannot



but think the just disposition of that piece has in it the force of many volumes on the subject: the evangelists are easily distinguished from the rest by a passionate zeal and love which the painter has thrown in their faces; the huddled group of those who stand most distant are admirable representations of men abashed with their late unbelief and hardness of heart. And such endeavours as this of Raphael, and of all men not called to the altar, are collateral helps not to be despised by the ministers of the gospel.

It is with this view that I presume upon subjects of this kind; and men may take up this paper, and be caught by an admonition under the disguise of a diversion.

All the arts and sciences ought to be employed in one confederacy against the prevailing torrent of vice and impiety; and it will be no small step in the progress of religion, if it is as evident as it ought to be, that he wants the best taste and best sense a man can have who is cold to the beauty of holiness.

As for my part, when I have happened to attend the corpse of a friend to his interment, and have seen a graceful man at the entrance of a church-yard, who became the dignity of his function, and assumed an authority which is natural to truth, pronounce, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die:" I say, upon such an occasion, the retrospect upon past actions between the deceased, whom I followed, and myself, together with the many little circumstances that strike upon the soul, and alternately give grief and consolation, have vanished like a dream; and I have been relieved as by a voice from heaven, when the solemnity has proceeded, and after a long pause, I have heard the servant of God utter, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the later day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." How have I been raised above this world, and all its regards, and how well prepared to receive the next sentence which the holy man has spoken; "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

There are, I know, men of heavy temper, without genius, who can read these expressions of scripture with as much indifference as they do the rest of these loose papers: however, I will not despair to bring men of wit into a love and admiration of sacred writings; and, as old as I am, I promised myself to see the day when I shall be as much the fashion among men of politeness to admire a rapture of St. Paul, as any fine expression of Virgil or Horace, and to see a well-dressed young man produce an evangelist out of his pocket, and be no more out of countenance than if it were a classic printed by Elzevir.

It is a gratitude that ought to be paid to Providence by men of distinguished faculties, to praise and adore the Author of their being with a suitable to those faculties, and rouse slower men, by their words, actions and writings, to a participation of their transports and thanksgivings.

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SECT. VIII.

AGAINST ATHEISM AND INFIDELITY.

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—Procul O! Procul este profani!

Virg. Æn. vi. I. 258.

Hence! far hence, O ye profane!

THE watchman, who does me particular honours, as being the chief man in the lane, gave so very great a thump at my door last night that I awakened at the knock, and heard myself complimented with the usual salutation of Good-morrow, Mr. Bickerstaff, Good-morrow, my masters all. The silence and darkness of the night disposed me to be more than ordinarily serious; and as my attention was not drawn out among exterior objects by the avocations of sense, my thoughts naturally fell upon myself. I was considering, amidst the stillness of the night, what was the proper employment of a thinking being; what were the perfections it should propose to itself; and what the end it should aim at. My mind is of such a particular cast, that the falling of a shower of rain, or the whistling of wind, at such a time, is apt to fill my thoughts with something awful and solemn. I was in this disposition, when our bellman began his midnight homily (which he has been repeating to us every winter night for these twenty years) with the usual exordium,

Oh! mortal man, thou that art born in sin!

Sentiments of this nature, which are in themselves just and reasonable, however debased by the circumstances that accompany them, do not fail to produce their natural effect in a mind that is not perverted and depraved by wrong notions of gallantry, politeness, and ridicule. The temper which I now found myself in, as well as the time of the year, put me in mind of those lines in Shakespeare, wherein, according to his agreeable wildness of imagination, he has wrought a country tradition into a beautiful piece of poetry. In the tragedy of Hamlet, where the ghost vanishes upon the cock's crowing, he takes occasion to mention its crowing all hours of the night about Christmas time, and to insinuate a kind of religious veneration for that season.

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It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, say they, no spirit walks abroad;
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm:
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

This admirable author, as well as the best and greatest men of all ages, and of all nations, seems to have had his mind thoroughly seasoned with religion, as is evident by many passages in his plays that would not be suffered by a modern audience; and are therefore certain instances that the age he lived in had a much greater sense of virtue than the present.

It is indeed a melancholy reflection to consider that the British nation, which is now at a greater height of glory for its councils and conquests than it ever was before, should distinguish itself by a certain looseness of principles, and a falling off from those schemes of thinking which conduce to the happiness and perfection of human nature. This evil comes upon us from the works of a few solemn blockheads, that meet together with the zeal and seriousness of apostles, to extirpate common sense, and propagate infidelity. These are the wretches, who, without any show of wit, learning, or reason, publish their crude conceptions with an ambition of appearing more wise than the rest of mankind, upon no other pretence than that of dissenting from them. One gets by heart a catalogue of title-pages and editions, and immediately to become conspicuous, declares that he is an unbeliever. Another knows how to write a receipt, or cut up a dog, and forthwith argues again the immortality of the soul. I have known many a little wit, in the ostentation of his parts, rally the truth of the scripture, who was not able to read a chapter in it. Those poor wretches talk blasphemy for want of discourse, and are rather the objects of scorn or pity than of our indignation; but the grave disputant that reads and writes, and spends all his time in convincing himself and the world that he is no better than a brute, ought to be whipped out of a government, as a blot to a civil society, and a defamer of mankind. I love to consider an infidel, whether distinguished by the title of Deist, Atheist, or Free-thinker, in three different lights; in his solitudes, his afflictions, and his last moments.

A wise man, that lives up to the principles of reason and virtue, if one considers him in his solitude, as taking in the system of the universe, observing the mutual dependence and harmony, by which the whole frame of it hangs together, beating down his passions or swelling his thoughts with magnificent ideas of Providence, makes a nobler figure in the eye of an intelligent being than the greatest conqueror amidst all the poms and solemnities of a triumph. On the contrary, there is not a more ridiculous animal than an Atheist in his retirement. His mind is incapable of rapture or elevation; he can only consider himself as an insignificant figure in a landscape, and wandering up and down in a field or a meadow, under the same terms as the meanest animals about him, and as subject to as total a mortality as they; with this aggravation, that he is the only one amongst them who lies under the apprehension of it.

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In distresses, he must be of all creatures the most helpless and forlorn; he feels the whole pressure of a present calamity without being relieved by the memory of any thing that is past, or the prospect of any thing that is to come. Annihilation is the greatest blessing that he proposes to himself, and an halter or a pistol the only refuge he can fly to. But if you would behold one of those gloomy miscreants in his poorest figure; you must consider him under the terrors, or at the approach of death.

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About thirty years ago I was a-shipboard with one of these vermine, when there arose a brisk gale, which could frighten nobody but himself. Upon the rolling of the ship, he fell upon his knees, and confessed to the chaplain, that he had been a vile Atheist, and had denied a Supreme Being ever since he came to his estate. The good wan was astonished, and a report immediately ran through the ship that there was an Atheist upon the upper deck. Several of the common seamen, who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish; but they were more surprised when they saw it was a man, and heard out of his own mouth, that he never believed, till that day, that there was a God. As he lay in the agonies of confession, one of the honest tars whispered to the boatswain, that it would be a good deed to heave him over board. But we were now within sight of port, when of a sudden the wind fell, and the penitent relapsed, begging all of us that were present, as we were Gentlemen, not to say any thing of what had passed.

He had not been ashore above two days, when one of the company began to rally him upon his devotion on shipboard, which the other denied in so high terms, that it produced the lie on both sides, and ended in a duel. The Atheist was run thro' the body, and after some loss of blood, became as good a Christian as he was at sea, till he found that his wound was not mortal. He is at present one of the Free-thinkers of the age, and now writing a pamphlet against several received opinions concerning the existence of fairies.

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AFTER having treated of false zealots in religion,¹ I cannot forbear mentioning a monstrous species of men, who, one would not think had any existence in nature, were they not to be met with in ordinary conversation, I mean the zealots in Atheism. One would fancy that these men, though they fall short, in every other respect, of those who make a profession of religion, would at least out shine them in this particular, and be exempt from that single fault which seems to grow out of the imprudent fervors of religion: but so it is, that Infidelity is propagated with as much fierceness and contention, wrath and indignation, as if the safety of mankind depended upon it. There is something so ridiculous and perverse in this kind of zealots, that one does not know how to set them out in their proper colours. They are a sort of gamesters who are eternally upon the fret, though they play for nothing. They are perpetually teizing their friends to come over to them, though, at the same time,

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1 See Spect. vol. III. No. 185.

they allow that neither of them shall get any thing by the bargain. In short, the zeal of spreading Atheism is, if possible, more absurd than Atheism itself.

Since I have mentioned this unaccountable zeal which appears in Atheists, and Infidels, I must further observe that they are likewise in a most particular manner possessed with the spirit of bigotry. They are wedded to opinions full of contradiction and impossibility, and, at the same time, look upon the smallest difficulty in an article of faith as a sufficient reason for rejecting it. Notions that fall in with the common reason of mankind, that are conformable to the sense of all ages and all nations, not to mention their tendency for promoting the happiness of societies, or of particular persons, are exploded as errors and prejudices; and schemes erected in their stead that are altogether monstrous and irrational, and require the most extravagant credulity to embrace them. I would fain ask one of these bigotted Infidels, supposing all the great points of Atheism, as the casual or eternal formation of the world, the materiality of a thinking substance, the mortality of the soul, the fortuitous organization of the body, the motions and gravitation of matter, with the like particulars, were laid together and formed into a kind of creed, according to the opinions of the most celebrated Atheists, I say, supposing such a creed as this were formed, and imposed upon any one people in the world whether it would not require an infinitely greater measure of faith, than any set of articles which they so violently oppose. Let me therefore advise this generation of wranglers, for their own and for the public good, to act a least so confidently with themselves, as not to burn with zeal for irreligion, and with bigotry for nonsense.

—*Cahum ipsum petimus stultitia.*—

Hot. Od. III. I. 1. v. 38.

—Scarce the Gods, and heavenly climes
Are safe from our audacious crimes.

Dryden:

UPON my return to my lodgings last night, I found a letter from my worthy friend the clergyman, whom I have given some account of in my former papers. He tells me in it, that he was particularly pleased with the latter part of my yesterday's speculation; and at the same time inclosed the following essay, which he desires me to publish as the sequel of that discourse. It consists partly of uncommon reflections, and partly of such as have been already used, but now set in a stronger light.

A believer may be excused by the most hardened Atheist for endeavouring to make him a convert, because he does it with an eye to both their interests. The Atheist is inexcusable who tries to gain over a believer, because he does not propose the doing himself or the believer any good by such a conversion.

The prospect of a future state is the secret comfort and refreshment of my soul; it is that which makes nature look gay about me: it doubles all my pleasures and supports me under all my afflictions. I can look at disappointments and misfortunes, pain and sickness, death itself, and what is worse than death, the loss of those who are dearest to me, with indifference, so long as I keep in view the pleasures of eternity, and the state of being, in which there will be no fears nor apprehensions, pains nor sorrows, sickness nor separation. Why will a man be so impertinently officious, as to tell me this is only fancy and delusion? Is there any merit in being the messenger of ill news? If it is a dream let me enjoy it, since it makes me both the happier and the better man.

I must confess I do not know how to trust a man who believes neither heaven nor hell, or, in other words, a future state of rewards and punishments. Not only natural self-love, but reason directs us to promote our own interest above all things. It can never be for the interest of a believer to do me a mischief, because he is sure, upon the balance of accompts, to find himself a loser by it. On the contrary, if he considers his own welfare in his behaviour towards me, it will lead him to do me all the good he can, and at the same time restrain him from doing me any injury. An unbeliever does not act like a reasonable creature, if he favours me contrary to his present interest, or does not distress me when it turns to his present advantage. Honour and good nature may indeed tie up his hands; but as these would be very much strengthened by reason and principle, so without them they are only instincts, or wavering unsettled notions, which rest on no foundation.

Infidelity has been attacked with so good success of late years, that it is driven out of all its outworks. The Atheist has not found his post tenable, and is therefore retired into Deism, and a disbelief of revealed religion only. But the truth of it is, the greatest number of this set of men, are those who, for want of a virtuous education, or examining the grounds of religion, know so very little of the matter in question, that their Infidelity is but another term for their ignorance.

As folly and inconsiderateness are the foundations of Infidelity, the great pillars and supports of it are either vanity of appearing wiser than the rest of mankind, or an ostentation of courage in despising the terrors of another world, which have so great an influence on what they call weaker minds, or an aversion to a belief that must cut them off from many of those pleasures they propose to themselves, and fill them with remorse for many of those they have already tasted.

The great received articles of the Christian religion have been so clearly proved, from the authority of that divine revelation in which they are delivered, that it is impossible for those who have ears to hear, and eyes to see, not to be convinced of them, But were it possible for any thing in the Christian faith to be erroneous, I can find no ill consequences in adhering to it. The great points of the incarnation and sufferings of our Saviour produce naturally such habits of virtue in the mind of man, that, I say, supposing it were possible for us to be

mistaken in them, the Infidel himself must at least allow that no other system of religion could so effectually contribute to the heightening of morality. They give us great ideas of dignity of human nature, and of the love which the Supreme Being bears to his creatures, and consequently engage us in the highest acts of our duty towards our Creator, our neighbour, and ourselves. How many noble arguments has St. Paul raised from the chief articles of our religion, for the advancing of morality in its three great branches? To give a single example in each kind: What can be a stronger motive to a firm trust and reliance on the mercies of our Maker, than the giving us his Son to suffer for us? What can make us love and esteem even the most inconsiderable of mankind, more than the thought that Christ died for him? Or what dispose us to set a stricter guard upon the purity of our own hearts than our being members of Christ, and a part of the society of which that immaculate person is the head? But these are only a specimen of those admirable enforcements of morality which the apostle has drawn from the history of our blessed Saviour.

