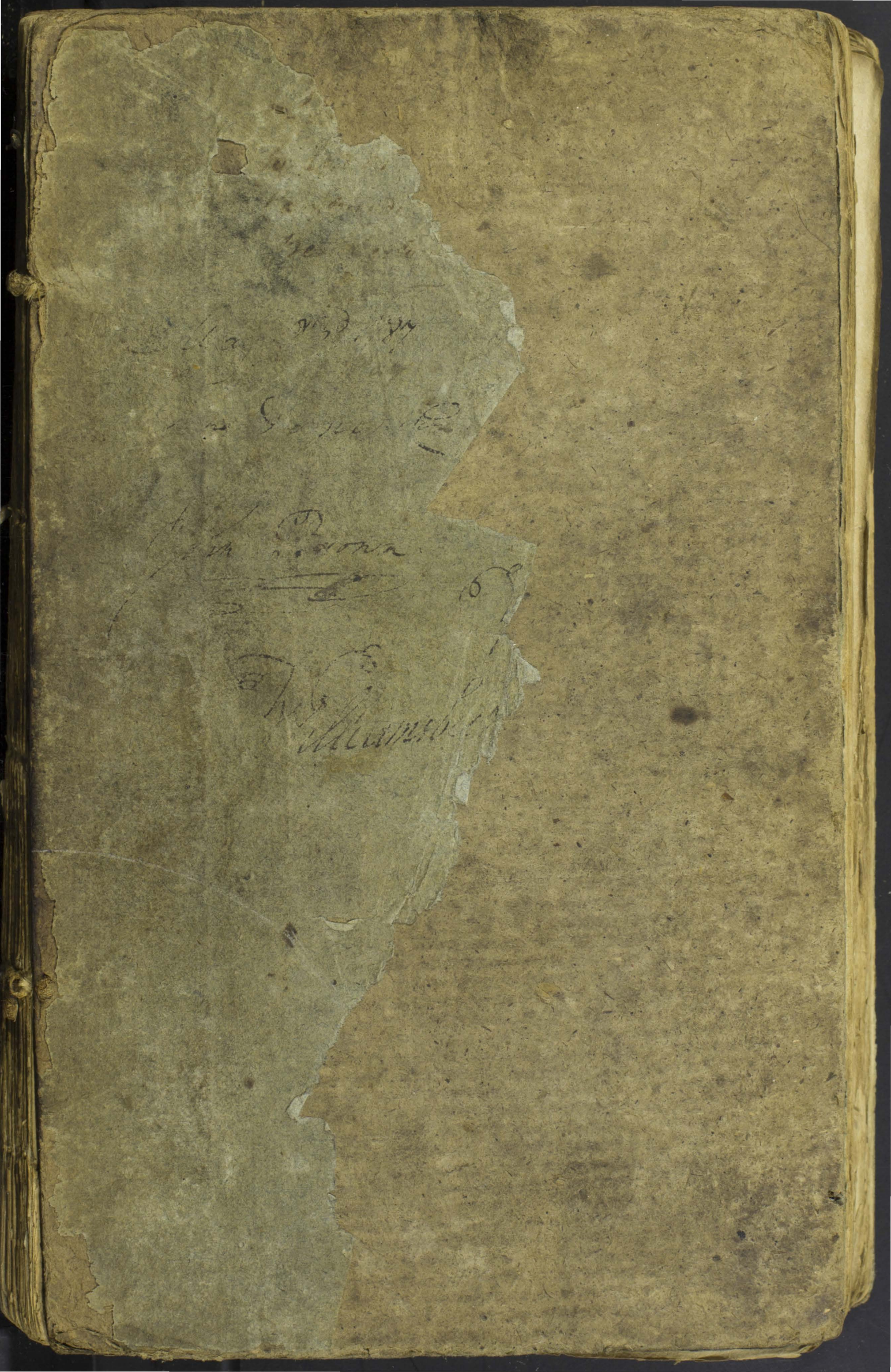

A PRESENT FROM

THE REVEREND DR *HALES*,

CLERK OF THE CLOSET TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE

PRINCESS DOWAGER OF *WALES*;

AND

THE REVEREND DR *TIL[illegible]SON*,

PREBENDARY OF *WESTMINSTER*,

AND RECTOR OF [illegible]*BROOK*,

LONDON.

The Gift of John Brown to his Friend John Young Sept.br 27th 1796

A

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

FIRST and SECOND VOLUMES

OF THE

View of the Deistical Writers.

Aberdeen College Lib.
Alc.
Simon Williams N

CONTAINING

ADDITIONS and ILLUSTRATIONS

Relating to those VOLUMES.

In several LETTERS to a FRIEND.

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To which is added,

REFLECTIONS on the late Lord BOLINGBROKE's Letters on the Study and Use of HISTORY, as far as relates to the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The THIRD EDITION, corrected and enlarged.

WITH

A LARGE INDEX to the THREE VOLUMES.

BY *JOHN LELAND*, D. D.

LONDON:

Printed for B. DOD, at the *Bible and Key*, in *Ave-Mary-Lane*, near *Stationers-Hall*.

M DCC LVI.

PREFACE.

AS in the Concluſion of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, I ſeemed to have finiſhed the whole deſign, I think myſelf obliged to give ſome account to the public of the reaſon of publiſhing another volume ſo ſoon after the former. That which gave occaſion to it was this: Since the publication of the former volumes, I have received ſome Letters relating to the ſubject of them, which have put me upon reconſidering ſome things in them, and making farther additions and illuſtrations, which, I hope, may be of advantage to the main deſign. I had alſo by me, as was hinted in the Preface to the ſecond volume, ſeveral obſervations which were originally deſigned to be inſerted in that volume, but which were omitted, when I found it enlarged ſo much beyond my expectation. Some friends were willing to have them publiſhed,

and that there ſhould be a new edition of the whole in three volumes, in which the ſeveral additions and illuſtrations ſhould be diſtributed in their proper places. But as this would render the former edition very incomplete, and might ſeem to be a wrong to thoſe that had purchaſed it, it was judged more adviſable to publiſh a diſtinct volume, which ſhould comprehend all thoſe additions and illuſtrations, leaving the former volumes to ſtand as they are. Among the additions which are now publiſhed, one relates to the Earl of SHAFTESBURY. Some gentlemen, who are great admirers of that noble author, thought I had puſhed the charge againſt him too far, eſpecially on the head of future rewards and puniſhments. This occaſioned my reviewing that part of the firſt volume, and adding to the obſervations which had been there made, and which, upon the moſt impartial conſideration, I have found no reaſon to alter, or retract. Another large addition relateth to the pamphlet intitled, *Deiſm*

fairly ſtated, and fully vindicated, which ſome thought was too ſlightly paſſed over, in the firſt volume of the *View*, and which is now therefore more fully conſidered. There is alſo a conſiderable addition relating to the remarks I had made on Mr. *Hume's Eſſay on Miracles*; and which was occaſioned by an ingenious paper that was ſent me not long after the publication of the ſecond volume. I have added ſome obſervations on thoſe paſſages in Mr. *Hume's Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which ſeem deſigned to caſt a ſlur on the evangelical morality. Theſe are the moſt conſiderable additions. The reſt are ſmaller pieces, and are, for the moſt part, ſuch as were originally deſigned to have been inſerted in the ſecond volume, when it was firſt publiſhed; to which ſeveral others, relating to both volumes, are now added. And the reader is directed by proper references to the paſſages in the two preceding volumes, to which they belong. I am ſenſible, that as they are now publiſhed, they have the

diſadvantage of appearing as ſo many detached pieces, without much order or connection. This will ſtand in great need of favourable allowances. And I may perhaps be thought to preſume too much upon the indulgence the public has ſhewn me, in publiſhing what may look like incoherent fragments. But I chuſe rather to incur the cenſure this might ſubject me to, than to do any thing that might render the former edition leſs valuable to thoſe who have ſo generouſly encouraged it. And I have endeavoured, in ſome meaſure, to make up for that defect, by introducing them in ſuch a manner as to form ſome kind of connection between the ſcattered pieces; and, for that purpoſe, have thrown them into the form of Letters, which, like thoſe of the former volumes, are directed to my worthy friend the Rev. Dr. *Wilſon*.

It has been hinted to me, that an INDEX would be highly proper in a work of this kind, which treats of a great variety of matters, and in which many authors are referred to. I had thoughts accord-

accordingly of adding an Index at the end of the ſecond volume. But it was become ſo large, that I was afraid it would have ſwelled it beyond its due proportion; and therefore omitted it. But there is an Index now ſubjoined, which may ſerve for both the former volumes, and for that which is now publiſhed. And this may perhaps be looked upon as a real advantage to the work.