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If our modern Infidels considered these matters with that candour and seriousness which they deserve, we should not see them act with such a spirit of bitterness, arrogance, and malice; they would not be raising such insignificant cavils, doubts, and scruples, as may be started against every thing that is not capable of mathematical demonstration; in order to unsettle the minds of the ignorant, disturb the public peace, subvert morality, and throw all things into confusion and disorder. If none of these reflections can have any influence on them, there is one that perhaps may, because it is adapted to their vanity by which they seem to be guided much more than their reason. I would therefore have them consider, that the wisest and best of men in all ages of the world have been those who lived up to the religion of their country, when they saw nothing in it opposite to morality, and to the best lights they had of the divine nature. Pythagoras' first rule directs us to worship the gods as it is ordained by law; for that is the most natural interpretation of the precept. Socrates, who was the most renowned among the Heathens, both for wisdom and virtue, in his last moments desires his friends to offer a cock to Æsculapius; doubtless out of a submissive deference to the established worship of his country. Xenophon tells us that his prince (whom he sets forth as a pattern of perfection,) when he found his death approaching, offered sacrifices on the mountains to the Persian Jupiter, and the sun, according to the customs of the Persians; for those are the words of the historian. Nay, the Epicureans and anatomical philosophers shewed a very remarkable modesty in this particular; for, though the being of a God was entirely repugnant to their schemes of natural philosophy, they contented themselves with the denial of a providence, asserting at the same time the existence of gods in general: because they would not shock the common belief of mankind, and the religion of their country.

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Qua ratione queas traducere lemitem ævum:
Ne te semper inops agitet, vexetque cupido;
Ne pavor el rerum mediocriter utilium spes.

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Hor I. 1. Epist. XVIII v. 97.

How thou may'st live, how spend thine age in peace;
Lest avarice, still poor, disturb thy ease;
Or fears should shake, or cares thy mind abuse,
Or ardent hope for things of little use.

Creech.

HAVING endeavoured, in my last Saturday's paper, to shew the great excellency of faith, I shall here consider what are the proper means of strengthening and confirming it in the mind of man. Those who delight in reading books of controversy, which are written on both sides of the question in points of faith, do very seldom arrive at a fixed and settled habit of it. They are one day entirely convinced of its important truths, and they next meet with something that shakes and disturbs them. The doubt which was laid revives again, and shews itself in new difficulties; and that generally for this reason, because the mind, which is perpetually tossed, in controversies and disputes, is apt to forget the reasons which had once set it at rest; and to be disquieted with any former perplexity, when it appears in a new shape, or is started by a different hand. As nothing is more laudable than an inquiry after truth, so nothing is more irrational than to pass away our whole lives without determining ourselves one way or other in those points which are of the last importance to us. There are indeed many things from which we may withhold our assent: but in cases by which we are to regulate our lives, it is the greatest absurdity to be wavering and unsettled, without closing with that side which appears the most safe and the most probable.

The first rule therefore which I shall lay down is this, that when, by reading or discourse, we find ourselves thoroughly convinced of the truth of any article, and of the reasonableness of our belief in it, we should never after suffer ourselves to call it into question. We may perhaps forget the arguments which occasioned our conviction, but we ought to remember the strength they had with us, and therefore still to retain the conviction which they once produced. This is no more than what we do in every art or science: nor is it possible to act otherwise considering the weakness and limitations of our intellectual faculties. It was thus that Latimer, one of the glorious army of martyrs, who introduce reformation in England, behaved himself in that great conference which was managed between the most learned among the Protestants and Papists in the reign of Queen Mary. This venerable old man, knowing how his abilities were impaired by age, and that it was impossible for him to recollect all those reasons which had directed him in the choice of his religion, lest his companions, who were in the full possession of their parts and learning, to baffle and confound their



antagonists by the force of reason. As for himself, he only repeated to his adversaries the articles in which he firmly believed, and in the profession of which he was determined to die. It is in this manner that the mathematician proceeds upon propositions which he has once demonstrated and though the demonstration may have slipt out of his memory, he builds upon the truth, because he knows it was demonstrated. This rule is absolutely necessary for weaker minds, and in some measure for men of the greatest abilities.

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But to there last I would propose, in the second place, that they should lay up in their memories, and always keep by them in a readiness, those arguments which appear to them of the greatest strength, and which cannot be got over by all the doubts and cavil of Infidelity.

But, in the third place, there is nothing which strenghtens faith more than morality. Faith and morality naturally produce each other. A man is quickly convinced of the truth of religion who finds it is not against his interest that it should be true. The pleasure he receives at present, and the happiness which he promises himself from it hereafter, will both dispose him very powerfully to give credit to it, according to the ordinary observation, that we are easy to believe what we wish. It is very certain that a man of sound reason cannot forbear closing with religion upon an impartial examination of it: but at the same time it is as certain that faith is kept alive in us, and gathers strength from practice more than from speculation.

There is still another method which is more persuasive than any of the former, and that is, an habitual adoration of the Supreme Being, as well in constant acts of mental worship as in outward forms. The devout man does not only believe but feels there is a Deity. He has actual sensations of him: his experience concurs with his reason; he sees him more and more in all his intercourses with him, and even in this life almost loses his faith in conviction.

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The last method which I shall mention for the giving life to a man's faith, is frequent retirement from the world, accompanied with religious meditation. When a man thinks of any thing in the darkness of the night, whatever deep impressions it may make in his mind, they are apt to vanish as soon as the day breaks about him. The light and noise of the day, which are perpetually solliciting his senses, and calling off his attention, wear out of his mind the thoughts that imprinted themselves in it with so much strength, during the silence and darkness of the night. A man finds the same difference as to himself in a crowd, and in a solitude; the mind is stunned and dazzled amidst that variety of objects which press upon her in a great city; she cannot apply herself to the consideration of those things which are of the utmost concern to her. The cares or pleasures of the world strike in with every thought, and a multitude of vicious examples give a kind of justification to our folly. In our retirements every thing disposes us to be serious. In courts and cities we are entertained with the works of men; in the country with those of God. One is the province of art, the other of nature. Faith and devotion naturally grow in the mind of every reasonable man, who sees the impressions of divine power and wisdom in every object on which he casts his eye. The Supreme

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Being has made the best arguments for his own existence in the formation of the heavens and the earth; and these are arguments which a man of sense cannot forbear attending to, who is out of the noise and hurry of human affairs. Aristotle says, that should a man live under ground, and there converse with works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of such a being, as we define God to be. The Psalmist has very beautiful strokes of poetry to this purpose in that exalted strain, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. One day telleth another; and one night certifieth another. There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world." As such a bold and sublime manner of thinking furnishes very noble matter for an ode, the reader may see it wrought into the following one.

I.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue etherial sky,
And spangled heav'ns, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
Th' unwear'd sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

II.

Soon as the ev'ning shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

III.

What though, in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball!
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found!



In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice:
For ever singing as they shine;
The hand that made us is divine.



SECT. IX.

AGAINST THE MODERN FREE-THINKERS.

Sir,

THERE arrived in this neighbourhood, two days ago, one of your gay gentlemen of the town, who being attended at his entry with a servant of his own, besides a countryman he had taken up for a guide, excited the curiosity of the village to learn whence and what he might be. The countryman (to whom they applied as most easy of access) knew little more than that the gentleman came from London to travel and see fashions, and was, as he heard say, a Free-thinker; what religion that might be he could not tell; and for his own part, if they had not told him the man was a Free-thinker he should have guessed, by his way of talking, he was little better than a Heathen; excepting only that he had been a good gentleman to him, and made him drunk twice in one day, over and above what they had bargained for.

I do not look upon the simplicity of this, and several odd inquiries with which I shall not trouble you, to be wondered at; much less can I think that our youths of fine wit and enlarged understandings have any reason to laugh. There is no necessity that every squire in Great Britain should know what the word Free-thinker stands for: but it were much to be willed that they who value themselves upon that conceited title were a little better instructed in what it ought to stand for, and that they would not persuade themselves a man is really and truly a Free-thinker in any tolerable sense, merely by virtue of his being an Atheist, or an Infidel of any other distinction. It may be doubted with good reason, whether there ever was in nature a more abject, slavish, and bigotted generation than the tribe of *Beaux Esprits* at present so prevailing in this island. Their pretension to be Free-thinkers is no other than rakes have to be free-livers, and savages to be free-men; that is, they can think whatever they have a mind to, and give themselves up to whatever conceit the extravagancy of their inclination or their fancy shall suggest; they can think as wildly as talk and act, and will not endure that their wit should be controlled by such formal things as decency and common sense; deduction, coherence, consistency, and all the rules of reason, they accordingly disdain, as too precise and mechanical for men of a liberal education.

This, as far as I could ever learn from their writings, or my own observation, is a true account of the British Free-thinker. Our visitant here who gave occasion for this paper, has brought with him a new system of common sense, the particulars of which I am not yet acquainted with, but will lose no opportunity of informing myself whether it contains any thing worth Mr. Spectator's notice. In the mean time, Sir, I cannot but think it would be for the good of mankind if you would take this subject into your own consideration, and convince the hopeful youth of our nation that licentiousness is not freedom: or, if such a paradox will not be understood, that a prejudice towards Atheism is not impartiality.

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I am, Sir, your most humble Servant,
Philonous.

Quicquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vult, quod viget, caeleste et divinum est, ab eamque rem æternum sit necesse est.

Tull.

Whatever that principle is, which lives, perceives, understands, and wills, the same is heavenly and divine, and consequently eternal.

I AM diverted from the account I was giving the town of my particular concerns by casting my eye upon a treatise, which I could not overlook without an inexcuseable negligence and want of concern for all the civil as well as religious interests of mankind. This piece has for its title “A Discourse of Free-thinking, occasioned by the rise and growth of a sect called Free-thinkers.” The author very methodically enters upon his argument, and says, “By Free-thinking, I mean the use of the understanding in endeavouring, to find out the meaning of any proposition whatsoever, in considering the nature of the evidence for or against, and in judging of it according to the seeming force or weakness of the evidence.” As soon as he has delivered this definition, from which one would expect he did not design to shew a particular inclination for or against any thing before he had considered it, he gives up all title to the character of a Free-thinker, with the most apparent prejudice against a body of men, whom of all others a good man would be most careful not to violate, I mean, men in holy orders. Persons who have devoted themselves to the service of God are venerable to all who fear him: and it is a certain characteristic of a dissolute and ungoverned mind to rail or speak disrespectfully of them in general. It is certain, that in so great a crowd of men some will intrude who are of tempers very unbecoming their function: but because ambition and avarice are sometimes lodged in that bosom, which ought to be the dwelling of sanctity and devotion, must this unreasonable author vilify the whole order! He has not taken the least care to disguise his being an enemy to the persons against whom he writes, nor any where granted, that the institution of religious men to serve at the altar, and instruct such who are not so wise as himself, is at all necessary or desirable, but proceeds, without the least apology, to undermine their credit, and frustrate their labours. Whatever clergymen, in disputes against each other, have unguardedly uttered, is here recorded in such a manner as to affect religion itself by wresting concessions to its disadvantage from its own teachers. If this be true, as sure any man that reads the discourse must allow it is; and if religion is the strongest tie of human society, in what manner are we to treat this our common enemy, who promotes the growth of such a sect as he calls Free-thinkers? He that should burn a house, and justify the action, by asserting he is a free agent, would be more excuseable than this author in uttering what he has from the right of a Free-thinker; but they are a set of dry, joyless, dull fellows, who want capacities and talents to make a figure amongst mankind

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upon benevolent and generous principles, that think to surmount their own natural meanness, by laying offences in the way of such as make it their endeavour to excel upon the received maxims and honest arts of life. If it were possible to laugh at so melancholy an affair as what hazards salvation, it would be no unpleasant inquiry to ask what satisfaction they reap, what extraordinary gratification of sense, or what delicious libertinism this sect of Free-thinkers enjoy, after getting loose of the laws which confine the passions of other men? Would it not be a matter of mirth to find, after all, that the heads of this growing sect are sober wretches, who prate whole evenings over coffee, and have not themselves fire enough to be any farther debauchees than merely in principle? These sages of iniquity are, it seems, themselves only speculatively wicked, and are contented that all the abandoned young men of the age are kept safe from reflection, by dabbling in their rhapsodies, without tasting the pleasures for which their doctrines leave them unaccountable. Thus do heavy mortals, only to gratify a dry pride of heart, give up the interests of another world, without enlarging their gratifications in this; but it is certain that there are a sort of men that can puzzle truth, but cannot enjoy the satisfaction of it. The same Freethinker is a creature unacquainted with the emotions which possess great minds when they are tuned for religion; and it is apparent that he is untouched with any such sensation as the rapture of devotion. Whatever one of these scorers may think, they certainly want parts to be devout; a sense of piety towards heaven, as well as the sense of any thing else, is lively and warm in proportion to the faculties of the head and heart. This gentleman may be assured he has not a taste for what he pretends to decry, and the poor man is certainly more a blockhead than an Atheist. I must repeat, that he wants capacity to relish what true piety is: and he is as capable of writing an heroic poem as making a fervent prayer. When men are thus low and narrow in their apprehensions of things, and at the same time vain, they are naturally led to think every thing they do not understand not to be understood. Their contradiction to what is urged by others is a necessary consequence of their incapacity to receive it. Atheistical fellows, who appeared the last age, did not serve the devil for nought, but revelled in excesses suitable to their principles, while in these unhappy days mischief is done for mischief's sake. These Free-thinkers, who lead the lives of recluse students, for no other purpose but to disturb the sentiments of other men, put me in mind of the monstrous recreation of these late wild youths, who, without provocation, had a wantonness in stabbing and defacing those they met with. When such writers as this, who has no spirit but that of malice, pretend to inform the age, Mohocks and cut-throats may well set up for wits and men of pleasure.

It will be perhaps expected, that I should produce some instances of the ill intention of this Free-thinker, to support the treatment I here give him. In his 52d page he says,

“2dly. The priests throughout the world differ about Scriptures, and the authority of Scriptures. The Bramins have a book of Scripture called the Shafter. The Persees have their Zundavastaw. The Bonzes of China have books written by the disciples of Fo-he, whom

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they call the God and Saviour of the world, who was born to teach the way of salvation, and to give satisfaction for all men's sins. The Taiapoins of Siam have a book of Scripture, written by Sommonocodom, who, the Siamese say, was born of a virgin, and was the God expected by the universe. The Dervizes have their Alcoran."

I believe there is no one will dispute the author's great impartiality in setting down the accounts of these different religions. And I think it is pretty evident he delivers the matter with an air, that betrays the history of one born of a virgin has as much authority with him, from St. Sommonocodom, as from St. Matthew. Thus he treats revelation. Then as to philosophy, he tells you, p. 136, "Cicero produces this as an instance of a probable opinion, that they who study philosophy do not believe there are any gods;" and then, from consideration of various notions he affirms Tully concludes, "That there can be nothing after death."

As to what he misrepresents of Tully, the short sentence on the head of this paper is enough to oppose; but who can have patience to reflect upon the assembly of impostures among which our author places the religion of his country? As for my part, I cannot see any possible interpretation to give this work, but a design to subvert and ridicule the authority of Scripture. The peace and tranquility of the nation, and regards even above those, are so much concerned in this matter, that it is difficult to express sufficient sorrow for the offender, or indignation against him. But if ever man deserved to be denied the common benefits of air and water, it is the author of a discourse of Free-thinking.

—*mentisque capacius altæ*. Ovid. I. 1. v. 76.

Capacious of a more exalted mind.

AS I was the other day taking a solitary walk in St. Paul's, indulged my thoughts in the pursuit of a certain analogy between the fabric and the Christian church in the largest sense. The divine order and œconomy of the one seemed to be emblematically set forth by the just, plain and majestic architecture of the other. And as the one consists of a great variety of parts united in the same regular design, according to the truest art, and most exact proportion; so the other contains a decent subordination of members, various sacred institutions, sublime doctrines, and solid precepts of morality digested into the same design, and with an admirable concurrence tending to one view, the happiness and exaltation of human nature.

In the midst of my contemplation I beheld a fly upon one of the pillars; and it straight-way came into my head, that this same fly was a Free-thinker. For it required some comprehension in the eye of the spectator to take in at one view the various parts of the building, in order to observe their symmetry and design. But to the fly, whose prospect was confined to a little part of one of the stones of a single pillar, the joint beauty of the whole, or the distinct use of its parts, were inconspicuous, and nothing could appear but small inequalities

in the surface of the hewn none, which, in the view of that insect, seemed so many deformed rocks and precipices.

The thoughts of a Free-thinker are employed on certain minute particularities of religion, the difficulty of a single text, or the unaccountableness of some step of Providence or point of doctrine to his narrow faculties, without comprehending the scope and design of Christianity, the perfection to which it raiseth human nature, the light it hath shed abroad in the world, and the close connection it hath as well with the good of public societies, as with that of particular persons.

This raised in me some reflections on that frame or disposition which is called largeness of mind, its necessity towards forming a true judgment of things, and where the soul is not incurably stunted by nature, what are the likeliest methods to give it enlargement.

It is evident that philosophy doth open and enlarge the mind, by the general views to which men are habituated in that study, and by the contemplation of more numerous and distant objects than fall within the sphere of mankind in the ordinary pursuits of life. Hence it comes to pass that philosophers judge of most things very differently from the vulgar. Some instances of this may be seen in the *Theætetus* of Plato, where Socrates makes the following remarks among others of the like nature.

“When a philosopher hears ten thousand acres mentioned as a great estate, he looks upon it as an inconsiderable spot, having been used to contemplate the whole globe of earth; or when he beholds a man elated with the nobility of his race, because he can reckon a series of seven rich ancestors, the philosopher thinks him a stupid ignorant fellow, whose mind cannot reach to a general view of human nature, which would shew him that we have all innumerable ancestors, among whom are crouds of rich and poor, kings and slaves, Greeks and Barbarians.” Thus far Socrates, who was accounted wiser than the rest of the Heathens, for notions which approach the nearest to Christianity.

As all parts and branches of philosophy, or speculative knowledge, are useful in that respect, astronomy is peculiarly adapted to remedy a little and narrow spirit. In that science, there are good reasons assigned to prove the sun an hundred thousand times bigger than our earth; and the distance of the stars so prodigious, that a cannon bullet, continuing in its ordinary rapid motion, would not arrive from hence at the nearest of them in the space of an hundred and fifty thousand years. These ideas wonderfully dilate and expand the mind. There is something in the immensity of this distance, that shocks and overwhelms the imagination, it is too big for the grasp of the human intellect: estates, provinces, and kingdoms, vanish at its presence. It were to be wished a certain prince, who hath encouraged the study of it in his subjects, had been himself a proficient in astronomy. This might have shewed him how mean an ambition that was, which terminated in a small part of what is in itself but a point, in respect of that part of the universe which lies within our view.

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But the Christian religion ennobleth and enlargeth the mind beyond any other profession or science whatsoever. Upon that scheme, while the earth, and the transient enjoyments of this life, shrink in the narrowest dimensions, and are accounted as “the dast of a balance, the drop of a bucket, yea less than nothing,” the intellectual world opens wider to our view: the perfections of the Deity, the nature and excellency of virtue, the dignity of the human soul, are displayed in the largest characters. The mind of man seems to adapt itself to the different nature of its objects; it is contracted and debased by being conversant in little and low things, and feels a proportionable enlargement arising from the contemplation of these great and sublime ideas.

The greatness of things is comparative; and this does not only hold, in respect of extension, but likewise in respect of dignity, duration, and all kinds of perfection. Astronomy opens the mind, and alters our judgment, with regard to the magnitude of extended beings but Christianity produceth an universal greatness of soul. Philosophy increaseth our views in every respect but Christianity extends them to a degree beyond the light of nature.

How mean must the most exalted potentate upon earth appear to that eye which takes in innumerable orders of blessed spirits, differing in glory and perfection? How little must the amusements of sense, and the ordinary occupations of mortal men, seem to one who engaged in so noble a pursuit, as the assimilation of himself to the Deity, which is the proper employment of every Christian!

And the improvement which grows from habituating the mind to the comprehensive views of religion must not be thought wholly to regard the understanding. Nothing is of greater force to subdue the inordinate motions of the heart, and to regulate the will. Whether a man be actuated by his passions or his reason, these are first wrought upon by some object, which stirs the soul in proportion to its apparent dimensions. Hence irreligious men, whose short prospects are filled with earth, and sense, and mortal life, are invited by these mean ideas, to actions proportionably little and low. But a mind whose views are enlightened and extended by religion, is animated to nobler pursuits, by more sublime and remote objects.

There is not any instance of weakness in the Free-thinkers that raises my indignation more, than their pretending to ridicule Christians, as men of narrow understandings, and to pass themselves upon the world for persons of superior sense, and more enlarged views. But I leave it to any impartial man to judge which hath the nobler sentiments, which the greater views; he whose notions are stinted to a few miserable inlets of sense, or he whose sentiments are raised above the common taste, by the anticipation of those delights which will satiate the soul, when the whole capacity of her nature is branched out into new faculties? he who looks for nothing beyond this short span of duration, or he whose aims are so extended with the endless length of eternity? he who derives his spirit from the elements, or he who thinks it was inspired by the Almighty?

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Sir,

“SINCE you have not refused to insert matters of a theological nature in those excellent papers, with which you daily both instruct and divert us, I earnestly desire you to print the following paper. The notions therein advanced are, for ought I know, new to the English reader, and, if they are true, will afford room for more useful inferences.

No man that reads the Evangelists, but must observe that our blessed Saviour does upon every occasion bend all his force and zeal to rebuke and correct the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Upon that subject he shews a warmth which one meets with in no other part of his sermons. They were so enraged at the public detection of their secret villanies, by one who saw through all their disguises, that they joined in the prosecution of him; which was so vigorous that Pilate at last consented to his death. The frequency and vehemence of these reprehensions of our Lord, have made the word Pharisee to be looked upon as odious among Christians, and to mean only one who lays the utmost stress upon the outward, ceremonial and ritual part of his religion, without having such an inward sense of it as would lead him to a general and sincere observance of those duties which can only arise from the heart, and which cannot be supposed to spring from a desire of applause or profit.

This is plain from the history of the life and actions of our Lord, in the four Evangelists. One of them, St. Luke, continued his history down in a second part, which we commonly call the Acts of the Apostles. Now it is observable, that in this second part, in which he gives a particular account of what the apostles did and suffered at Jerusalem upon their first entering upon their commission, and also of what St. Paul did after he was consecrated to the apostleship till his journey to Rome, we find not only no opposition to Christianity from the Pharisees, but several signal occasions in which they assisted its first teachers, when the Christian church was in its infant state. The true, zealous and heart persecutors of Christianity at that time were the Sadducees, whom we may truly call the Free-thinkers among the Jews. They believed neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, *i.e.*, in plain English, they were Deists at least, if not Atheists. They could outwardly comply with, and conform to the establishment in church and state, and they pretended forsooth to belong only to a particular sect; and because there was nothing in the law of Moses, which, in many words, asserted a resurrection, they appeared to adhere to that in a particular manner beyond any other part of the Old Testament. These men therefore justly dreaded the spreading of Christianity after the ascension of our Lord, because it was wholly founded upon his resurrection.

Accordingly, therefore, when Peter and John had cured the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, and had thereby raised a wonderful expectation of themselves among the people, the priests and Sadducees, clapt them up, and sent them away for the first time

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with a severe reprimand. Quickly after, when the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, and many miracles wrought after those severe instances of the apostolical power had alarmed the priests, who looked upon the temple worship, and consequently their bread, to be struck at; these priests, and all they that were with them, who were of the sect of the Sadducees, imprisoned the apostles, intending to examine them in the great council the next day: where, when the council met, and the priests and Sadducees proposed to proceed with great rigour against them, we find that Gamaliel, a very eminent Pharisee, St. Paul's master, a man of great authority among the people, many of whose determinations we have still preserved in the body of the Jewish traditions, commonly called the Talmud, opposed their heat, and told them, for ought they knew, the apostles might be actuated by the Spirit of God, and that in such a case it would be in vain to oppose them; since, if they did so, they would only fight against God, whom they could not overcome. Gamaliel was so considerable a man amongst his own sect, that we may reasonably believe he spoke the sense of his party as well as his own. St. Stephen's martyrdom came on presently after, in which we do not find the Pharisees, as such, had any hand; it is probable that he was prosecuted by those who had before imprisoned Peter and John. One novice indeed of that sect was so zealous that he kept the clothes of those that stoned him. This novice, whose zeal went beyond all bounds, the great St. Paul, who was particularly honoured with a call from heaven by which he was converted, and he was afterwards, by God himself, appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Besides him, and him too reclaimed in so glorious a manner, we find no one Pharisee, either named or hinted at by St. Luke, as an opposer of Christianity in these earliest days. What others might do we know not. But we find the Sadducees pursuing St. Paul even to death at his coming to Jerusalem, in the [21st of the Acts](#). He then, upon all occasions, owned himself to be a Pharisee. In the [22d chapter](#) he told the people, that he had been bred up at the feet of Gamaliel after the strictest manner, in the law of his fathers. In the [23d chapter](#) he told the council that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and that he was accused for asserting the hope and resurrection of the dead, which was their darling doctrine. Hereupon the Pharisees stood by him, and though they did not own our Saviour to be the Messiah, yet they would not deny but some angel or spirit might have spoken to him, and then if they opposed him, they should fight against God. This was the very argument Gamaliel had used before. The resurrection of our Lord, which they saw so strenuously asserted by the apostles, whose miracles they also saw and owned, ([Acts iv. 16](#)) seems to have struck them, and many of them were converted ([Acts xv. 5.](#)) even without a miracle, and the rest stood still and made no opposition.

We see here what the part was which the Pharisees acted in this important conjuncture. Of the Sadducees, we meet not with one in the whole apostolic history that was converted. We hear of no miracles wrought to convince any of them, though there was an eminent one wrought to reclaim a Pharisee. St. Paul, we see, after his conversion, always gloried in his

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having been bred a Pharisee. He did so to the people of Jerusalem, to the great council, to King Agrippa, and to the Philippians. So that from hence we may justly infer, that it was not their institution, which was in itself laudable, which our blessed Saviour found fault with, but it was their hypocrisy, their covetousness, their oppression, the overvaluing themselves upon their zeal for the ceremonial law, and their adding to that yoke, by their traditions, all which were not properly essentials of their institution, that our Lord blamed.

But I must not run on. What I would observe, Sir, is, that Atheism is more dreadful, and would be more grievous to human society, if it were invested with sufficient power, than religion under any shape, where its professors do at the bottom believe what they profess, I despair not of a Papist's conversion, though I would not willingly lie at a zealot Papist's mercy, (and no Protestant would, if he knew what Popery is) though he truly believes in our Saviour. But the Free-thinker, who scarcely believes there is a God, and certainly disbelieves revelations is a very terrible animal. He will talk of natural rights, and the just freedoms of mankind, no longer than till he himself gets into power; and, by the instance before us, we have small grounds to hope for his salvation, or that God will ever vouchsafe him sufficient grace to reclaim him from errors, which have been so immediately levelled against himself.

If these notions be true, as I verily believe they are, I thought they might be worth publishing at this time, for which reason they are sent in this manner to you by,

Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

M. N.

Quid si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro: nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri velo: sin mortuus (ut quidam minuti philosophi censent) nihil sentiam; no vereor, ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant.

I please myself in my mistake: nor while I live, will I ever chuse, that this opinion, wherewith I am so much delighted, should be wrested from me, but if, at death, I am to be annihilated, as some minute philosophers imagine, I am not afraid lest those wise men when extinct too, should laugh at my error.

SEVERAL letters which I have lately received give me information, that some well disposed persons have taken offence at my using the word *Free-thinker* as a term of reproach; To set therefore this matter in a clear light, I must declare that no one can have a greater veneration than myself for the Free-thinkers of antiquity, who acted the same part in those times, as the great men of the reformation did in several nations of Europe, by exerting themselves against the idolatry and superstition of the times in which they lived. It was by this noble impulse that Socrates and his disciples, as well as all the philosophers of note in Greece; and Cicero, Seneca, with all the learned men of Rome, endeavoured to enlighten

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their contemporaries amidst the darkness and ignorance in which the world was then sunk and buried.