I have been deſired to prepare a new edition of the *Reflections on Lord* Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*. And as this hath a near affinity to the ſubjects treated of in the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, and will help to complete that part of it which relates to Lord *Bolingbroke*, it is here added to this volume. The *political* part is left out, as not ſo well ſuited to the main deſign of this work; but there is a conſiderable addition made to it, with relation to *the curſe pronounced upon* Canaan, which, in the opinion of ſome judicious friends, was not ſo fully conſidered before as it ought to have been.

This addition was drawn up by me ſome time ago, and ſent over, in order to be inſerted in the new edition of theſe *Reflections*, before I ſaw Dr. *Newton*'s accurate diſſertation on this ſubject, in his excellent diſſertations upon prophecy, which came but very lately into my hands.---It will now probably be thought not ſo neceſſary: but I have choſen to let it ſtand as it was firſt drawn up; becauſe it may poſſibly not be without its uſe, and will tend to render the *Reflections on Lord* Bolingbroke's *Letters* more complete.---The method I have purſued is ſomething different from Dr. *Newton*'s. He ſeems to incline to think there is an omiſſion in the *Hebrew copies*.--- But I chuſe to defend the paſſage according to the preſent reading of the *Hebrew copies*, which is followed by almoſt all the antient verſions, as well as by our own tranſlators; and, in my opinion, good reaſons might be given to ſhew that it is to be preferred to the reading ſome learned men would ſubſtitute inſtead of it.

This

This is all that is neceſſary to inform the reader of, with regard to the deſign of the volume that is now offered to the public. And I think myſelf obliged to take this occaſion to acknowlege the favourable and candid acceptance the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, as well as the firſt, has met with, and the particular notice which hath been taken of the author by ſome perſons of great merit and diſtinction. This gives me no ſmall ſatisfaction, not ſo much for any particular intereſt and advantage of my own, though I have a moſt grateful ſenſe of the generous kindneſs that hath been ſhewn me, as becauſe it gives me reaſon to apprehend, that my endeavours to ſerve ſo glorious a cauſe may, in ſome degree, anſwer the end for which they were honeſtly intended. If I can be any way inſtrumental to promote the ſacred intereſts of religion among us, I ſhall eſteem it the greateſt happineſs of my life. And it is a pleaſure to think, that in an age in which it is too much neglected and diſre-

diſregarded, there are ſtill ſome among us eminently diſtinguiſhed by their *high quality*, their *fortune*, and *figure* in the world, who ſhew a juſt concern for religion, and whoſe zeal for our common Chriſtianity has cauſed them candidly to overlook leſſer differences and diſtinctions. And it is to be hoped, and ſhould be the matter of our earneſt prayers to God, that all real Chriſtians, who have the intereſts of our holy religion at heart, will join in united efforts to ſupport ſo glorious a cauſe, in which the preſervation and advancement of true goodneſs and virtue, the peace and good order of the ſociety, and the preſent and eternal happineſs of individuals is ſo nearly concerned.

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and

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SIR,

WHEN I firſt formed the deſign of taking a view of the Deiſtical writers, I fixed it as a law to myſelf to make a fair repreſentation,

LETTER I.

as far as I was able, of the ſentiments of thoſe writers, and not to puſh the charge farther againſt them than there appeared to me to be juſt ground for. For I think the beſt cauſe in the world will not juſtify the making wrong charges againſt the adverſaries, or repreſenting them in a worſe light than they really deſerve. It has been no ſmall ſatisfaction to me, that, except in a ſingle inſtance, I have hitherto heard no complaints, as if the ſentiments of the ſeveral deiſtical writers, of whom ſome account is given in *the View*, were not fairly and candidly repreſented. It is with regard to what is there ſaid of the Earl of *Shaftesbury*, that the complaint has been made. Some perſons who profeſs to be real friends to Chriſtianity, and I doubt not are ſo, have let me know, that they wiſh I had not put that noble Lord into the liſt of the deiſtical writers; and they think the charge againſt him hath in ſome inſtances been carried too far. You may remember I informed you of this ſome time ago, and it was your opinion that it was not neceſſary to take any particular notice of that complaint, as you believed there were very few who made any doubt of his Lordſhip's coming very properly under that character, and that what had been produced in *the View* out of his own writings was a ſufficient proof of it. So indeed it appeared to me. I thought it however incumbent upon me carefully to reviſe that part of my book. And I can declare with great truth, that it would have given me

pleaſure to have had reaſon to think, that in this inſtance I had been miſtaken in the judgment I had formed; and I ſhould have thought myſelf obliged in that caſe publickly to have acknowleged it. But upon the moſt impartial conſideration, I have not ſeen reaſon to retract any thing I had offered with regard to that noble Lord. It cannot I think be denied by any impartial perſon who hath read the characteriſtics without prejudice, which are the only works he avowed, and which had his laſt hand, that there are ſeveral paſſages in them, which ſeem plainly intended to expoſe Chriſtianity and the holy ſcriptures. And there is great reaſon to apprehend, that not a few have been unwarily led to entertain unhappy prejudices againſt revealed religion, and the authority of the ſcriptures, through too great an admiration of his Lordſhip's writings. Some inſtances of this kind have come under my own particular obſervation. And therefore it appeareth to me upon the moſt mature conſideration, that I could not, in conſiſtency with the deſign I had in view, omit the making ſome obſervations upon that admired author, as far as the cauſe of Chriſtianity is concerned.

That part of my obſervations on Lord *Shaftesbury's* works, which I find hath been particularly excepted againſt, is the account given of his ſentiments with regard to future rewards and puniſhments. It hath been urged, that his deſign in what he has written on this ſubject, was not

LETTER I.

to inſinuate that we ought not to be influenced by a regard to future rewards and puniſhments, the uſefulneſs of which he plainly acknowlegeth; but only to ſhew that it is wrong to be acted merely by a view to the reward, or by a fear of the puniſhment, without any real inward love to virtue, or any real hatred and abhorrence of vice. To this purpoſe his Lordſhip obſerves, that "to be brib'd only, or terrified into an ho- "neſt practice, beſpeaks little of real honeſty "or worth——and that if virtue be not really "eſtimable in itſelf, he can ſee nothing eſtim- "able in following it for the ſake of a bar- "gain*." He asks, "How ſhall we deny that "to ſerve God by compulſion, or for intereſt "merely, is ſervile and mercenary?†" And he puts the caſe of a perſon's being "incited "by the hope of reward to do the good he "hates, and reſtrained by the fear of puniſh- "ment from doing the ill to which he is not "otherwiſe in the leaſt degree averſe;" and obſerves, that "there is in this caſe no virtue "whatſoever‡." If his Lordſhip had ſaid no more than this, he would have ſaid no more than every real friend to Chriſtianity will allow; though in this caſe there would ſtill be great reaſon to complain of his Lordſhip's having made a very unfair repreſentation of the ſenſe of thoſe divines, who think it neceſſary to urge the motives drawn from future rewards and puniſhments. It is true, that if the belief of fu-

* Characteriſt. Vol. I. p. 97. † *Ib.* Vol. II. p. 272. ‡ *Ib.* p. 55.

ture

ture retributions ſhould have no other effect than the putting ſome reſtraint upon men's outward evil actions, and regulating their external behaviour, even this would be of great advantage to the community: but this is far from being the only or principal thing intended. Thoſe certainly muſt know little of the nature and tendency of the Chriſtian religion, who ſhould endeavour to perſuade themſelves or others, that though a man had a real love of vice in his heart, and only abſtained from ſome outward vicious practices for fear of puniſhment; and though he had an inward averſion to true goodneſs and virtue, and only performed ſome outward acts that had a fair appearance; this alone would denominate him a good man, and intitle him to the future reward. For this were to ſuppoſe that though he were really a vicious and bad man, without that purity and ſincerity of heart on which the ſcriptures lay ſo great a ſtreſs, yet the practiſing ſome external acts of obedience, deſtitute of all true goodneſs, and of virtuous affections, would intitle him to the favour of God, and to that eternal happineſs which is promiſed in the Goſpel. If any perſons ſhould teach this, I would readily join with his Lordſhip in condemning them. But he hath not contented himſelf with ſtriking at the ſuppoſed wrong ſentiments of divines, whom he loves on all occaſions to expoſe. There are ſeveral paſſages in his Lordſhip's writings which appear to be directly intended to repreſent the inſiſting

LETTER I.