The great points which these Free-thinkers endeavoured to establish and inculcate into the minds of men, were, the formation of the universe, the superintendency of Providence, the perfection of the divine nature, the immortality of the soul, and the future state of rewards and punishments. They all complied with the religion of their country, as much as possible, in such particulars as did not contradict and pervert these great and fundamental doctrines of mankind. On the contrary, the persons who now set up for Free-thinkers, are such as endeavour, by a little trash of words and sophistry, to weaken and destroy those very principles, for the vindication of which, freedom of thought at first become laudable and heroic. These apostates from reason and good sense, can look at the glorious frame of nature, without paying any adoration to him that raised it; can consider the great revolutions in the universe, without lifting up their minds to that superior power which hath the direction of it; can presume to censure the Deity in his ways towards men; can level mankind with the beasts that perish; can extinguish in their own minds all the pleasing hopes of a future state, and lull themselves into a stupid security against the terrors of it. If one were to take the word *Priestcraft* out of the mouths of these shallow monsters, they would be immediately struck dumb. It is by the help of this single term that they endeavour to disappoint the good works of the most learned and venerable order of men, and harden the hearts of the ignorant against the very light of nature, and the common received notions of mankind. We might not to treat such miscreants as these upon the foot of fair disputants, but to pour out contempt upon them, and speak of them with scorn and infamy, as the pest of society, the revilers of human nature, and the blasphemers of a Being, whom a good man would rather die than hear dishonoured. Cicero, after having mentioned the great heroes of knowledge that recommended this divine doctrine of the immortality of the soul, calls those small pretenders to wisdom who declared against it, certain minute philosophers, using a diminutive even of the word *little*, to express the despicable opinion he had of them. The contempt he throws upon them in another passage is yet more remarkable; where, to shew the mean thoughts he entertains of them, he declares, he would rather be in the wrong with Plato, than in the right with such company. There is indeed nothing in the world so ridiculous as one of these grave philosophical Free-thinkers, that hath neither passions nor appetites to gratify, no hates of blood nor vigour of constitution that can turn his systems of Infidelity to his advantage, or raise pleasures out of them which are inconsistent with the belief of an hereafter. One that has neither wit, gallantry, mirth or youth to indulge by those notions, but only a poor, joyless, uncomfortable vanity of distinguishing himself from the rest of mankind, is

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rather to be regarded as a mischievous lunatic than a mistaken philosopher. A chaste Infidel, a speculative Libertine, is an animal that I should not believe to be in nature, did I not sometimes meet with this species of men, that plead for the indulgence of their passions in the midst of a severe studious life, and talk against the immortality of the soul over a dish of coffee.

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I would fain ask a minute philosopher, what good he proposes to mankind by the publishing of his doctrines? Will they make a man a better citizen, or father of a family; a more endearing husband, friend, or son? Will they enlarge his public or private virtues, or correct any of his frailties or vices? What is there either joyful or glorious in such opinions? Do they either refresh or enlarge our thoughts? Do they contribute to the happiness, or raise the dignity of human nature? The only good that I have ever heard pretended to, is, that they banish terrors, and set the mind at ease. But whose terrors do they banish? It is certain, if there were any strength in their arguments, they would give great disturbance to minds that are influenced by virtue, honour and morality, and take from us the only comforts and supports of affliction, sickness and old age. The minds therefore which they set at ease, are only those of impenitent criminals and malefactors, and which, to the good of mankind, should be in perpetual terror and alarm.

I must confess, nothing is more of usual than for a Free-thinker, in proportion as the insolence of scepticism is abated in him by years and knowledge, or humbled or beaten down by sorrow or sickness, to reconcile himself to the general conceptions of reasonable creatures; so that we frequently see the apostates turning from their revolt toward the end of their lives, and employing the refuse of their parts in promoting those truths which they had before endeavoured to invalidate.

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The history of a Gentleman in France is very well known, who was so zealous a promoter of Infidelity, that he had got together a select company of disciples, and travelled into all parts of the kingdom to make converts. In the midst of his fantastical success he fell sick, and was reclaimed to such a sense of his condition, that after he had passed some time in great agonies and horrors of mind, he begged those who had the care of burying him, to dress his body in the habit of a Capuchin, that the devil might not run away with it: and, to do farther justice upon himself, desired them to tie a halter about his neck, as a mark of that ignominious punishment, which in his own thoughts he he had so justly deserved.

I would not have persecution so far disgraced, as to with these vermin might be advertised on by any legal penalties; though I think it would be highly reasonable that those few of them who die in the professions of their infidelity, should have such tokens of infamy fixed upon them, as might distinguish those bodies which are given up by the owners to oblivion and putrefaction, from those which rest in hope, and shall rise in glory. But, at the same time that I am against doing them the honour of the notice of our laws, which ought not to suppose there are such criminals in being, I have often wondered, how they can be

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tolerated in any mixed conversations, while they are venting these absurd opinions; and should think, that if, on any such occasions, half a dozen of the most robust Christians in the company would lead one of these Gentlemen to a pump, or convey him into a blanket, they would do very good service both to church and state. I do not know how the law stands in this particular; but I hope, whatever knocks, bangs or thumps, might be given with such an honest intention, would not be construed as a breach of the peace. I dare say they would not be returned by the person who receives them; for whatever these fools may say in the vanity of their hearts, they are too wise to risk their lives upon the uncertainty of their opinions.

When I was a young man about this town, I frequented the ordinary of the Black Horse, in Holburn, where the person that usually presided at the table was a rough old-fashioned Gentleman, who according to the customs of those times, had been the Major and Preacher of a regiment. It happened one day that a nosy young officer, bred in France, was venting some new fangled notions, and speaking, in the gait of his humour, against the dispensations of Providence. The Major at first only desired him to talk more respectfully of one for whom all the company had an honour; but finding him run on in his extravagance, began to reprimand him after a more serious manner. Young man! said he, do not abuse your benefactor, whilst you are eating his bread. Consider whose air you breathe, whose presence you are in, and who it is that gave you the power of that very speech which you make use of to his dishonour. The young fellow, who thought to turn matters into a jest, asked him, if he was going to preach? But, at the same time, desired him to take care what he said, when he spoke to a man of honour. A man of honour, says the Major; thou art an Infidel and a blasphemer, and I shall use thee as such. In short, the quarrel ran so high, that the Major was desired to walkout. Upon their coming into the garden, the old fellow advised his antagonist to consider the place into which one pass might drive him; but finding him grow upon him to a degree of scurrility, as believing the advice proceeded from fear; Sirrah, says he, if a thunderbolt does not strike thee dead before I come at thee, I than not fail to chastise thee for thy profaneness to thy Maker, and thy sauciness to his servant. Upon this he drew his sword, and cried out with a loud voice, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" which so terrified his antagonist, that he was immediately disarmed, and thrown upon his knees. In this posture he begged his life; but the Major refused to grant it before he had asked pardon for his offence in a short extemporary prayer, which the old Gentleman dictated to him upon the spot, and which his proselyte repeated after him, in the presence of the whole ordinary, that were now gathered about him in the garden.

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SECT. X.

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, AND A FUTURE STATE.

—*Inter silvas academi quærere verum.*

Hor. lib. II. epist. 2. v. 45.

To search out truth in academic groves.

THE course of my last speculation² led me insensibly into a subject upon which I always meditate with great delight, I mean the immortality of the soul. I was yesterday walking alone in one of my friend's woods, and lost myself in it, very agreeably, as I was running over in my mind the several arguments that establish this great point, which is the basis of morality, and the source of all the pleasing hopes and secret joys that can arise in the heart of a reasonable creature. I considered those several proofs drawn,

First, from the nature of the soul itself, and particularly its immateriality, which, though not absolutely necessary to the eternity of its duration, has, I think, been evinced to almost a demonstration.

Secondly, from its passions and sentiments, as particularly from its love of existence, its horror of annihilation, and its hopes of immortality, with that secret satisfaction which it finds in the practice of virtue, and that uneasiness which follows in it upon the commission of vice.

Thirdly, from the nature of the Supreme Being, whole justice, goodness, wisdom and veracity, are all concerned in this great point.

But among these and other excellent arguments for the immortality of the soul, there is one drawn from the perpetual progress of the soul, to its perfection, without a possibility of ever arriving at it; which is a hint that I do not remember to have seen opened and improved by others who have written on this subject, though it seems to me to carry a great weight with it. How can it enter into the thoughts of man, that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, shall fall away into nothing almost as soon as it is created? Are such abilities made for no purpose? A brute arrives at a point of perfection that he can never pass; in a few years he has all the endowments he is capable of; and were he to live ten thousand more, would be the same thing he is at present. Were a human soul thus at a stand in her accomplishments, were her faculties to be full blown, and incapable of further enlargements, I could imagine it might fall away insensibly, and drop at once into a state of annihilation. But can we believe a thinking being, that is in a perpetual progress of improvements, and travelling on from perfection to perfection, after having just looked abroad into the works of its Creator, and made a few discoveries

² See Spectator, Vol. II. No. 111.

of his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, must perish at her first setting out, and in the very beginning of her enquiries?

A man, considered in his present state, seems only sent into the world to propagate his kind. He provides himself with a successor, and immediately quits his post to make room for him.

—Hæres

Hæredem alterius, velut unda supervenit undam.

Hor. lib. II. Epist. 2. v. 175.

Heir urges on his predecessor heir,
Like wave impelling wave.

He does not seem born to enjoy life, but to deliver it down to others. This is not surprising to consider in animals, which are formed for our use, and can finish their business in a short life. The silk-worm, after having spun her task, lays her eggs and dies. But a man can never have taken in his full measure of knowledge, has not time to subdue his passions, establish his soul in virtue, and come up to the perfection of his nature, before he is hurried off the stage. Would an infinitely wise Being make such glorious creatures for so mean a purpose? Can he delight in the production of such abortive intelligences, such short-lived reasonable beings? Would he give us talents that are not to be exerted? Capacities that are never to be gratified? How can we find that wisdom, which shines through all his works, in the formation of man, without looking on this world as only a nursery for the next, and believing that the several generations of rational creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick successions, are only to receive their first rudiments of existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted into a more friendly climate, where they may spread and flourish to all eternity?



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There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion than this, of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it. To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength, to consider that she is to shine for ever with new accessions of glory, and brighten to all eternity; that she will be still adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; carries in it something wonderfully agreeable to that ambition which is natural to the mind of man. Nay, it must be a prospect pleasing to God himself, to see his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him, by greater degrees of resemblance.



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Methinks this single consideration, of the progress of a finite spirit to perfection, will be sufficient to extinguish all envy in inferior natures, and all contempt in superior. That cherubim, which now appears as a God to a human soul, knows very well, that the period will come about in eternity, when the human soul shall be as perfect as he himself now is: nay, when she shall look down upon that degree of perfection, as much as she now falls

short of it. It is true, the higher nature still advances, and by that means preserves his distance and superiority in the scale of being: but he knows how high soever the station is, of which he stands possessed at present, the inferior nature will at length mount up to it, and shine forth in the same degree of glory.

With what astonishment and veneration may we look into our own souls, where there are such hidden stores of virtue and knowledge, such inexhausted sources of perfection! We know not yet what we shall be, nor will it ever enter into the heart of man to conceive the glory that will be always in reserve for him. The soul, considered with its Creator, is like one of those mathematical lines that may draw nearer to another for all eternity, without a possibility of touching it: and can there be a thought so transporting as to consider ourselves in these perpetual approaches to him, who is not only the standard of perfection, but of happiness!



Nescio quomodo inhæret in mentibus quasi seculorum quoddam augurium fututorum; idque in maximis, ingeniis altissimisque animis existit maxime et apparet facillime.

Cic. Tusc. Quæst.

There is, I know not how, deeply imprinted in the minds of men a certain presage, as it were, of a future existence; and this takes the deepen root, and is most discoverable in the greatest geniuses and most elevated minds.

To the SPECTATOR.

Sir,

“I AM fully persuaded, that one of the best springs of generous and worthy actions, is the having generous and worthy thoughts of ourselves. Whoever has a mean opinion of the dignity of his nature will act in no higher a rank than he has allotted himself in his own estimation. If he considers his being as circumscribed by the uncertain term of a few years, his designs will be contracted into the same narrow span he imagines is to bound his existence. How can he exalt his thoughts to any thing great and noble, who only believes that, after a short turn on the stage of this world, he is to sink into oblivion, and to lose his consciousness for ever?

For this reason, I am of opinion that so useful and elevated a contemplation as that of the soul’s immortality cannot be resumed too often. There is not a more improving exercise to the human mind than to be frequently reviving its own great privileges and endowments, nor a more effectual means to awaken in us an ambition raised above low objects and little pursuits, than to value ourselves as heirs of eternity.

It is a very great satisfaction to consider the best and wisest of mankind in all nations and ages, asserting as with one voice this their birth-right, and to find it ratified by an express revelation. At the same time, if we turn our thoughts inward upon ourselves, we may meet with a kind of secret sense concurring with the proofs of our own immortality.



You have in my opinion raised a good presumptive argument from the increasing appetite the mind has to knowledge, and to the extending its own faculties, which cannot be accomplished, as the more restrained perfection of lower creatures may in the limits of a short life. I think another probable conjecture may be raised from our appetite to duration itself, and from a reflection on our progress through the several stages of it. We are complaining, as you observe in a former speculation, of the shortness of life, and yet are perpetually hurrying over the parts of it, to arrive at certain little settlements, or imaginary points of rest, which are dispersed up and down in it.

Now, let us consider what happens to us when we arrive at these imaginary points of rest. Do we stop our motion, and sit down satisfied in the settlement we have gained? or are we not removing the boundary, and marking out new points of rest, to which we press forward with the like eagerness, and which cease to be such as fast as we attain them? Our case is like that of a traveller upon the Alps, who should fancy that the top of the next hill must end his journey, because it terminates his prospect; but he no sooner arrives at it, than he sees new ground and other hills beyond it, and continues to travel on as before.

This is so plainly every man's condition in life, that there is no one who has observed any thing but may observe, that as fast as his time wears away, his appetite to something future remains. The use therefore I would make of it is this, that since nature (as some love to express it) does nothing in vain; or, to speak properly, since the Author of our being has planted no wandering passion in it, no desire which has not its object, futurity is the proper object of the passion so constantly exercised about it; and this restlessness in the present, this assigning ourselves over to farther stages of duration, this successive grasping at something still to come, appears to me (whatever it may to others) as a kind of instinct, or natural symptom, which the mind of man has of its own immortality.