ſo much as is done in the Goſpel upon the eternal rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate, as having a bad influence on the moral temper; and particularly as tending to ſtrengthen an inordinate ſelfiſhneſs, and to diminiſh the affections towards public good, and to make men neglect what they owe to their friends, and to their country. He plainly intimates the diſadvantages accruing to virtue from the having *infinite* rewards in view, and that in that caſe the *common and natural motives to goodneſs are apt to be neglected and loſe much by diſuſe* *. He repreſents the being influenced by a regard to future rewards and puniſhments as at beſt *diſingenuous, ſervile, and of the ſlaviſh kind*; and to this he oppoſes a *liberal ſervice*, and the *principle of love*, and the *loving God and virtue for God and virtue's ſake* †: and accordingly he determines that thoſe duties, to which men are carried without any view to ſuch rewards, are for that reaſon more noble and excellent, and argue a higher degree of virtue. If the caſe really were as his Lordſhip is pleaſed to repreſent it, it muſt certainly give a very diſadvantageous idea of Chriſtianity; as if the inſiſting upon thoſe moſt important motives drawn from a future eternal world, which our Saviour came to ſet in the ſtrongeſt light, tended to introduce and cheriſh a wrong temper of mind,

* Several paſſages to this purpoſe were produced out of the Characteriſtics in the firſt volume of *the View*, which I need not here repeat. † See Characteriſtics, Vol. II. p. 271, 272, 273.

narrow

narrow and ſelfiſh, diſingenuous and ſervile, to weaken our benevolent affections, both public and private, and to take us off from the duties and office of the civil and ſocial life. At that rate it could not be ſaid that the Goſpel is a friend to ſociety and to mankind: and inſtead of promoting the practice of true virtue, it would rather derogate from it, and degrade it from its proper dignity and excellence. It was therefore neceſſary to ſhew, as I endeavoured to do in my obſervations on Lord *Shaftesbury's* writings, that this is far from being a juſt repreſentation of the nature and tendency of the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments. The moſt noble and extenſive benevolence, exerting itſelf in all proper effects and inſtances, in oppoſition to a narrow ſelfiſh diſpoſition, is what Chriſtianity every-where recommendeth and inforceth in the moſt engaging manner; and it is its peculiar advantage that it carrieth our views to a better ſtate, where the benevolence which is now begun ſhall be compleated, and ſhall be exerciſed in a more enlarged ſphere, and extend to a nobler ſociety. And can the hope of this poſſibly tend to diminiſh our benevolence, or muſt it not rather heighten and improve it? When a man hath a firm and ſteady perſuaſion, that the Supreme Being will reward his perſevering conſtancy in a virtuous courſe with everlaſting felicity, this inſtead of weakening his inward affection to virtue, and his moral ſenſe of its worth and excellency,

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must in the nature of things greatly confirm and eſtabliſh it. There is therefore an entire conſiſtency between the loving virtue for its own ſake, *i. e.* as his Lordſhip explains it, *becauſe it is amiable in itſelf**, and the being animated to the purſuit and practice of it by ſuch rewards as the Goſpel propoſeth. For it never appeareth more excellent and lovely, than when it is conſidered as recommending us to the favour and approbation of him who is the ſupreme original Goodneſs and Excellence, and as preparing us for a complete happineſs in a future ſtate, where it ſhall be raiſed to the higheſt degree of beauty and perfection. In like manner it muſt mightily ſtrengthen our abhorrence of vice, and our ſenſe of its turpitude and malignity, to conſider it as not only at preſent injurious and diſgraceful to our nature, but as an oppoſition to the will and law of the moſt wiſe and righteous Governour of the world, who will in a future ſtate of retributions inflict awful puniſhments upon thoſe who now obſtinately perſiſt in a preſumptuous courſe of vice and wickedneſs.

Our noble author himſelf, when he propoſeth to ſhew *what obligation there is to virtue, or what reaſon to embrace it*, which is the ſubject of the ſecond book of his *Inquiry*, reſolveth it into this, that *moral rectitude or virtue muſt be the advantage, and vice the miſery and diſadvantage of every creature.* And that *it is the creature's intereſt to be wholly good and vir-*

* Vol. II. p. 67.

tuous.

*tuous**. To prove this ſeems to be the entire deſign of that book, which he concludes with obſerving, that *virtue is the good, and vice the ill of every one.* He ſeems indeed in diſplaying the advantages of the one, and diſadvantages of the other, to confine himſelf wholly to this preſent life, and to abſtract from all conſideration of a future ſtate. But if the repreſenting virtue to be our intereſt here on earth, and conducive to our preſent happineſs, be a juſt ground of *obligation to virtue*, and a proper *reaſon to embrace it*, which his ſecond book is deſigned to ſhew, then ſurely if it can be proved, that it tendeth not only to our happineſs here, but to procure us a perfect happineſs in a future ſtate of exiſtence, this muſt mightily heighten the obligation to virtue, and ſtrengthen the reaſon for embracing it. If having regard to the preſent advantages of virtue be conſiſtent in his ſcheme with loving virtue for its own ſake, and as amiable in itſelf, and doth not render the embracing it a mercenary or ſlaviſh ſervice, why ſhould it be inconſiſtent with a liberal ſervice to be aſſured that it ſhall make us happy for ever? Or, why ſhould they be accounted greater friends or admirers of virtue, who conſider its excellency only with regard to the narrow limits of this tranſitory life, than they who regard it as extending its beneficial influence to a nobler ſtate of exiſtence, and who believe that it ſhall flouriſh in unfading beauty and

* Vol. II. p. 81. 98.

glory

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glory to eternity? That an affection in itſelf worthy and excellent ſhould grow leſs ſo, by conſidering it as ſo pleaſing to the Supreme Being, that he will reward it with everlaſting happineſs, and raiſe it to the higheſt perfection it is capable of in a future ſtate, would be a ſtrange way of reaſoning.

It was obſerved in the account given of the Earl of *Shaftesbury*'s writings, in the firſt volume of *the View*, that there are ſeveral paſſages in which he acknowlegeth, that the hope of future rewards, and fear of future puniſhments, is a great advantage, ſecurity, and ſupport to virtue. If theſe paſſages had been concealed or diſguiſed, there might have been juſt ground of complaint. But they were fairly laid before the reader, as well as thoſe that ſeemed to be of a contrary import, that he might be able to form a judgment of his Lordſhip's ſentiments, how far he is conſiſtent with himſelf, and whether the cenſures be well founded, which he paſſeth upon thoſe who inſiſt upon the rewards promiſed in the Goſpel, as powerful motives to virtue. He chargeth them as "reducing religion to ſuch a "philoſophy, as to leave no room for the prin-"ciple of love —— and as building a future "ſtate on the ruins of virtue, and thereby be-"traying religion, and the cauſe of God *." He repreſenteth them as if they were againſt a *liberal ſervice, flowing from an eſteem and love of God*, or a *ſenſe of duty and gratitude*, and a

* Vol. II. p. 272, 279.

love

love of the dutiful and grateful part, as good and amiable in itſelf *. And he expreſly declareth, That "the hope of future reward, and "fear of future puniſhment, cannot conſiſt in "reality with virtue or goodneſs, if it either "ſtands as eſſential to any moral performance, "or as a *conſiderable motive* to any act, of "which ſome better affection ought alone to be "a ſufficient cauſe †." Here he ſeems not willing to allow, that the regard to future retributions ought to be ſo much as a *conſiderable motive* to well-doing; and aſſerteth, that to be influenced by it as ſuch a motive cannot conſiſt in reality with virtue or goodneſs. This is in effect to ſay, that we ought not to be influenced by a regard to future rewards and puniſhments at all. For if they be believed and regarded at all, they muſt be a conſiderable motive; ſince, as he himſelf obſerveth, where infinite rewards are firmly believed, they muſt needs have a mighty influence, and will over-balance other motives ‡. If therefore it be inconſiſtent with true virtue or goodneſs, to be influenced by them as a conſiderable motive, it is wrong to propoſe them to mankind. For why ſhould they be propoſed, or to what purpoſe believed, if it be inconſiſtent with true goodneſs to be influenced by them in proportion to their worth and importance? His Lordſhip elſewhere obſerves, "That by making rewards and puniſh-

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* Vol. II. p. 270. † Ib. p. 58. ‡ Ib. p. 68.