I take it at the same time for granted, that the immortality of the soul is sufficiently established by other arguments: and if so, this appetite, which otherwise would be very unaccountable and absurd, seems very reasonable, and adds strength to the conclusion. But I am amazed when I consider there are creatures capable of thought, who, in spite of every argument, can form to themselves a sullen satisfaction in thinking otherwise. There is something so pitifully mean in the inverted ambition of that man who can hope for annihilation, and please himself to think that his whole fabric shall one day crumble into dust, and mix with the mass of inanimate beings; that it equally deserves our admiration and pity. The mystery of such men's unbelief is not hard to be penetrated; and indeed amounts to nothing more than a sordid hope that they shall not be immortal, because they dare not be so.

This brings me back to my first observation, and gives me occasion to say further, that as worthy actions spring from worthy thoughts, so worthy thoughts are likewise the consequence of worthy actions: but the wretch who has degraded himself below the character

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of immortality, is very willing to resign his pretensions to it, and to substitute, in its room, a dark negative happiness in the extinction of his being.

The admirable Shakespear has given us a very strong image of the unsupported condition of such a person in his last minutes in the second part of King Henry VI. where Cardinal Beaufort, who had been concerned in the murder of the good Duke Humphrey, is represented on his death-bed. After some short confused speeches, which shew an imagination disturbed with guilt, just as he is expiring, King Henry standing by him full of compassion, says,

Lord Cardinal! if thou thinkest on heaven's bliss,
Hold up thy hand, make signal of that hope!
He dies, and makes no sign!

The despair which is here shewn, without a word or action on the part of the dying person, is beyond what could he painted by the most forcible expressions whatever,

I shall not pursue this thought further, but only add, that as annihilation is not to be had with a wish, so it is the most abject thing in the world to wish it. What are honour, fame, wealth, or power, when compared with the generous expectation of a being without end, and a happiness adequate to that being? I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient
humble servant,
T. D.

To live in joyful hope becomes the wise.

THE time present seldom affords sufficient employment to the mind of man. Objects of pain or pleasure, love or admiration, do not lie thick enough together in life to keep the soul in constant action and supply an immediate exercise to its faculties. In order therefore to remedy this defect, that the mind may not want business, but always have materials for thinking, she is endued with certain powers that can recal what is passed, and anticipate what is to come.

That wonderful faculty which we call the memory is perpetually looking back, when we have nothing present to entertain us. It is like those repositories in several animals that are filled with stores of their former food, on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails.

As the memory relieves the mind in her vacant moments, and prevents any chasms of thought by ideas of what is past, we have other faculties that agitate and employ her upon what is to come. These are the passions of hope and fear.

By these two passions we reach forward into futurity, and bring up to our present thoughts objects that lie hid in the remotest depths of time. We suffer misery and enjoy happiness before they are in being: we can set the sun and stars forward, or lose sight of



them by wandering into those retired parts of eternity, when the heavens and earth shall be no more.

By the way, who can imagine that the existence of a creature is to be circumscribed by time, whose thoughts are not? But I shall, in this paper, confine myself to that particular passion which goes by the name of *hope*.

Our actual enjoyments are so few and transient, that man would be a very miserable being were he not endued with this passion, which gives him a taste of those good things that may possibly come into his possession. "We should hope for every thing that is good," says the old poet Linus, "because there is nothing which may not be hoped for, and nothing but what the gods are able to give us."

Hope quickens all the still parts of life, and keeps the mind awake in her most remiss and indolent hours. It gives habitual serenity and good humour. It is a kind of vital heat in the soul that cheers and gladdens her, when he does not attend to it. It makes pain easy, and labour pleasant.

Beside these several advantages which rise from hope, there is another which is none of the least, and that is, its great efficacy in preserving us from setting too high a value on present enjoyments. The saying of Cæsar is very well known. When he had given away all his estate in gratuities among his friends, one of them asked what he had left for himself? To which that great man replied, Hope. His natural magnanimity hindered him from prising what he was certainly possessed of, and turned all his thoughts upon something more valuable than he had in view. I question not but every reader will draw a moral from this story, and apply it to himself without my direction.

The old story of Pandora's box (which many of the learned believe was formed among the Heathens upon the tradition of the fall of man) shews us how deplorable a state they thought the present life without hope. To set forth the utmost condition of misery, they tell us that our forefather, according to the Pagan theology, had a great vessel presented him by Pandora upon his lifting up the lid of it, says the fable, there flew out all the calamities and distempers incident to men, from which, till that time, they had been altogether exempt. Hope, who had been inclosed in the cup with so much bad company, instead of flying off with the rest, stuck so close to the lid of it that it was shut down upon her.

I shall make but two reflections upon what I have hitherto said. First, that no kind of life is so happy as that which is full of hope, especially when the hope is well grounded, and when the object of it is of an exalted kind, and in its nature proper to make, the person happy who enjoys it. This proposition must be very evident to those who consider how few are the present enjoyments of the most happy man, and how insufficient to give him an entire satisfaction and acquiescence in them.

My next observation is this, that a religious life is that which most abounds in a well-grounded hope, and such an one as is fixed on objects that are capable of making us entirely

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happy. This Hope in a religious man, is much more sure and certain than the hope of any temporal blessing, as it is strengthened not only by reason, but by faith. It has at the same time its eye perpetually fixed on that state, which implies, in the very notion of it, the most full and the most complete happiness.

I have before shewn how the influence of hope in general sweetens life, and makes our present condition supportable, if not pleasing; but a religious hope has still greater advantages. It does not only bear up the mind under her sufferings, but makes her rejoice in them, as they may be the instruments of procuring her the great and ultimate end of all her hope.

Religious hope has likewise this advantage above any other kind of hope, that it is able to revive the dying man, and to fill his mind not only with secret comfort and refreshment, but sometimes with rapture and transport. He triumphs in his agonies, whilst the soul springs forward with delight to the great object which she has always had in view, and leaves the body with an expectation of being reunited to her in a glorious and joyful resurrection.

I shall conclude this essay with those emphatical expressions of a lively hope, which the Psalmist made use of in the midst of those dangers and adversities which surrounded him; for the following passage had its present and personal, as well as its future and prophetic sense. "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 rejoiceth; 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 corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

For we are his offspring. [Acts xvii. 28.](#)

To the SPECTATOR.

Sir,

IT has been usual to remind persons of rank, on great occasions in life, of their race and quality, and to what expectations they were born: that by considering what is worthy of them, they may be withdrawn from mean pursuits, and encouraged to laudable undertakings. This is turning nobility into a principle of virtue, and making it productive of merits, as it is understood to have been originally a reward of it.

It is for the like reason, I imagine, that you have, in some of your speculations, asserted to your readers the dignity of human nature. But you cannot be insensible that this is a controverted doctrine; there are authors who consider human nature in a very different view, and books of maxims have been written to shew the falsity of all human virtues. The reflexions which are made on this subject usually take some tincture from the tempers and characters of those that make them. Politicians can resolve the most shining actions among men into artifice and design; others, who are soured by discontent, repulses, or ill usage, are apt to mistake their spleen for philosophy; men of profligate lives, and such as find

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themselves incapable of rising to any distinction among their fellow-creatures, are for pulling down all appearances of merit, which seem to upbraid them; and Satirists describe nothing but deformity. From all these hands we have such draughts of mankind as are represented in those burlesque pictures, which the Italians call Caracatures; where the art consists in preserving amidst distorted proportion and aggravated features, some distinguishing likeness of the person, but in such a manner as to transform the most agreeable beauty into the most odious monster.

It is very disingenuous to level the best of mankind with the worst, and for the faults of particulars to degrade the whole species. Such methods tend not only to remove a man's good opinion of others, but to destroy that reverence for himself, which is a great guard of innocence, and a spring of virtue.

It is true indeed, that there are surprising mixtures of beauty and deformity, of wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, in the human make; such a disparity is found among numbers of the same kind; and every individual, in some instances, or at some times, is so unequal to himself, that man seems to be the most wavering and inconsistent being in the whole creation. So that the question in morality, concerning the dignity of our nature, may at first sight appear like some difficult question in Natural Philosophy, in which the arguments on both sides seem to be of equal strength. But as I began with considering this point, as it relates to action, I shall here borrow an admirable reflection from Monsieur Pascal, which I think sets it in its proper light.

It is of dangerous consequence, says he, to represent to man how near he is to the level of beasts, without shewing him at the same time his greatness. It is likewise dangerous to let him see his greatness without his meanness. It is more dangerous yet to leave him ignorant of either; but very beneficial that he should be made sensible of both. Whatever imperfections we may have in our nature, it is the business of religion and virtue to rectify them, as far as is consistent with our present state. In the mean time, it is no small encouragement to generous minds to consider that we shall put them all off with our mortality. That sublime manner of salutation with which the Jews approached their kings,

O king, live for ever!

may be addressed to the lowest and most despised mortal among us, under all the infirmities and distresses with which we see him surrounded. And whoever believes the immortality of the soul, will not need a better argument for the dignity of his nature, nor a stronger incitement to actions suitable to it.

I am naturally led by this reflection to a subject I have already touched upon in a former letter, and cannot without pleasure call to mind the thoughts of Cicero, to this purpose, in the close of his book concerning old age. Every one who is acquainted with his writings will remember, that the elder Cato is introduced in that discourse as the speaker, and Scipio and Lelius as his auditors. This venerable person is represented looking forward as it were from

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the verge of extreme old age, into a future state, and rising into a contemplation on the unperishable part of his nature, and its existence after death. I shall collect part of his discourse; and, as you have formerly offered some arguments for the soul's immortality, agreeable both to reason and the Christian doctrine, I believe your readers will not be displeased to see how the same great truth shines in the pomp of Roman eloquence.

“This, (says Cato,) is my firm persuasion, that since the human soul exerts itself with so great activity, since it has such a remembrance of the past, such a concern for the future; since it is enriched with so many arts, sciences, and discoveries, it is impossible but the being which contains all these must be immortal.

The Elder Cyrus, just before his death, is represented by Xenophon speaking after this manner. Think not, my dearest children, that when I depart from you, I shall be no more, but remember, that my soul, even while I lived among you, was invisible to you; yet by my actions you were sensible it existed in this body. Believe it therefore existing still, though it be still unseen. How quickly would the honours of illustrious men perish after death, if their souls performed nothing to preserve their fame? For my, own part I could never think that the soul, which in a mortal body, lives: but when departed out of it, dies: or that its consciousness is lost when it is discharged out of an unconscious habitation. But when it is freed from all corporeal alliance, then it truly exists. Further, since the human frame is broken by death, tell us what becomes of its parts? It is visible where the materials of other beings are translated, namely, to the source from whence they had their birth. The soul alone, either present or departed, is not the object of our eyes.

Thus Cyrus. But to proceed. No one shall persuade me, Scipio, that your worthy father, or your grandfathers, Paulus and Africanus, or Africanus' father, or uncle, or many other excellent men whom I need not name, performed so many actions to be remembered by posterity, without being sensible that futurity was their right. And, if I may be allowed an old man's privilege, to speak of myself, do you think I would have endured the fatigue of so many wearisome days and nights, both at home and abroad, if I imagined that the same boundary which is set to my life must terminate my glory! Were it not more desirable to have worn out my days in ease and tranquility, free from labour and without emulation? but I know not how, my soul has always raised itself, and looked forward on futurity, in this view and expectation, that when it shall depart out of life; it shall then live for ever; and if this were not true, that the mind is immortal, the souls of the most worthy would not, above all others, have the strongest impulse to glory.

What besides this is the cause that the wisest men die with the greatest equanimity, the ignorant with the greatest concern? Does it not seem, that those minds which have the most

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extensive views, foresee they are removing to a happier condition, which those of a narrower sight do not perceive! I, for my part, am transported with the hope of seeing your ancestors, whom I have honoured and loved, and am earnestly desirous of meeting not only those excellent persons whom I have known, but those too of whom I have heard and read, and of whom I myself have written; nor would I be detained from so pleasing a journey. O happy day! when I final escape from this croud, this heap of pollution, and be admitted to that divine assembly of exalted spirits! when I shall go not only to those great persons I have named, but to my Cato, my son, than whom a better man was never born; and whose funeral rites I myself performed, whereas he ought rather to have attended mine. Yet has not his soul deserted me, but seeming to call back a look on me, is gone before to those habitations to which it was sensible I should follow him. And though I might appear to have borne my loss with courage, I was not unaffected with it, but I comforted myself in the assurance that it would not be long before we should meet again, and be divorced no more.”

I am, Sir, &c.

—*Nec morti esse locum*—Virg. Geog. IV. v. 262.

No room is left for death. Dryden.

A LEWD young fellow seeing an aged hermit go by him barefooted, “Father,” says he, “you are in a very miserable condition if there is not another world.” True son said the hermit; “but what is thy condition if there is?” Man is a creature designed for two different states of being, or rather for two different lives. His first life is short and transient; his second permanent and lasting. The question we are all concerned in is this: In which of these two lives is it our chief interest to make ourselves happy? Or, in other words, Whether we should endeavour to secure to ourselves the pleasures and gratifications of a life which is uncertain and precarious, and at its utmost length of a very inconsiderable duration; or to secure to ourselves the pleasures of a life which is fixed and settled, and will never end? Every man, upon the first hearing of this question knows very well which side of it he ought to close with. But however right we are in theory, it is plain that in practice we adhere to the wrong side of the question. We make provisions for this life, as though it were never to have an end, and for the other life, as though it were never to have a beginning.

Should a spirit of superior rank, who is a stranger to human nature, accidentally alight upon the earth, and take a survey of its inhabitants, what would his notions of us be? Would not he think that we are a species of beings made for quite different ends and purposes than what we really are? Must not he imagine that we were placed in this world to get riches and honours? Would not he think that it was our duty to toil after wealth, and station, and title? Nay, would not he believe we were forbidden poverty by threats of eternal punishment, and enjoined to pursue our pleasures under pain of damnation! He would certainly imagine that we were influenced by a scheme of duties quite opposite to those which are indeed prescribed to us. And truly, according to such an imagination, he must conclude that we

are a species of the most obedient creatures in the universe; that we are constant to our duty, and that we keep a steady eye on the end for which we were sent hither.