"ments"

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" ments" [*i. e.* the rewards and punishments proposed in the Gospel; for to these he evidently refers] " the principal motives to duty, the " Christian religion in particular is overthrown, " and the greatest principle, that of love, re- " jected *." When he here brings so heavy a charge against those who make the rewards of the Gospel their *principal motives*, his meaning seems to be this: That they make the hope of future eternal happiness a more powerful motive than the present satisfaction and advantages virtue hath a tendency to produce, which are the motives he so largely insists upon, and which he calls *the common and natural motives to goodness*. And is the being more animated by the consideration of that eternal happiness which is the promised reward of virtue, than by any of the advantages it yields in this present state (though these also are allowed to have their proper weight and influence) so great a fault, as to deserve to be represented as a subverting of all religion, and particularly the Christian? If the eternal life promised in the Gospel be rightly understood, the hope of it includeth a due regard to the glory of God, to our own highest happiness, and to the excellency of virtue and true holiness; all which are here united, and are the worthiest motives that can be proposed to the human mind. There is a perfect harmony between this hope, and what his Lordship so much extols, the principle of di-

* Vol. II. 279.

vine

vine love, *ſuch as ſeparates from every thing worldly, ſenſual, and meanly intereſted.* Nor can it be juſtly ſaid concerning this hope of the Goſpel reward, what he ſaith of *a violent affection towards private good*, that the more there is of it, the *leſs room there is for an affection towards goodneſs itſelf, or any good and deſerving object*, worthy of *love and admiration for its own ſake, ſuch as God is univerſally acknowleged to be* *. The very reward itſelf includeth the perfection of love and goodneſs; and the happineſs promiſed principally conſiſteth in a conformity to God, and in the fruition of him; and therefore the being powerfully animated with the hope of it is perfectly conſiſtent with *the higheſt love and admiration of the Deity, on the account of his own infinite excellency.*

It appeareth to me, upon conſidering and comparing what hath been produced out of Lord *Shaftesbury*'s writings, that though his Lordſhip's good ſenſe would not allow him abſolutely to deny the uſefulneſs of believing future retributions; yet he hath in effect endeavoured on ſeveral occaſions to caſt a ſlur upon Chriſtianity, for propoſing and inſiſting upon what he calls *infinite rewards*; and thus hath attempted to turn that to its diſadvantage which is its greateſt glory, *viz.* its ſetting the important retributions of a future ſtate in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt light, and teaching us to

* Vol. II. p. 58. 59.

raiſe

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raiſe our affections and views to things inviſible and eternal. His Lordſhip hath, upon the moſt careful and diligent reviſal of his works, ſuffered thoſe obnoxious paſſages ſtill to continue there. Nor will any man wonder at this, who conſidereth the deſign and tendency of many other paſſages in his writings: That he hath taken occaſion to ridicule the ſpirit of prophecy, and to burleſque ſeveral paſſages of holy writ: That he hath repreſented the ſcriptures as abſolutely uncertain, and the important facts by which Chriſtianity is atteſted, as not to be depended upon: That he hath inſinuated injurious reflections upon the character and intentions of the bleſſed Founder of our holy religion: That he hath repreſented our faith in the Goſpel as having no other foundation than the authority of the ſtate; and hath hinted, that it could hardly have ſtood the teſt of ridicule, and even of *Bartholomew-Fair* drollery, had it been applied to it at its firſt appearance *.

As I have been engaged ſo far in an examination of Lord *Shaftesbury*'s writings, I ſhall take this occaſion to make ſome farther obſervations on his celebrated Inquiry concerning Virtue.

He ſets out with obſerving, That "religion "and virtue appear to be ſo nearly related, that "they are generally preſumed inſeparable com- "panions. But that the practice of the world "does not ſeem in this reſpect to be anſwer-

* See all this clearly ſhewn in the firſt volume of *The View of the Deiſtical Writers*, p. 101, et ſeq.

"able

" able to our ſpeculations:" That " many who have had the appearance of great zeal in religion, have yet wanted the common affections of *humanity* *. Others again, who have been conſidered as mere Atheiſts, have yet been obſerved to practiſe the rules of morality, and act in many caſes with ſuch good meaning and affection towards mankind, as might ſeem to force an acknowlegement of their being virtuous †." His Lordſhip therefore propoſeth to enquire, " What honeſty or virtue is, conſidered by itſelf, and in what manner it is influenced by religion: how far religion neceſſarily implies virtue: and whether it be a true ſaying, That it is impoſſible for an Atheiſt to be virtuous, or ſhare any real degree of honeſty or merit ‡." LETTER I.

In that part of *the Inquiry*, in which he propoſeth to ſhew what virtue is, he ſeems to make it properly conſiſt in good affections towards mankind, or in a man's having " his diſpoſition of mind and temper ſuitable and agreeing to the good of his kind, or of the ſyſtem in which he is included, and of which he conſtituteth a part §." And he had be-

* It will readily be acknowleged, that the appearance of religion is often ſeparated from true virtue: but real practical religion neceſſarily comprehendeth virtue; and as far as we are deficient in the practice of virtue, we are deficient in what religion indiſpenſibly requireth of us.

† Character. vol. II. p. 5, 6. ‡ Ibid. p. 7. § See ib. p. 31. 77, 78. 86, 87, et paſſim.

fore

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fore declared, that ſome who have been conſidered as mere Atheiſts, have acted with ſuch good affection towards mankind, as might ſeem to force an acknowlegement that they are virtuous.

And as this is the notion his Lordſhip gives of the nature of virtue; ſo when he treats of the obligation to virtue, and the reaſon there is to embrace it, which is the ſubject of the ſecond book of the *Inquiry*, he ſeems to place it in its tendency to promote our happineſs in this preſent life, without taking any notice of a future ſtate.

Accordingly, many have looked upon the *Inquiry* as deſigned to ſet up ſuch a notion of virtue and its obligation, as is independent on religion, and may ſubſiſt without it. And in the progreſs of that *Inquiry*, his Lordſhip takes occaſion to compare Atheiſm with ſuperſtition or falſe religion, and plainly gives the former the preference; and ſeems ſometimes to ſpeak tenderly of it; having obſerved, that nothing can poſſibly, in a rational creature, exclude a principle of virtue, or render it ineffectual, except what either, "1. Takes away the natural and "juſt ſenſe of right and wrong: 2. Or creates "a wrong ſenſe of it: 3. Or cauſes the right "ſenſe of it to be oppoſed by contrary affec-"tions †." As to the firſt caſe, the taking away the natural ſenſe of right and wrong, he will not allow that Atheiſm, or any ſpeculative

† Character. vol. II. p. 40.

opinion,

opinion, perſuaſion, or belief, is capable immediately or directly to exclude or deſtroy it; and that it can do it no other way than *indirectly* by the intervention of oppoſite affections, *caſually* excited by ſuch belief *. As to the ſecond caſe, the *wrong ſenſe, or falſe imagination of right and wrong*, he ſays, That "however Atheiſm "may be indirectly an occaſion of men's loſing "a good and ſufficient ſenſe of right and wrong, "it will not, as Atheiſm merely, be the occa- "ſion of ſetting up a falſe ſpecies of it; which "only falſe religion, or fantaſtical opinion, de- "rived immediately from ſuperſtition and cre- "dulity, is able to effect †." As to the third caſe, which renders a principle of virtue ineffectual, *viz.* its being oppoſed by contrary affections, —— he ſays, That "Atheiſm, though "it be plainly deficient, and without remedy, "in the caſe of ill judgment on the happineſs "of virtue, yet it is not indeed of neceſſity "the cauſe of ſuch ill judgment. For without "an abſolute aſſent to any hypotheſis of Theiſm, "the advantages of virtue may poſſibly be ſeen "and own'd, and a high opinion of it eſtabliſhed "in the mind ‡."

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Our noble author was ſenſible of the offence he had given, by ſeeming to ſpeak favourably of Atheiſts, and by erecting a ſyſtem of virtue independent of religion, or the belief of a Deity: and in a treatiſe he publiſhed ſome years

* Character. vol. II. p. 44, 45. † Ib. p. 46, 51, 52. ‡ Ib. p. 69.

LETTER I. after the *Inquiry*, intitled, *The Moraliſts, a Philoſophical Rhapſody*, makes an apology for it: That "he has endeavoured to keep the "faireſt meaſures he could with men of this "ſort," [*viz.* atheiſtical perſons, and men of no religion] "alluring them all he was able, "and arguing with a perfect indifferency even "on the ſubject of a Deity — having this "one chief aim and intention, how in the "firſt place to reconcile thoſe perſons to the "principles of virtue; that by this means, a "way might be laid open to religion, by re-"moving thoſe greateſt, if not only obſtacles to "it, which ariſe from the vices and paſſions of "men.—That 'tis upon this account chiefly he "endeavours to eſtabliſh virtue upon principles "by which he is able to argue with thoſe, who "are not yet inclined to own a God, or future "ſtate. — He owns, he has made virtue his "chief ſubject, and in ſome meaſure inde-"pendent on religion; yet he fancies he may "poſſibly appear at laſt as high a divine, as he "is a moraliſt:" — And ſays, "He will ven-"ture to affirm,—That whoſoever ſincerely "defends virtue, and is a realiſt in morality, "muſt of neceſſity in a manner, by the ſame "ſcheme of reaſoning, prove as very a realiſt "in divinity *." And elſewhere he ſays, That "we may juſtly as well as charitably conclude, "that it was his deſign in applying himſelf to the "men of looſer principles, to lead them into

* Character. vol. II. p. 266, 267, 268.

"ſuch

" ſuch an apprehenſion of the conſtitution of LETTER
" mankind, and of human affairs, as might I.
" form in them a notion of order in things,
" and draw hence an acknowlegement of the
" wiſdom, goodneſs, and beauty, which is Su-
" preme; that being thus far become proſelytes,
" they might be prepared for that divine love
" which our religion would teach them, when
" once they ſhould embrace it, and form them-
" ſelves to its ſacred character *."

This muſt be own'd to be an handſome apology: So that if we take his Lordſhip's own account of his intention in his *Inquiry*, it was not to favour Atheiſm, but rather to reclaim men from it; to reconcile Atheiſts to the principles of virtue, and thereby bring them to a good opinion of religion. It may no doubt be of real ſervice to the intereſts of virtue, to endeavour to make men ſenſible of its great excellency in itſelf, and its preſent natural advantages, which his Lordſhip ſets forth at large, and in a very elegant manner. And this is no more than hath been often repreſented by thoſe divines, who yet think it neceſſary to inſiſt on the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. There are indeed many that have ſaid, what no man who knows the world, and the hiſtory of mankind, can deny, that in the preſent ſituation of human affairs, a ſteady adherence to virtue often ſubjects a man to ſevere trials and ſufferings; and that it frequently happeneth, that bad

* Character. vol. II. p. 279.

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and vicious men are in very proſperous outward circumſtances; but I ſcarce know any that have maintained what his Lordſhip calls that *unfortunate opinion*, viz. That "virtue is *naturally* "an enemy to happineſs in life;" or, who ſuppoſe, That "virtue is the *natural ill*, and vice "the *natural good* of any creature *." Nor would any friend to Chriſtianity have found fault with his Lordſhip's endeavouring to ſhew, that by the very frame of the human conſtitution, virtue has a friendly influence to promote our ſatisfaction and happineſs, even in this preſent life; and that vice has naturally a contrary tendency. But certainly it was no-way neceſſary to his deſign, ſuppoſing it to have been, as he profeſſes, to ſerve the cauſe of virtue in the world, to throw out ſo many inſinuations as he has done againſt the being influenced by a regard to future rewards and puniſhments; as if it argued a higher degree of virtue to have no regard to them at all. And though in ſeveral paſſages he ſhews the advantage which ariſes to virtue from religion and the belief of a Deity, yet whilſt he ſeems to allow that virtue may ſubſiſt, and even be carried to a conſiderable degree without it, I am afraid it will give encouragement to thoſe he calls *the men of looſer principles*; and that, inſtead of reclaiming them from Atheiſm, it will tend to make them eaſy in it, by leading them to think they may be good and virtuous men without any religion at all.

* Character. vol. II. p. 71, 72.

His

His Lordſhip ſeems, from a deſire of *keeping the faireſt meaſures*, as he expreſſes it, *with men of this ſort*, to have carried his complaiſance too far, when he aſſerts, that Atheiſm has no direct tendency either to take away and deſtroy *the natural and juſt ſenſe of right and wrong*, or to the ſetting up *a falſe ſpecies of it*. This is not a proper place to enter into a diſtinct conſideration of this ſubject. I ſhall content myſelf with producing ſome paſſages from the moſt applauded Doctor of modern Atheiſm, *Spinoſa*, and who has taken the moſt pains to form it into a ſyſtem. He propoſeth, in the fifteenth chapter of his *Tractatus Theologicopoliticus*, to treat of *the natural and civil right of every man. De jure uniuſcujuſque naturali et civili.* And the ſum of his doctrine is this: That every man has a natural right to do whatever he has power to do, and his inclination prompts him to; and that the right extends as far as the force. By *natural right*, or *law*, *Jus et inſtitutum naturæ*, " he underſtands nothing elſe " but the rules of the nature of each indivi- " dual, according to which it is determined to " exiſt and act after a certain manner *." And after

* Per jus et inſtitutum naturæ nihil aliud intelligo, quam regulas naturæ uniuſcujuſque individui, ſecundum quas unumquodque naturaliter determinatum concipimus ad certo modo exiſtendum et operandum. Ex. gr. piſces a natura determinati ſunt ad natandum, magni ad minores comedendum, adeoque piſces ſummo naturali jure aqua potiuntur, et magni minores comedunt. — " Sequitur unumquodque individuum jus ſummum habere ad omnia

LETTER I. after having obſerved, that " the large fiſhes " are determined by nature to devour the " ſmaller, and that therefore they have a na- " tural right to do ſo;" — and that " every in- " dividual has the *higheſt right* to do all things " which it has power to do;" he declares, That " in this caſe he acknowleges no difference be- " tween men and other individuals of nature,

" omnia quæ poteſt. —— Nec hic ullam agnoſcimus differen- " tiam inter homines et reliqua naturæ individua, neque inter " homines ratione præditos, et inter alios qui veram rationem ig- " norant, neque inter fatuos, delirantes, et ſanos." Quare inter homines quamdiu ſub imperio ſolius naturæ vivere conſiderantur, tam ille qui rationem nondum novit, vel qui virtutis habitum nondum habet, ex ſolis legibus appetitus ſummo jure vivit, quam ille qui ex legibus rationis vitam ſuam dirigit. Hoc eſt, ſicuti ſapiens jus ſummum habet ad omnia quæ ratio dictitat, ſive ex legibus rationis vivendi; ſic etiam ignarus et animi impotens ſummum jus habet ad omnia quæ appetitus ſuadet, ſive ex legibus appetitus vivendi. Jus itaque naturale uniuſcujuſque hominis, non ſana ratione, ſed cupiditate et potentia determinatur.— Quicquid itaque unuſquiſque qui ſub ſolo naturæ imperio conſideratur, ſibi utile vel ductu ſanæ rationis, vel ex affectuum impetu judicat, id ſummo naturæ jure appetere, et quacunque ratione, ſive vi, ſive dolo, ſive precibus, ſive quocunque demum modo facilius poterit, ipſi capere licet, et conſequenter pro hoſte habere eum, qui impedire vult, quo minus animum expleat ſuum. Ex quibus ſequitur jus et inſtitutum naturæ ſub quo omnes naſcuntur, et maxima ex parte vivunt, nihil niſi quod nemo cupit, et nemo poteſt, prohibere; non contentiones, non odia, non iram, non dolos, nec abſolute aliquid quod appetitus ſuadet, averſari. Nec mirum, nam natura non legibus humanæ rationis, quæ non niſi verum utile et conſervationem intendunt, ſed infinitis aliis, quæ totius naturæ, cujus homo particula eſt, æternum ordinem reſpiciunt: ex cujus ſola neceſſitate, omnia individua certo modo determinantur ad exiſtendum et operandum.— Oſtendimus jus naturale ſola potentia cujuſque determinari.— Nemo, niſi promiſſo aliud accedat, de fide alterius poteſt eſſe certus, quandoquidem unuſquiſque naturæ jure dolo agere poteſt; nec pactis ſtare tenetur, niſi ſpe majoris boni, vel metu majoris mali. — Tract. Theolog. Polit. cap. xvi.