But how great would be his astonishment, when he learned that we were beings not designed to exist in this world above threescore and ten years? and that the greatest part of this busy species fall short even of that age? How would he be lost in horror and admiration, when he should know that this set of creatures, who lay out all their endeavours for this life, which scarce deserves the name of existence; when, I say, he should know that this set of creatures are to exist to all eternity in another life, for which they make no preparations? Nothing can be a greater disgrace to reason than that men, who are persuaded of these two different states of being, should be perpetually employed in providing for a life of threescore and ten years, and neglecting to make provision for that which, after many myriads of years, will be still new, and still beginning; especially when we consider that our endeavours for making ourselves great, or rich, or honourable, or whatever else we place our happiness in, may, after all, prove unsuccessful; whereas, if we constantly and sincerely endeavour to make ourselves happy In the other life, we are sure that our endeavours will succeed, and that we shall not be disappointed in our hope.



The following question is started by one of the schoolmen. Supposing the whole body of the earth were a great ball or mass of the finest sand, and that a single grain or particle of this sand should be annihilated every thousand years; supposing then that you had it in your choice to be happy all the while this prodigious mass of sand was Consuming by this slow method till there was not a grain of it left, on condition you were to be miserable for ever after; or supposing that you might be happy for ever after, on condition you would be miserable till the whole mass of sand were thus annihilated at the rate of one sand in a thousand years: which of these two cases would you make your choice?

It must be confessed in this case, so many thousands of years are to the imagination as a kind of eternity, though in reality they do not bear so great a proportion to that duration which is to follow them, as an unit does to the greatest number which you can put together in figures, or as one of those sands to the supposed heap. Reason therefore tells us, without any manner of hesitation, which would be the better part in this choice. However, as I have before intimated, our reason might in such a case be so overset by the imagination, as to dispose some persons to sink under the consideration of the great length of the first part of this duration, and of the great distance of that second duration which is to succeed it. The mind, I say, might give itself up to that happiness which is at hand, considering that it is so very near, and that it would last very long. But when the choice we actually have before us, is this, whether we will chuse to be happy for the space only of threescore and ten, nay, perhaps of only twenty or ten years, I might say of only a day or an hour, and miserable to all eternity; or, on the contrary, miserable for this short term of years, and happy for a whole



eternity; what words are sufficient to express that folly and want of consideration, which, in such a case, makes a wrong choice?

I here put the case even at the worst, by supposing what seldom happens, that a course of virtue makes us miserable in this life; but if we suppose, as it generally happens, that virtue would make us more happy even in this life than a contrary course of vice; how can we sufficiently admire the stupidity or madness of those persons who are capable of making so absurd a choice?

Every wise man therefore will consider this life only as it may conduce to the happiness of the other, and cheerfully sacrifice the pleasures of a few years to those of an eternity.

Sentio te sedem hominum ac domum contemplari, quæ si tibi parva (ut est) ita videtur, hæc coelestia semper spectato; illa humana contemnito.

Cic. Somn. Scip.

I understand, you contemplate the abode and habitation of men; which if it seem so small to you, as indeed it is, direct your views continually to heavenly objects, and contemn those that are earthly.

THE following essay comes from the ingenious author of the letter upon novelty, printed in a late Spectator; the notions are drawn from the Platonic way of thinking, but as they contribute to raise the mind, and may inspire noble sentiments of our own future grandeur and happiness, I think it well deserves to be presented to the public.

“If the universe be the creature of an intelligent mind, this mind could have no immediate regard to himself in producing it. He needed not to make trial of his omnipotence, to be informed what effects were within its reach; the world, as existing in his eternal idea, was then as beautiful as now it is drawn forth into being; and in the immense abyss of his essence are contained far brighter scenes than will be ever set forth to view; it being impossible that the great author of nature should bound his power by giving existence to a system of creatures so perfect, that he cannot improve upon it by any other exertions of his almighty will. Between finite and infinite there is an unmeasured interval, not to be filled up in endless ages; for which reason, the most excellent of God’s works must be equally short of what his power is able to produce, as the most imperfect, and may be exceeded with the same ease.

This thought hath made some imagine, (what, it must be confessed, is not impossible,) that the unfathomed space is ever teeming with new births, the younger still inheriting a greater perfection than the elder. But, as this doth not fall within my present view, I shall content myself, with taking notice, that the consideration now mentioned proves undeniably, that the ideal worlds in the divine understanding yield a prospect incomparably more ample,

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various and delightful than any created world can do; and that therefore, as it is not to be supposed that God should make a world merely of inanimate matter, however diversified or inhabited only by creatures of no higher an order than brutes; so the end for which he designed his reasonable offspring, is the contemplation of his works, the enjoyment of himself, and in both to be happy, having, to this purpose, endued them with correspondent faculties and desires. He can have no greater pleasure from a bare review of his works, than from the survey of his own ideas, but we may be assured that he is well pleased in the satisfaction derived to beings capable of it, and, for whose entertainment, he hath erected this immense theatre. Is not this more than an intimation of our immortality? Man, who when considered as on his probation for a happy existence hereafter, is the most remarkable instance of divine wisdom: if we cut him off from all relation to eternity, is the most wonderful and unaccountable composition in the whole creation. He hath capacities to lodge a much greater variety of knowledge than he will be ever master of, and an unsatisfied curiosity to tread the secret paths of nature and providence; but, with this, his organs, in their present structure, are rather fitted to serve the necessities of a vile body, than to minister to his understanding and, from the little spot to which he is chained, he can frame but wandering guesses concerning the innumerable worlds of light that encompass him, which, though in themselves of a prodigious bigness, do but just glimmer in the remote spaces of the heavens: and when, with a great deal of time and pains, he hath laboured a little way up the steep ascent of truth, and beholds with pity the grovelling multitude beneath, in a moment his foot slides, and he tumbles down headlong into the grave.

Thinking on this, I am obliged to believe, in justice to the Creator of the world, that there is another state when man shall be better situated for contemplation, or rather have it in his power to remove from object to object, and from world to world: and be accommodated with senses, and other helps, for making the quickest and most amazing discoveries. How does such a genius as Sir Isaac Newton, from amidst the darkness that involves human understanding, break forth, and appear like one of another species! The vast machine, we inhabit, lies open to him, he seems not unacquainted with the general laws that govern it; and while with the transport of a philosopher he beholds and admires the glorious work, he is capable of paying at once a more devout and more rational homage to his maker. But alas! how narrow is the prospect even of such a mind? and how obscure to the compass that is taken in by the ken of an angel: or of a soul but newly escaped from its imprisonment in the body! For my part, I freely indulge my soul in the confidence of its future grandeur; it pleases me to think that I, who know so small a portion of the works of the Creator, and with slow and painful steps creep up and down on the surface of this globe, shall ere long shoot away with the swiftness of imagination, trace out the hidden springs of nature's operation, be able to keep pace with the heavenly bodies in the rapidity of their career, be a spectator of the long chain of events in the natural and moral worlds, visit the several

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apartments of the creation, know how they are furnished and how inhabited, comprehend the order, and measure the magnitudes. and distances of those orbs, which to us seem disposed without any regular design, and set all in the same circle; observe the dependence of the parts of each system, and, if our minds are big enough, to grasp the theory of the several systems upon one another, from whence results the harmony of the universe. In eternity a great deal may be done of this kind. I find it of use to cherish this generous ambition; for besides the secret refreshment it diffuses through my soul, it engages me in an endeavour to improve my faculties, as well as to exercise them conformably to the rank I now hold among reasonable beings, and the hope I have of being once advanced to a more exalted station.

The other, and that the ultimate end of man, is the enjoyment of God, beyond which he cannot form a wish. Dim at best are the conceptions we have of the Supreme Being, who, as it were, keeps his creatures in suspense, neither discovering, nor hiding himself; by which means the Libertine hath a handle to dispute his existence, while the most are content to speak him fair, but in their hearts prefer every trifling satisfaction to the favour of their Maker, and ridicule the good man for the singularity of his choice. Will there not a time come, when the Free-thinker shall see his impious schemes overturned, and be made a convert to the truths he hates; when deluded mortals shall be convinced of the folly of their pursuits, and the few wise who followed the guidance of heaven, and, scorning the blandishments of sense and the sordid bribes of the world, aspired to a celestial abode, shall stand possessed of their utmost wish in the vision of the Creator? Here the mind heaves a thought now and then towards him, and hath some transient glances of his pretence: when in the instant it thinks itself to have the fastest hold, the object eludes its expectations, and it falls back tired and baffled to the ground. Doubtless there is some more perfect way of conversing with heavenly beings. Are not spirits capable of mutual intelligence, unless immersed in bodies, or by their intervention? Must superior natures depend on inferior for the main privilege of sociable beings, that of conversing with, and knowing each other? What would they have done, had matter never been created? I suppose, not have lived in eternal solitude. As incorporeal substances are of a nobler order, so be sure, their manner of intercourse is answerably more expedite and intimate. This method of communication we call intellectual vision, as somewhat analogous to the sense of seeing, which is the medium of our acquaintance with this visible world. And in some such way can God make himself the object of immediate intuition to the blessed; and as he can, it is not improbable that he will, always condescending, in the circumstances of doing it, to the weakness and proportion of finite minds. His works but faintly reflect the image of his perfections, it is a secondhand knowledge; to have a just idea of him, it may be necessary that we see him as he is. But what is that? It is something that never entered into the heart of man to conceive; yet, what we can easily conceive, will be a fountain of unspeakable, of everlasting rapture. All created glories

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will fade and die away in his presence. Perhaps it will be my happiness to compare the world with the fair exemplar of it in the divine mind! perhaps to view the original plan of those wise designs that have been executing in a long succession of ages. Thus employed in finding out his works, and contemplating their author, how shall I fall prostrate and adoring, my body swallowed up in the immensity of matter, my mind in the infinitude of his perfections!”

Multa putans, sortemque animo miseratus iniquam. Virg. *Æneid.* VI. v. 332.

Revolving in his breast their fate unkind,
A gen'rous pity fills his pious mind.



IN compassion to those gloomy mortals, who by their unbelief are rendered incapable of feeling those impressions of joy and hope, which the celebration of the late glorious Easter festival naturally leaves on the mind of a Christian, I shall in this paper endeavour to evince that there are grounds to expect a future state, without supposing in the reader any faith at all, not even the belief of a Deity. Let the most stedfast unbeliever open his eyes, and take a survey of the sensible world, and then say, if there be not a connexion and adjustment, an exact and constant order discoverable in all the parts of it. Whatever be the cause, the thing itself is evident to all our faculties. Look into the animal system, the passions, senses, and locomotive powers, is not the like contrivance and propriety observable these too! Are they not fitted to certain ends, and are they not by nature directed to proper objects?

Is it possible then that the smallest bodies should, by a management superior to the wit of man, be disposed, in the most excellent manner, agreeable to their respective natures; and yet the spirits or souls of men be neglected, or managed by such rules as fall short of man's understanding? Shall every other passion be rightly placed by nature, and shall that appetite of immortality, natural to all mankind, be alone misplaced, or designed to be frustrated? Shall the industrious application of the inferior animal powers in the meanest vocations be answered by the ends we propose, and shall not the generous efforts of a virtuous mind be rewarded! In a word, shall the corporeal world be all order and harmony, the intellectual discord and confusion? He, who is bigot enough to believe these things, must bid adieu to that natural rule of reasoning from analogy; must run counter to that maxim of common sense, that men ought to form their judgments of things unexperienced from what they have experienced.



If any thing looks like a recompence of calamitous virtue on this side the grave, it is either an assurance that thereby we obtain the favour and protection of Heaven, and shall, whatever befalls us in this, in another life meet with a just return, or else that applause and reputation, which is thought to attend virtuous actions. The former of these, our Free-thinkers, out of their singular wisdom and benevolence to mankind, endeavour to erase from the minds of men. The latter can never be justly distributed in this life, where so many ill actions are reputable, and so many good actions disesteemed or misinterpreted; where

subtile hypocrisy is placed in the most engaging light, and modest virtue lies concealed; where the heart and the soul are hid from the eyes of men, and the eyes of men are dimmed and vitiated. Plato's sense in relation to this point is contained in his *Gorgias*, where he introduces Socrates speaking after this manner:

“It was in the reign of Saturn provided by a law, which the gods have since continued down to this time, that they who had lived virtuously and piously upon earth, should after death enjoy a life full of happiness, in certain islands appointed for the habitation of the blessed; but that such as had lived wickedly should go into the receptacle of damned souls, namely Tartarus, there to suffer the punishments they deserved. But in all the reign of Saturn, and in the beginning of the reign of Jove, living judges were appointed, by whom each person was judged in his lifetime in the same day on which he was to die. The consequence of which was, that they often passed wrong judgments. Pluto, therefore, who presided in Tartarus, and the guardians of the blessed islands, finding that, on the other side, many unfit persons were sent to their respective dominions, complained to Jove, who promised to redress the evil. He added, the reason of these unjust proceedings is that men are judged in the body. Hence many conceal the blemishes and imperfections of their minds by beauty, birth and riches; not to mention, that at the time of trial there are crowds of witnesses to attest their having lived well. These things mislead the judges, who being themselves also of the number of the living are surrounded each with his own body, as with a veil thrown over his mind. For the future, therefore, it is my intention that men do not come on their trial till after death, when they shall appear before the judge, disrobed of all their corporeal ornaments. The judge himself too shall be a pure unveiled spirit, beholding the very soul, the naked soul, of the party before him. With this view I have already constituted my sons, Minos and Radamanthus, judges, who are natives of Asia and Æacus, a native of Europe. These, after death, shall hold their court in a certain meadow, from which there are two roads, leading the one to Tartarus, the other to the islands of the blessed.”

From this, as from numberless other passages of his writings, may be seen Plato's opinion of a future date. A thing therefore in regard to us so comfortable, in itself so just and excellent, a thing so agreeable to the analogy of nature, and so universally credited by all orders and ranks of men, of all nations and ages, what is it that should move a few men to reject? Surely there must be something of prejudice in the case. I appeal to the secret thoughts of a Free-thinker, if he does not argue within himself after this manner: The senses and faculties I enjoy at present are visibly designed to repair, or preserve the body from the injuries it is liable to in its present circumstances. But in an eternal state, where no decays are to be repaired, no outward injuries to be fenced against, where there are no flesh and bones, nerves, or blood vessels, there will certainly be none of the senses; and that there should be a state of life without the senses it is inconceivable.