" nor

" nor between men that make a right uſe of
" their reaſon and thoſe that do not ſo; nor
" between wiſe men and fools.—That he that
" does not yet know reaſon, or has not attained
" to a habit of virtue, hath as much the higheſt
" natural right to live according to the ſole
" laws of appetite, and to do what that in-
" clines him to, as he that directs his life by
" the rules of reaſon hath to live according to
" reaſon."—Accordingly, he directly aſſerts,
" That the natural right of every man is deter-
" mined not by ſound reaſon, but by inclina-
" tion, or appetite and power.—That there-
" fore whatever any man, conſidered as under
" the ſole government of nature, judges to be uſe-
" ful for himſelf, whether led by ſound reaſon,
" or prompted by his paſſions, he has the higheſt
" natural right to endeavour to procure it for
" himſelf any way he can, whether by force or
" fraud; and conſequently to hold him for an
" enemy, who would hinder him from grati-
" fying his inclination: and that from hence it
" follows, that the right and law of nature,
" under which all are born, and for the moſt
" part live, only prohibits that which a man
" does not deſire, or which is out of his power;
" nor is it averſe to contentions, hatred, wrath,
" deceit, nor to any thing that the appetite puts
" him upon. And no wonder; for nature is
" not confined within the laws of human rea-
" ſon, which only intend the true benefit of
" mankind, but depends upon infinite other

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" things, which reſpect the eternal order of " univerſal nature, of which man is only a " minute part; from the neceſſity of which " alone all individuals are determined to exiſt " and operate after a certain manner." He often repeats it in that chapter, That " natural " right is only determined by the power of " every individual." And he expreſly aſſerts, That " no man can be ſure of another man's " fidelity, except he think it his intereſt to keep " his promiſe; ſince every man has a natural " right to act by fraud or deceit, nor is obliged " to ſtand to his engagements, but from the " hope of greater good, or fear of greater " ill."

I think it muſt be owned, that theſe principles have not merely an *indirect* and *caſual*, but a plain and direct tendency to take away or pervert the natural ſenſe of *right* and *wrong*, or to introduce a falſe ſpecies of it, if the ſubſtituting power and inclination, inſtead of reaſon and juſtice, can be accounted ſo. This is to argue conſequentially from Atheiſm, when all things are reſolved into nature, and eternal neceſſity, by which are underſtood the neceſſary effects of matter and motion. *Spinoſa* indeed owns, that it is more profitable to live according to the dictates of reaſon, or the preſcriptions of the civil laws, than merely according to appetite or natural right. But whilſt men think they have the higheſt natural right to do whatever they have power to do, and inclination

clination prompts them to, civil laws will be but feeble ties, and bind a man no farther than when he has not power, or thinks it not for his intereſt to break them. Virtue and vice, fidelity and fraud are on a level; the one equally founded in natural right as the other: And how any man can be truly virtuous upon this ſcheme I cannot ſee. LETTER I.

It appears to me therefore, that inſtead of endeavouring to ſhew that virtue may ſubſiſt without religion, or the belief of a God and a future ſtate, one of the moſt important ſervices that can be done to mankind is to ſhew the cloſe connection there is between religion and virtue or good order, and that the latter cannot be maintained without the former. And this indeed plainly follows from ſome of the principles laid down by our noble author in his *Inquiry*.

Although he ſeems to have intended to ſhew that an Atheiſt may be really virtuous; and obſerves in a paſſage cited above, that without the belief of a Deity "the advantages of virtue "may poſſibly be ſeen and own'd, and a high "opinion of it eſtabliſhed in the mind," he there adds, "However it muſt be confeſſed, "that the natural tendency of Atheiſm is very "different *." Where he ſeems plainly to allow, that Atheiſm is *naturally* an enemy to virtue, and that the direct tendency of it is to hinder the mind from entertaining a right opi-

* Character. vol. II. p. 69.

nion

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nion of virtue, or from having a due ſenſe of its advantages. And elſewhere ſpeaking of the Atheiſtical belief he obſerves, that it "tends to "the weaning the affections from every thing "amiable and ſelf-worthy. For how little "diſpoſed muſt a perſon be to love or admire "any thing as orderly in the univerſe, who "thinks the univerſe itſelf a pattern of diſor-"der *!" To this may be added another remarkable paſſage in which his Lordſhip declares, That "he who only doubts of a God may poſ-"ſibly lament his own unhappineſs, and wiſh "to be convinced.——But that he who denies a "Deity is daringly preſumptuous, and ſets up "an opinion againſt the ſentiments of man-"kind, and being of ſociety!" Where he ſeems plainly to pronounce that Atheiſm is ſubverſive of all virtue, which in his ſcheme hath an eſſential relation to ſociety, and the good of the public. And accordingly he adds, That 'tis eaſily ſeen, that "one of theſe," *viz.* he that only doubts, "may bear a due reſpect "to the magiſtrates and the laws, but not the "other," *viz.* he that denies a Deity, "who "being obnoxious to them is juſtly puniſh-"able †."

Several paſſages might be produced, in which his Lordſhip repreſents the tendency religion hath to promote virtue. He obſerves, That "nothing can more highly contribute to the

* Character. vol. II. p. 70. † Ib. p. 260.

"fixing

" fixing of right apprehenſions, and a ſound LETTER
" judgment or ſenſe of right and wrong, than I.
" to believe a God, who is repreſented ſuch,
" as to be a true model, or example of the
" moſt exact juſtice, and higheſt goodneſs and
" worth * !" And again, That " this belief muſt
" undoubtedly ſerve to raiſe and increaſe the af-
" fection towards virtue, and help to ſubmit and
" ſubdue all other affections to this alone.---And
" that, when this Theiſtical belief is intire and
" and perfect, there muſt be a ſteady opinion of
" the ſuperintendency of a Supreme Being, a
" witneſs and ſpectator of human life, and
" conſcious of whatſoever is felt or acted in
" the univerſe, ſo that in the perfecteſt receſs,
" or deepeſt ſolitude, there muſt be one ſtill
" preſumed remaining with us, whoſe preſence
" ſingly muſt be of more moment than that
" of the moſt auguſt aſſembly upon earth: and
" that in ſuch a preſence, as the *ſhame* of guilty
" actions muſt be the greateſt of any, ſo——
" muſt the honour be of well-doing, even un-
" der the unjuſt cenſures of a world. And in
" this caſe it is very apparent, how conducing
" a perfect Theiſm muſt be to virtue, and how
" great a deficiency there is in Atheiſm †." He
ſhews, That " where by the violence of rage, luſt,
" or any other counter-working paſſions, the
" good affection may frequently be controuled
" and overcome--if religion interpoſing creates a

* Character. vol. II. p. 51. † Ib. p. 57.

" belief,

LETTER I. "belief, that the ill paſſions of this kind, no "leſs than their conſequent actions, are the "objects of a Deity's animadverſion; 'tis cer- "tain, that ſuch a belief muſt prove a ſeaſon- "able remedy againſt vice, and be in a particu- "lar manner advantageous to virtue *." And he concludes the firſt book of the *Inquiry concerning virtue* with obſerving, That "we may "hence determine juſtly the relation which "virtue has to piety: the firſt not being com- "plete but in the latter. And thus, ſaith he, "the perfection and height of virtue muſt be "owing to the belief of a God †."

From theſe paſſages it ſufficiently appears, that thoſe who would ſeparate virtue from religion cannot properly plead Lord *Shaftesbury*'s authority for it. And indeed not only is religion a friend to virtue, and of the higheſt advantage to it, but as it ſignifies proper affections and diſpoſitions towards the Supreme Being, is itſelf the nobleſt virtue. It is true that his Lordſhip ſeems frequently to place virtue wholly in good affections towards mankind. But this appears to be too narrow a notion of it. He himſelf makes *virtue* and *moral rectitude* to be equivalent terms ‡; and moral rectitude ſeems as evidently and neceſſarily to include right affections towards God, as towards thoſe of our own ſpecies. He that is deficient in this, muſt certainly be deficient in an eſſential branch of

* Character. vol. II. p. 60, 61. † Ib. p. 76. ‡ Ib. p. 77, 81.

good affection, or moral rectitude. If a human creature could not be ſaid to be rightly diſpoſed, that was deſtitute of affections towards its natural parents, can he be ſaid to be rightly diſpoſed, who hath not a due affection towards the *Common Parent*, as Lord *Shaftesbury* calls him, of all intellectual beings. This noble writer deſcribes virtue to be that which is beautiful, fair, and amiable in diſpoſition and action. And he asks, "Whether there is on "earth a fairer matter of ſpeculation, a goodlier view or contemplation, than that of "*a beautiful, proportioned*, and *becoming* action *?" And is there any thing more beautiful, more juſtly proportioned, and more becoming, than the acting ſuitably to the relation we bear to the Supreme Being, and the ſerving, adoring, and honouring him, as far as we are capable of doing ſo? Is there ſuch a beauty and harmony in good affections towards thoſe of our own ſpecies, and muſt there not be ſtill more beauty and excellency in having our minds formed to proper affections and diſpoſitions towards our Maker, Preſerver, and Benefactor, the *ſource and principle*, to uſe our author's expreſſions, *of all being and perfection, the ſupreme and ſovereign beauty, the original of all which is good and amiable?* His Lordſhip ſpeaks in the higheſt terms of the pleaſing conſciouſneſs which is the effect of love or kind affections towards mankind. But

* Character. vol. II. p. 105.

certainly

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certainly there is nothing that can yield more of a divine ſatisfaction, than that which ariſeth from a conſciouſneſs of a man's having approved himſelf to the beſt of beings, and endeavoured to promote his glory in the world, and to fulfil the work he hath given us to do. And it will be readily acknowleged, that a neceſſary part of this work is the doing good to our fellow-creatures.

The very notion he ſo frequently gives of virtue, as having an eſſential relation to a ſyſtem, ſeems if underſtood in its proper extent to include religion, and cannot ſubſiſt without it. His Lordſhip indeed frequently explains this as relating to the ſyſtem of the human ſpecies, to which we are particularly related, and of which we conſtitute a part. But he alſo repreſents the human ſyſtem as only a part of the univerſal one, and obſerves that "as man muſt "be conſidered as having a relation abroad to "the ſyſtem of his kind; ſo even the ſyſtem of "his kind to the animal ſyſtem: this to the "world (our earth) and this again to the "bigger world, the univerſe *." And that "having recognized this uniform conſiſtent "fabric, and own'd the univerſal ſyſtem, we "muſt of conſequence acknowlege an uni-"verſal mind †." He aſſerts, that good affec-"tion in order to its being of the right kind "muſt be *intire:* and that "a partial affection,

* Character. vol. II. p. 286. † Ib. p. 290.

"or

" or ſocial love in part, without regard to a LETTER
" complete ſociety or whole, is in itſelf an in- I.
" conſiſtency, and implies an abſolute contra-
" diction *." But how can that affection to the ſyſtem be ſaid to be intire, or of the right kind, which hath no regard to the author of it, on whom the whole ſyſtem, the order and even the very being of it, abſolutely depends? and without whom indeed there could be properly no ſyſtem at all, nothing but diſorder and confuſion? On this occaſion it will be proper to produce a remarkable paſſage in his third volume; where he obſerves, That " if what
" he had advanced in his *Inquiry*, and in his
" following *Philoſophic Dialogue* be real —
" it will follow, that ſince man is ſo conſti-
" tuted by means of his rational part, as to be
" conſcious of this his more immediate relation
" to the univerſal ſyſtem, and principle of or-
" der and intelligence, he is not only by na-
" ture *ſociable* within the limits of his own
" ſpecies or kind, but in a yet more generous
" and extenſive manner. He is not only born
" to virtue, friendſhip, honeſty, and faith, but
" to religion, piety, adoration, and a generous
" ſurrender of his mind to whatever happens
" from the *Supreme Cauſe* or order of things,
" which he acknowleges intirely juſt and per-
" fect †."

* Character. vol. II. p. 119. 113, 114. † Ib. vol. III. p. 224.

I have

LETTER I. I have inſiſted the more largely upon this, becauſe many there are among us that talk highly of virtue, who yet ſeem to look upon religion to be a thing in which they have little or no concern They allow that men are formed and deſigned to be uſeful to one another; but as to what is uſually called piety towards God, or thoſe acts of religion, of which God is the immediate object, this does not enter at all into their notion of virtue or morality. They ſlight it as a matter of no conſequence; and think they may be good and virtuous without it. But not to urge, that religion or a true regard to the Deity, is the beſt ſecurity for the right performance of every other part of our duty, and furniſheth the ſtrongeſt motives and engagements to it; which certainly ought greatly to recommend it to every lover of virtue; there is nothing which ſeems to be capable of a clearer demonſtration from the frame of the human nature, and the powers and faculties with which man is endued, than that he alone of all the ſpecies of beings in this lower world, is formed with a capacity for religion, and that conſequently this was one principal deſign of his creation, and without which he cannot properly anſwer the end of his being. To what hath been produced from the Earl of *Shaftesbury*, I ſhall add the teſtimony of another writer, whom no man will ſuſpect of being prejudiced in favour of religion, the late Lord Viſcount *Bolingbroke*; who, though he ſometimes ſeems to make

make man only a higher kind of brute, and blames thoſe who ſuppoſe that the ſoul of man was made to *contemplate God*, yet at other times finds himſelf obliged to acknowlege, that man was principally deſigned and formed for religion. Thus in the ſpecimen he gives of a meditation or ſoliloquy of a devout Theiſt, he talks of "feeling the ſuperiority of his ſpecies;" and adds, "I ſhould rouze in myſelf a grateful "ſenſe of theſe advantages above all others, "that I am a creature capable of knowing, of "adoring, and worſhipping my Creator, capa- "ble of diſcovering his will in the law of my "nature, and capable of promoting my hap- "pineſs by obeying it *." And in another paſſage, after inveighing, as is uſual with him, againſt the pride and vanity of philoſophers and divines in exalting man, and flattering the pride of the human heart, he thinks fit to acknowlege, That "man is a *religious* as well as "*ſocial* creature, made to know and adore his "Creator, to diſcover and to obey his will.—— "That greater powers of reaſon, and means of "improvement, have been meaſured out to us "than to other animals, that we might be able "to fulfil the *ſuperior* purpoſes of our *deſtina- "tion, whereof religion is undoubtedly the chief*. "---and that in theſe the elevation and pre- "eminence of our ſpecies over the inferior ani- "mals conſiſts †." I think it plainly followeth

* Lord Bolingbroke's works, Vol. V. p. 390, 391. See alſo to the ſame purpoſe, ib. p. 340. † Ib. p. 470.

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from what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath here obſerved, and which ſeems to be perfectly juſt and reaſonable, that they who live in an habitual neglect of religion, are chargeable with neglecting the chief purpoſe of their being, and that in which the true glory and pre-eminence of the human nature doth principally conſiſt: and that conſequently they are guilty of a very criminal conduct, and which they can by no means approve to the great Author of their exiſtence, who gave them their noble powers, and to whom as the wiſe and righteous Governor of the world they muſt be accountable for their conduct.

I have been carried farther in my obſervations on this ſubject than I intended; but if this may be looked upon as a digreſſion, I hope it will not be thought unſuitable to the main deſign I have in view.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER II.

Unfair management in the French *Tranſlation of Mr.* Collins's *diſcourſe of Free-thinking. Frauds of the* Deiſtical *writers in their quotations of authors. The parallel drawn by Mr.* Chubb *between the propagation of Chriſtianity and the progreſs of Methodiſm, examined. Reflections on the Pamphlet intitled,* Deiſm fairly ſtated, and fully vindicated. *That author's pompous account of Deiſm, and his way of ſtating the queſtion between Chriſtians and Deiſts, conſidered. Concerning the differences among Chriſtians about the way of knowing the Scriptures to be the word of God. The charge he brings againſt the Chriſtian Religion as conſiſting only of unintelligible doctrines and uſeleſs inſtitutions, aud his pretence that the moral precepts do not belong to Chriſtianity at all, but are the property of the Deiſts, ſhewn to be vain and groundleſs. The corruption of Chriſtians no juſt argument againſt true original Chriſtianity.*

SIR,

IN the article relating to Mr. *Collins* in the firſt volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers,* ſome account is given of that gen-

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tleman's *Diſcourſe of Free-Thinking*, and of the anſwers that were made to it. Since the publiſhing of that account, an obſervation hath occurred to me, which I think may be fitly inſerted under that article. It may properly come in as a marginal note in p. 126. The obſervation is this.