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But as this manner of reasoning proceeds from a poverty of imagination, and narrowness of soul in those that use it, I shall endeavour to remedy those defects, and open their views, by laying before them a case which, being naturally possible, may perhaps reconcile them to the belief of what is supernaturally revealed.

Let us suppose a man blind and deaf from his birth, who being grown to a man's estate, is by the dead palsy, or some other cause, deprived of his feeling, tasting, and smelling; and at the same time has the impediment of his hearing removed, and the film taken from his eyes: what the five senses are to us, that the touch, taste, and smell were to him. And any other ways of perception of a more refined and extensive nature were to him as inconceivable, as to us those are, which will one day be adapted to perceive those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." And it would be just as reasonable in him to conclude, that the loss of those three senses could not possibly be succeeded by any new inlets of perception; as in a modern Free-thinker to imagine there can be no state of life and perception without the senses he enjoys at present. Let us further suppose the same person's eyes, at their first opening, to be struck with a great variety of the most gay and pleasing objects, and his ears with a melodious concert of vocal and instrumental music: behold him amazed, ravished, transported and you have some distant representation, some faint and glimmering idea of the ecstatic state of the soul in that article in which she emerges from this sepulchre of flesh into life and immortality.

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Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis avum.

Hor. epost. II. I. 1. v. 43.

It glides, and will for ever glide along.

Mr. Spectator,

THERE are none of your speculations which please me more than those upon infinitude and eternity. You have already considered that part of eternity which is past; and I wish you would give us your thoughts upon that which is to come.

Your readers will perhaps receive greater pleasure from this view of eternity than the former, since we have every one of us a concern in that which is to come; whereas a speculation on that which is past is rather curious than useful.

Besides, we can easily conceive it possible for successive duration never to have an end though, as you have justly observed, that eternity which never had a beginning is altogether incomprehensible; that is, we can conceive an eternal duration which may be, though we cannot an eternal duration which hath been; or, if I may use the philosophical terms, we may apprehend a potential, though not an actual eternity.

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This notion of a future eternity, which is natural to the mind of man, is an unanswerable argument that he is a being designed for it: especially if we consider that he is capable of being virtuous or vicious here; that he hath faculties improvable to all eternity; and, by a

proper or wrong employment of them, may be happy or miserable throughout that infinite duration. Our idea indeed of this eternity is not of an adequate or fixed nature, but is perpetually growing and enlarging itself towards the object, which is too big for human comprehension. As we are now in the beginning of existence, so shall we always appear to ourselves as if we were for ever entering upon it. After a million or two of centuries, some considerable things already past may slip out of our memory, which, if it be not strengthened in a wonderful manner, may possibly forget that ever there was a sun or planets, and yet notwithstanding the long race that we shall then have run, we shall still imagine ourselves just starting from the goal, and find no proportion between that space which we know had a beginning, and what we are sure will never have an end.

But I shall leave this subject to your management, and question not but you will throw it into such lights as shall at once improve and entertain your reader.

I have, inclosed, sent you. a translation of the speech of Cato on this occasion, which hath accidentally fallen into my hands, and which, for conciseness, purity, and elegance of phrase, cannot be sufficiently admired.



ACT. V. SCENE I.

CATO *solus*, &c.

SIC, sic se habere rem necesse prorsus est,
Ratione vincis, do lubens manus, Plato.
Quid enim dedisset. Qua dedit frustra nihil,
Æternitatis insitam cupidinem
Natura? Quorsum hæc duellis expectatio;
Vitæque non explenda melioris sitis?
Quid vult sibi aliud iste redeundi in nihil
Horror, sub imis quemque agens præcordiis?
Cur terita in se refugit anima, cur tremit
Attonita, quoties, morte ne pareat, timet?
Particula nempe est cuique nascenti indita
Divinior; quæ corpus incolens agit;
Hominique, succinit, tua est Æternitas.
Æternitas! O lubricum nimis aspici,
Mixtumque dulci gaudium formidine!
Quæ demigrabitur alia hinc in corpora?
Quæ terra mox incognita? Quis orbis novus,

*Manet incolendus? Quanta erit mutatio?
Hæc intuenti spatia mihi quaqua patent
Immensa: sed calignosa nox premit;
Nec luce clara vult videra frugula.
Figendus his pes; certa sunt hæc hactenus:
Si quod gubernet numen humanum genus,
(At, quod gubernet, esse clamant omnia)
Virtute non gaudere certe non potest:
Nec esse non beata, qua gaudet potest
Sed qua beata sede? Quove in tempore?
Hæc quanta quanta terra, tota est Cæsaris.
Quid dubius hæret animus usque adeo? Brevi
Hic nodum hic omnem expediet. Arma en induor.*

[Ensi manum admovens.

*In utramque partem facta; quæque vim inserant,
Et quæ propulsent? Dextera intentat necem
Vitam sinistra: vulnus hæc dabit manus:
Altera medelam vulneris; hic ad exitum
Deducet, ictu simplici; hæc vetant mori.
Secura ridet anima mucronis minas,
Ensesque strictos, interire nescia.
Extinguet ætas sidera diuturnior:
Ætate languens ipse sol obscurius
Emittet orbi consenescenti jubar:
Natura et ipsa sentiet quondam vices
Ætatis; annis ipsa deficiet gravis;
At tibi juvenus, at tibi immortalita;
Tibi parta divum est vita. Periment mutuis
Elementa sese et interibunt ictibus:
Tu permanibis sola semper integra,
Tu cunctu rerum quassa cuncta naufraga,
Jum portu in ipso tuta, contemplabere.
Compage rupta, corruent in se invicem,
Orbesque fractic ingerentur orbibus;
Illæsa tu sedebis extra fragmina.*

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CATO alone, &c.

IT must be so—Plato, thou reason'st well—
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror,
Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heav'n itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.
Eternity! thou pleasing, dreadful thought!
Through what variety of untri'd being,
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass?
The wide, th' unbounded prospect lies before me;
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it.
Here will I hold. If there's a pow'r above us,
(And that there is, all nature cries aloud
Through all her works,) he must delight in virtue;
And that which he delights in must be happy.
But when! or where!—This world was made for Caesar.
I'm weary of conjectures.—This must end 'em.

But in all these schemes there is something gross and improbable that shocks a reasonable and speculative mind; whereas nothing can be more rational and sublime than the Christian idea of a future state. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered, into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those that love him. The above mentioned schemes are narrow transcripts of our present state: but in this indefinite description there is something ineffably great and noble. The mind of man must be raised to a higher pitch, not only to partake the enjoyments of the Christian paradise, but even to be able to frame any notion of them.

Nevertheless, in order to gratify our imagination, and by way of condescension to our low way of thinking, the ideas of light, glory, a crown, &c. are made use of to adumbrate that which we cannot directly understand. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters: and God than 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, and behold all things are new. There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun for

the Lord God giveth them light, and shall make them drink of the river of his pleasures: and they shall reign for ever and ever. They shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.”

These are cheering reflections: and I have often wondered that men could be found so dull and phlegmatic, as to prefer the thought of annihilation before them, or so ill-natured as to endeavour to persuade mankind to the disbelief of what is so pleasing and profitable even in the prospect; or so blind as not to see that there is a Deity, and if there be, that this scheme of things flows from his attributes, and evidently corresponds with the other parts of his creation.

I know not how to account for this absurd turn of thought, except it proceed from a want of other employment, joined with an affectation of singularity. I shall therefore, inform our modern Free-thinkers of two points, whereof they seem to be ignorant. The first is, that it is not the being singular, but being singular for something that argues either extraordinary endowments of nature, or benevolent intentions to mankind, which draws the admiration and esteem of the world. A mistake in this point naturally arises from that confusion of thought which I do not remember to have seen so great instances of in any writers, as in certain modern Free-thinkers.

The other point is, that there are innumerable objects within the reach of a human mind, and each of these objects may be viewed in innumerable lights and positions, and the relations arising between them are innumerable. There is, therefore, an infinity of things whereon to employ their thoughts, if not with advantage to the world, at least with amusement to themselves, and without offence or prejudice to other people. If they proceed to exert their talent of Free-thinking in this way, they may be innocently dull, and no one take any notice of it. But to see men without either wit or argument pretend to run down divine and human laws, and treat their fellow-subjects with contempt for professing a belief of those points on which the present as well as future interest of mankind depends, is not to be endured. For my own part, I shall omit no endeavours, to render their persons as despicable, and their practices as odious, in the eye of the world, as they deserve.

—*Solemque suum, seu sidera norunt.*

Virg. *Ænid.* VI. v. 641.

Stars of their own, and their own suns they know.

Dryden.

I HAVE already taken a particular pleasure in examining the opinions which men of different religions, different ages, and different countries, have entertained concerning the immortality of the soul, and the state of happiness, which they promise themselves in another world. For whatever prejudices and errors human nature lies under, we find that either reason, or tradition from our first parents, has discovered to all people something in these great points which bears analogy to truth, and to the doctrines opened to us by divine revel-

ation. I was lately discoursing on this subject with a learned person, who has been very much conversant among the inhabitants of the more western parts of Afric. Upon his conversing with several in that country, he tells me that their notion of heaven, or of a future state of happiness, is this, that every thing we there wish for will immediately present itself to us. We find, say they, our souls are of such a nature that they require variety, and are not capable of being always delighted with the same objects. The Supreme Being, therefore, in compliancy: with this taste of happiness which he has planted in the soul of man, will rise up, from time to time, say they, every gratification which it is in the humour to be pleased with. If we wish to be in groves or bowers, among running streams or falls of water, we shall immediately find ourselves in the midst of such a scene as we desire. If we would be entertained with music and the melody of sounds, the concert arises upon our wish, and the whole region about us is filled with harmony. In short, every desire will be followed by fruition, and whatever a man's inclination directs him to, will be present with him. Nor is it material, whether the Supreme Power creates in conformity to our wishes, or whether he only produces such a change in our imagination, as makes us believe ourselves conversant among those scenes which delight us. Our happiness will be the same, whether it proceed from external objects, or from the impressions of the Deity upon our own private fancies. This is the account which I have received from my learned friend. Notwithstanding this system of belief be in general very chimerical and visionary, there is something sublime in its manner of considering the influence of a divine Being on a human soul. It has also, like most other opinions of the Heathen world, upon these important points; it has, I say, its foundation in truth, as it supposes the souls of good men, after this life, to be in a state of perfect happiness; that in this state there will be no barren hopes, no fruitless wishes; and that we shall enjoy every thing we can desire. But the particular circumstance which I am most pleased with in this scheme, and which arises from a just reflection upon human nature, is that variety of pleasures which it supposes the souls of good men will be possessed of in another world. This I think highly probable, from the dictates both of reason and revelation. The soul consists of many faculties, as the understanding and the will, with all the senses, both outward and inward; or, to speak more philosophically, the soul can exert herself in many different ways of action. She can understand, will, imagine, see, and hear, love, and discourse, and apply herself to many other of the like exercises of different kinds and natures but what is more to be considered, the soul is capable of receiving a most exquisite pleasure and satisfaction from the exercise of any of these its powers, when they are gratified with their proper objects: she can be entirely happy by the satisfaction of the memory, the sight, the hearing, or any other mode of perception. Every faculty is as a distinct state in the mind, and hath objects accommodated to its proper relish. Dr. Tillotson somewhere says, that he will not presume to determine in what consists the happiness of the blessed. Because God Almighty is capable of making the soul happy by ten thousand different ways. Besides those

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several avenues to pleasure which the soul is endued with in this life, it is not impossible, according to the opinions of many eminent divines, but there may be new faculties in the souls of good men made perfect, as well as new senses in their glorified bodies. This we are sure of, that there will be new objects offered to all those faculties which are essential to us.

We are likewise to take notice, that every particular faculty is capable of being employed on a very great variety of objects. The understanding, for example, may be happy in the contemplation of moral, natural, mathematical, and other kinds of truth. The memory likewise may turn itself to an infinite multitude of objects, especially when the soul shall have passed through the space of many millions of years, and shall reflect with pleasure on the days of eternity. Every other faculty may be considered in the same extent.

We cannot question but that the happiness of a soul will be adequate to its nature, and that it is not endued with any faculties which are to lie useless and unemployed. The happiness is to be the happiness of the whole man and we may easily conceive to ourselves the happiness of the soul, while any one of its faculties is in the fruition of its chief good. The happiness may be of a more exalted nature, in proportion as the faculty employed is so; but as the whole soul acts in the exertion of any of its particular powers, the whole soul is happy in the pleasure which arises from any of its particular acts. For notwithstanding, as has been before hinted, and as it has been taken notice of by one of the greater modern philosophers, we divide the soul into several powers and faculties, there is no such division in the soul itself, since it is the whole soul that remembers, understands, wills, or imagines.

Our manner of considering the memory, understanding, will, imagination, and the like faculties, is for the better enabling us to express ourselves in such abstracted subjects of speculation, not that there is any such division in the soul itself.

Seeing then that the soul has many different faculties, or, in other words, many different ways of acting; that it can be intensely pleased, or made happy by all these different faculties, or ways of acting; that it may be endued with several latent faculties, which it is not at present in a condition to exert: that we cannot believe the soul is endued with any faculty which is of no use to it; that whenever any one of these faculties is transcendently pleased, the soul is in a state of happiness; and, in the last place, considering that the happiness of another world is to be the happiness of the whole man, who can question but that there is an infinite variety in those pleasures we are speaking of; and that this fullness of joy will be made up of all those pleasures which the nature of the soul is capable of receiving.

We shall be the more confirmed in this doctrine if we observe the nature of variety with regard to the mind of man. The soul does not care to be always in the same bent? the faculties relieve one another by turns, and receive an additional pleasure from the novelty of those objects about which they are conversant.

Revelation likewise very much confirms this notion under the different views which it gives us of our future happiness. In the description of the throne of God, it represents to us

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all those objects which are able to gratify the senses and imagination. In very many places it intimates to us all the happiness which the understanding can possibly receive in that state where all things shall be revealed to us, and we shall know even as we are known. The raptures of devotion, of divine love, the pleasure of conversing with our blessed Saviour, with an innumerable host of angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, are likewise revealed to us in several parts of the holy writings. There are also mentioned those hierarchies of governments, in which the blessed shall be ranged one above another, and in which we may be sure a great part of our happiness will likewise consist; for it will not be there as in this world, where every one is aiming at power and superiority but, on the contrary, every one will find that station the most proper for him in which he is placed, and will probably think that he could not have been so happy in any other station. These, and many other particulars, are marked in divine revelation, as the several ingredients of our happiness in heaven, which all imply such a variety of joys, and such a gratification of the soul in all its different faculties, as I have been here mentioning.

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Some of the Rabbins tell us that the cherubims are a set of angels who know most, and the seraphims a set of angels who love most. Whether this distinction be not altogether imaginary I shall not here examine; but it is highly probable, that among the spirits of good men there may be some who will be more pleased with the employment of one faculty than of another, and this perhaps according to those innocent and virtuous habits or inclinations which have here taken the deepest root.

I might here apply this consideration to the spirits of wicked men with relation to the pain which they shall suffer in every one of their faculties, and the respective miseries which shall be appropriated to each faculty in particular. But leaving this to the reflection of my readers, I shall conclude with observing how we ought to be thankful to our great Creator, and rejoice in the being which he has bestowed upon us, for having made the soul susceptible of pleasure by so many different ways. We see by what a variety of passages, joy and gladness may enter into the thoughts of man; how wonderfully a human spirit is framed to imbibe its proper satisfactions, and taste the goodness of its Creator. We may therefore look into ourselves with rapture and amazement, and cannot sufficiently express our gratitude to him, who has encompassed us with such a profusion blessings, and opened in us so many capacities of enjoying them.

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There cannot be a stronger argument that God has designed us for a state of future happiness, and for that heaven which he has revealed to us, than that he has thus naturally qualified the soul for it, and made it a being capable of receiving so much bliss. He would never have made such faculties in vain, and have endued us with powers that were not to be exerted on such objects as are suited to them. It is very manifest, by the inward frame and constitution of our minds, that he has adapted them to an infinite variety of pleasures and gratifications which are not to be met with in this life. We should therefore at all times

take care that we do not disappoint this his gracious purpose and intention towards us, and make those faculties, which he formed as so many qualifications for happiness and rewards, to be the instruments of pain and punishment.



SECT. XI.

DEATH AND JUDGEMENT.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE GUARDIAN.

Sir,

THE inclosed is a faithful translation from an old author, which if it deserves your notice, let the reader guess whether he was a Heathen or a Christian.

I am, Your most humble Servant.

“I cannot, my friends, forbear letting you know what I think of death; for, methinks, I view and understand it much better, the nearer I approach to it. I am convinced that your fathers, those illustrious persons whom I so much loved and honoured, do not cease to live, though they have passed through what we call death; they are undoubtedly still living, but it is that sort of life which alone deserves truly to be called life. In effect, while we are confined to bodies, we ought to esteem ourselves no other than a sort of galley slaves at the chain, since the soul, which is somewhat divine, and descends from heaven as the place of its original, seems debased and dishonoured by this mixture of flesh and blood, and, to be in a state of banishment from its celestial country. I cannot help thinking too, that one main reason of uniting souls to bodies, was, that the great work of the universe might have spectators to admire the beautiful order of nature, the regular motion of heavenly bodies, who should strive to express that regularity in the uniformity of their lives. When I consider the boundless activity of our minds, the remembrance we have of things past, our foresight of what is to come: when I relied on the noble discoveries, and vast improvements, by which these minds have advanced arts and sciences; I am entirely persuaded, and out of all doubt, that a nature which has in itself a fund of so many excellent things cannot possibly be mortal. I observe further, that my mind is altogether simple without the mixture of any substance of nature different from its own; I conclude from thence that it is indivisible, and consequently cannot perish.

By no means think, therefore, my dear friends, when I shall have quitted you, that I cease to be, or shall subsist no where. Remember that while we live together you do not see my mind, and yet are sure that I have one actuating and moving my body: doubt not then but that this same mind will have a being when it is separated, though you cannot then perceive its actions. What nonsense would it be to pay those honours to great men after their deaths, which we constantly do, if their souls did not then subsist? For my own part, I could never imagine that our minds live only when united to our bodies, and die when they leave them; or that they shall cease to think and understand, when disengaged from bodies, which without them have neither sense or reason: on the contrary, I believe the soul, when separated from matter, to enjoy the greatest purity and simplicity of its nature, and

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to have much more wisdom and light than while it was united. We see when the body dies, what becomes of all the parts which compose it; but we do not see the mind, either in the body, or when it leaves it. Nothing more resembles death than sleep: and it is in that state that the soul chiefly shews it has something divine in its nature. How much more then must it shew it, when entirely disengaged?

—*Afflata est numine quando*

Jam propiore Dei—Virg. *Æneid.* VI. v. 250.

When all the god came rushing on her soul.

Dryden.

THE following letter comes to me from that excellent man in holy orders, whom I have mentioned more than once, as one of that society who assists me in my speculations. It is a thought in sickness, and of a very serious nature, for which reason I give it a place in the paper of this day,

Sir,

The indisposition which has long hung upon me, is at last grown to such a head, that it must quickly make an end of me, or of itself. You may imagine, that whilst I am in this bad state of health, there are none of your works which I read with greater pleasure than your Saturday's papers. I should be very glad if I could furnish you with any hints for that day's entertainment. Were I able to dress up several thoughts of a serious nature, which have made great impressions on my mind during a long fit of sickness, they might not be an improper entertainment for that occasion.

Among all the reflections which usually rise in the mind of a sick man, who has time and inclination to consider his approaching end, there is none more natural than that of his going to appear naked and unbodied before him who made him. When a man considers, that, as soon as the vital union is dissolved, he shall see that Supreme Being, whom he now contemplates at a distance, and only in his works; or, to speak more philosophically, when by some faculty in the soul he shall apprehend the divine Being, and be more sensible of his presence, than we are now of the presence of any object which the eye beholds: a man must be lost in carelessness and stupidity, who is not alarmed at such a thought! Dr. Sherlock, in his excellent treatise upon death, has represented, in very strong and lively colours, the state of the soul in its first separation from the body, with regard to that invisible world which every where surrounds us, though we are not able to discover it through this grosser world of matter, which is accommodated to our senses in this life. His words are as follow.

“That death, which is our leaving this world, is nothing else but our putting off these bodies, teaches us, that it is only our union to these bodies which intercepts the sight of the other world: the other world is not at such a distance from us as we may imagine: the throne of God indeed is at a great remove from this earth, above the third heavens, where he displays

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his glory to those blessed spirits which encompass his throne; but as soon as we step out of these bodies, we step into the other world, which is not so properly another world, (for there is the same heaven and earth still) as a new state of life. To live in these bodies is to live in this world, to live out of them is to remove into the next: for while our souls are confined to these bodies, and can look only through these material casements, nothing but what is material can affect us; nay, nothing but what is so gross, that it can reflect light, and convey the shapes and colours of things with it to the eye; so that, though within this visible world there be a more glorious scene of things than what appears to us, we perceive nothing at all of it; for this veil of flesh parts the visible and invisible world: but when we put off these bodies, there are new and surprising wonders present themselves to our views: when these material spectacles are taken off, the soul, with its own naked eyes, sees what was invisible before; and then we are in the other world, when we can see, and converse with it: thus St. Paul tells us, That when we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; but when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord, [2 Cor. v. 6. 8.](#) And, methinks, this is enough to cure us of our fondness for these bodies, unless we think it more desirable to be confined to a prison, and to look through a grate all our lives, which gives us but a very narrow prospect, and that none of the best neither, than to be set at liberty to view all the glories of the world. What would we give now for the least glimpse of that invisible world, which the first step we take out of these bodies will present us with? There are such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive: Death opens our eyes, enlarges our prospect, presents us with a new and more glorious world, which we can never see while we are shut up in flesh which should make us as willing to part with this veil as to take the film off our eyes which hinders our sight.

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As a thinking man cannot but be very much affected with the idea of his appearing in the presence of that Being whom none can see and live, he must be much more affected when he considers that this Being whom he appears before will examine all the actions of his past life, and reward or punish him accordingly. I must confess that I think there is no scheme of religion, besides that of Christianity, which can possibly support the most virtuous person under this thought. Let a man's innocence be what it will, let his virtues rise to the highest pitch of perfection attainable in his life, there will be still in him so many secret sins, so many human frailties, so many offences of ignorance, passion, and prejudice, so many unguarded words and thoughts, and in short, so many defects in his best actions, that without the advantages of such an expiation and atonement as Christianity has revealed to us, it is impossible that he should be cleared before his sovereign Judge, or that he should be able to stand in his sight. Our holy religion suggests to us the only means whereby our guilt may be taken away, and our imperfect obedience accepted.

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It is this series of thought that I have endeavoured to express in the following hymn, which I have composed during this my sickness.

I.

WHEN rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelm'd with guilt and fear,
I see my Maker, face to face,
O how than I appear!

II.

If yet, while pardon may be found,
And mercy may be sought,
My heart with inward horror shrinks,
And trembles at the thought,

III.

When thou, O Lord! shalt stand disclos'd
In majesty severe,
And sit in judgement on my soul,
O how shall I appear!

IV.

But thou hast told the troubled mind,
Who does her sins lament,
The timely tribute of her tears
Shall endless wo prevent.



V.

Then see the sorrows of my heart,
Ere yet it is too late;
And hear thy Saviour's dying groans,
To give those sorrows weight.

VI.

For never shall my soul despair
Her pardon to procure,
Who knows thy only Son has di'd
To make her pardon sure.

—*Animæque capaces*
Mortis—

Lucan.

Our lives are ever in the pow'r of death.

THE prospect of death is so gloomy and dismal, that if it were constantly before our eyes it would imbitter all the sweets of life. The gracious Author of our being hath therefore so formed us, that we are capable of many pleasing sensations, and reflections, and meet with so many amusements and solitudes, as divert our thoughts from dwelling upon an evil, which by reason of its seeming distance, makes but languid impressions upon the mind. But how distant soever the time of our death may be, since it is certain that we must die, it is necessary to allot some portion of our life to consider the end of it; and it is highly convenient to fix some stated times to meditate upon the final period of our existence here. The principle of self-love, as we are men, will make us inquire, what is like to become of us after our dissolution; and our conscience, as we are Christians, will inform us, that according to the good or evil of our actions here, we shall be translated to the mansions of eternal bliss or misery. When this is seriously weighed, we must think it madness to be unprepared against the black moment; but when we reflect, that, perhaps, that black moment may be tonight, how watchful ought we to be!

I was wonderfully affected with a discourse I had lately with a clergyman of my acquaintance upon this head, which was to this effect: "The consideration, said the good man, that my being precarious, moved me many years ago to make a resolution, which I have diligently kept, and to which I owe the greatest satisfaction that a mortal man can enjoy. Every night before I address myself in private to my Creator, I lay my hand upon my heart, and ask myself, Whether if God should require my soul of me this night, I could hope for mercy from him? The bitter agonies I underwent, in this my first acquaintance with myself, were so far from throwing me into despair of that mercy which is over all God's works that they rather proved motives to greater circumspection in my conduct. The oftener I exercised myself in meditations of this kind, the less was my anxiety: and by making the thoughts of death familiar, what was at first so terrible and shocking is become the sweetest of my enjoyments. These contemplations have indeed made me serious, but not sullen; nay, they are so far from having soured my temper, that as I have a mind perfectly composed, and a secret spring of joy in my heart, so my conversation is pleasant, and my countenance sincere. I taste all the innocent satisfactions of life pure and serene; I have no share in pleasures that leave a sting behind them; nor am I cheated with that kind of mirth, in the midst of which there is heaviness."

Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum.

Hor. lib. I. epist. 4. v. 13.

Think ev'ry day, soon as the day is past,
That thou hast liv'd, of thy short life the last.

Mr. Ironside,

THE following letter was really written by a young gentleman in a languishing illness, which both himself and those who attended him thought it impossible for him to outlive. If you think such an image of the state of a man's mind in that circumstance be worth publishing, it is at your service, and take it as follows:

Dear Sir,

You formerly observed to me, that nothing made a more ridiculous figure in a man's life, than the disparity we often find in him sick and well. Thus, one of an unfortunate constitution is perpetually exhibiting a miserable example of the weakness of his mind, or of his body, in their turns. I have had frequent opportunities of late to consider myself in these different views, and hope I have received some advantage by it. If what Mr. Waller says be true, that

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made,

then surely sickness, contributing no less than old age to the shaking down this scaffolding of the body, may discover the inclosed structure more plainly. Sickness is a sort of early old age; it teaches us a diffidence in our earthly state, and inspires us with the thoughts of a future, better than a thousand volumes of philosophers and divines. It gives so warning a concussion to those props of our vanity, our strength and youth, that we think of fortifying ourselves within, when there is so little dependence on our out-works. Youth, at the very best, is but a betrayer of human life in a gentler and smoother manner than age: It is like a stream that nourishes a plant upon its bank, and causes it to flourish and blossom to the sight, but at the same time is undermining it at the root in secret. My youth has dealt more fairly and openly with me; it has afforded several prospects of my danger, and given me an advantage not very common to young men, that the attractions of the world have not dazzled me very much; and I began, where most people end, with a full conviction of the emptiness of all sorts of ambition, and the unsatisfactory nature of all human pleasures.

When a smart fit of sickness tells me this scurvy tenement of my body will fall in a little time I am even as unconcerned as was that honest Hibernian, who, being in bed in the great storm some years ago, and told the house would tumble over his head, made answer, What care I for the house? I am only a lodger. I fancy it is the best time to die when one is in the best humour; and so excessively weak as I now am, I may say with conscience, that I am not

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at all uneasy at the thought that many men, whom I never had any esteem for, are likely to enjoy this world after me. When I reflect what an inconsiderable little atom every man is, with respect to the whole creation, methinks, it is a shame to be concerned at the removal of such a trivial animal as I am. The morning after my exit, the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers smell as sweet, the plants spring as green, the world will proceed in its old course, people will laugh as heartily, and marry as fast as they were used to do. "The memory of man (as it is elegantly expressed in the wisdom of Solomon) passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but one day." There are reasons enough in the fourth chapter of the same book to make any young man contented with the prospect of death. "For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, or is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair to men, and an unspotted life is old age."

He was taken away speedily, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul.

I am your's.

THE END.

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