" There was a *French* tranſlation of the *Diſ-*
" *courſe of Free-Thinking* carried on under Mr.
" *Collins*'s own eye, and printed at the *Hague*
" in 1714, though it bears *London* in the title-
" page. In this tranſlation ſeveral material al-
" terations are made, and a different turn is
" given to ſeveral paſſages, from what was in
" Mr. *Collins*'s original *Engliſh*. This is plainly
" done with a view to evade the charges which
" had been brought againſt him by Dr. *Bently*
" under the character of *Phileleutherus Lipſi-*
" *enſis*; ſome of which charges that bore very
" properly againſt Mr. *Collins*'s book as it was
" firſt publiſhed, will appear impertinent to
" thoſe that judge only by this tranſlation. But
" care is taken not to give the leaſt notice of
" theſe alterations to the reader, upon whom
" it is made to paſs for a faithful verſion of the
" original. All this is clearly ſhewn by the
" author of the *French* tranſlation of Dr.
" *Bentley's Remarks on the Diſcourſe of Free-*
" *Thinking*, which was printed at *Amſterdam*
" in 1738, under the title of *Friponnerie Laique*
" *des pretendus Eſprits forts d'Angleterre.*
" The *Lay-Craft of the pretended Free-Think-*

" *ers of England.* This Gentleman, Mr. *De* LETTER
" *la Chapelle*, has made it appear that Mr. II.
" *Collins*, and his Tranſlator who acted under
" his direction, have been guilty of palpable
" falſifications and frauds, which ill became one
" who had in that very book raiſed ſuch a loud
" outcry againſt the Clergy for *corrupting* and
" *mangling of authors*, and for *pious frauds*
" *in the tranſlating and publiſhing of books.*"

I cannot but obſerve on this occaſion, what muſt have occurred to every one that has been much converſant in the Deiſtical writers, that it would be hard to produce any perſons whatſoever who are chargeable with more unfair and fraudulent management in their quotations, in curtailing, adding to, or altering the paſſages they cite, or taking them out of their connection, and making them ſpeak directly contrary to the ſentiments of the authors. It is well known that they affect frequently to quote Chriſtian divines; but they ſeldom do it fairly, and often wilfully miſrepreſent, and pervert their meaning. Many glaring inſtances of this ſort might be produced out of the writings of the moſt eminent Deiſtical authors, if any man ſhould think it worth his while to make a collection to this purpoſe.

What I ſhall next mention hath little coherence with what has been juſt now obſerved; but if it may paſs for a proper hint I am ſatisfied. It relates to that part of the Remarks on Mr. *Chubb's poſthumous works*, in the firſt vo-

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lume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, which concerns the argument from prophecy. In p. 369, lin. 12, from the bottom after *events*, the following paragraph may be inſerted, without breaking the line.

It was wiſely ordered that miracles and prophecy ſhould go together, whereby not only the moſt ſtriking evidence was given to the truth and divinity of the Revelation, at the time when it was firſt promulgated; but proviſion was made that there ſhould be a growing evidence, which might acquire new force and ſtrength by the ſucceſſive accompliſhment of the prophecies in the ſeveral different periods to which they refer.

There is another obſervation relating to Mr. *Chubb's poſthumous Works* which I ſhall here ſubjoin; and which was originally prepared to be inſerted in the firſt volume of *the View*, &c. but was neglected. In p. 384 of that volume lin. 9. after *Letter*, let there be a new line, and let what follows be inſerted.

After having conſidered the attempts made by Mr. *Chubb* to invalidate the argument in behalf of divine Revelation from prophecy and miracles, it will not be improper to conſider what he hath offered to take off the force of the argument, which hath been frequently urged, from the wonderful propagation of Chriſtianity, in behalf of its divine original. He acknowlegeth, that "it is improbable that Chriſtianity "ſhould take place, and prevail in the world, "and to the degree it did, or at leaſt that we

"are

" are told it did, ſuppoſing the hiſtory of Chriſt's " life and miniſtry to be a fiction *." But then as if he had granted too much, he obſerves, that " The preſent run of Methodiſm, without any " miraculous power attending it, or any exter- " nal evidence to back it, takes off from the " weight and force of the argument †." He often returns to this, and in ſeveral parts of his book ſeems willing to run a parallel between the progreſs of Chriſtianity, and that of Methodiſm. But this only ſhews the ſtrong prejudices of thoſe who glory in the character of Free-Thinkers, and how forward they are to catch at the ſlighteſt pretences for ſetting aſide the evidences brought in favour of Chriſtianity. For in reality there can be no reaſonable parallel drawn between the one and the other. There is no great wonder in it, that profeſſed Chriſtians pretending to a high degree of purity and piety, and to teach true ſcriptural Chriſtianity, ſhould make ſome progreſs, not in Pagan or Mahometan, or even in Popiſh Countries, for I do not find our Methodiſts take upon them to make many converſions there, but in a country where ſcriptural Chriſtianity is profeſſed, and a full toleration allowed. There is nothing in this but what may be eaſily accounted for, without ſuppoſing any thing ſupernatural in the caſe. They do not pretend to new extraordinary revelations, nor appeal to any miraculous facts, as the *French*

* *Chubb's* Poſthumous Works, Vol. II. p. 40, 41. † *Ib.* marg. note.

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prophets did, in which caſe the failure of thoſe facts might eaſily ſubject them to a detection. But they build upon the religion already received among us, and only pretend to explain and inforce the doctrines there taught. But the caſe was intirely different with regard to the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity. The religion they preached, and eſpecially the great fundamental article of it the receiving a crucified Jeſus for their Saviour and Lord, was contrary to the moſt rooted prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles. It tended entirely to ſubvert the whole ſyſtem of the Pagan Superſtition and Idolatry, and alſo the pleaſing hopes the Jews had entertained concerning a temporal Meſſiah, that ſhould raiſe their nation to the height of ſecular dominion and grandeur. It was holy and ſelf-denying in its nature, and was deſigned not to flatter, but to ſubdue and mortify the corrupt luſts and paſſions of men. It appealed to facts of the moſt extraordinary and public nature, and which could not fail being detected, if they had been falſe. The firſt publiſhers of it were not only deſtitute of every worldly advantage, but had the moſt unſurmountable difficulties to encounter with. They were expoſed to the moſt grievous perſecutions, reproaches, and ſufferings, and had all the powers of the world engaged againſt them. That therefore they ſhould be able in ſuch circumſtances to bring over vaſt numbers both of Jews and Gentiles to the faith of the crucified Jeſus; and

and that the Religion they taught ſhould in ſpite of all oppoſition prevail, and at length overturn the whole eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition which had every worldly advantage to ſupport it: this cannot be reaſonably accounted for without ſuppoſing the interpoſition of a divine power, and the truth of the extraordinary facts on which it was founded. LETTER II.

The next addition I propoſe is a large one relating to the Pamphlet intitled *Deiſm fairly ſtated*, &c. This was very ſlightly paſſed over in the firſt volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*. But as I find ſome are of opinion that it might be of uſe to examine it more diſtinctly, I ſhall now be more large and particular in my obſervations upon it. The account that was given of it in the firſt volume of the *View* reach'd from the beginning of the 14th Letter in p. 402, to p. 406 lin. 10. Inſtead of which read from the beginning of the 14th Letter as follows.

I am now haſtening to the concluſion of the work. But firſt it will be proper to take notice of a pamphlet which was omitted before, intitled *Deiſm fairly ſtated, and fully vindicated*, and which was publiſhed in 1746. This tract though originally written by another hand is ſaid to have been reviſed by Mr. *Chubb*, and to have undergone conſiderable alterations and amendments. And as it hath been much boaſted of, I ſhall diſtinctly conſider both the account the author of it gives of Deiſm, and the attempt he hath made to expoſe the Chriſtian Revelation.

In

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In his account of Deiſm he treads in the ſteps of Dr. *Tindal*, and it might be ſufficient to refer to the remarks that have been made upon that writer's ſcheme, of which ſome account was given in the 10th Letter. But let us examine our author's pretenſions more diſtinctly.

He tells us that "Deiſm is no other than the "religion eſſential to man, the true original re-"ligion of nature and reaſon *." And becauſe Chriſtian divines have aſſerted, that the Goſpel contains the true religion of reaſon and nature, he repreſents them, and particularly the preſent Biſhop of *London*, and Mr. (now Dr.) *Samuel Chandler*, as acknowleging that "Deiſm is the "alone excellency and true glory of Chriſti-"anity," and pretends that what he has cited from them proves that "Deiſm is all in the "Chriſtian inſtitution, that can poſſibly approve "itſelf to the true genuine reaſon of man †." And accordingly he declares, that "every thing "that is enjoined in the Goſpel to be believed "as a rational doctrine, or practiſed as a na-"tural duty, relating to God, our neighbours, "and ourſelves, is an eſtabliſhed part of De-"iſm ‡." And through his whole book he ſuppoſes Deiſm to comprehend every doctrine and precept which is founded in reaſon and nature, or as he ſometimes expreſſeth it, in *truth* and *reaſon*, *i. e.* it comprehendeth every doctrine and precept that is true and juſt and reaſonable.

* Deiſm fairly Stated, *&c.* p. 5. † Ib. p. 6. ‡ Ib. p. 7.

That

That we may judge of the fairneſs of this writer in ſtating the point, it is proper to obſerve, that the thing he would be thought to vindicate is the religion of thoſe that call themſelves Deiſts, and who reject revelation, and oppoſe Chriſtianity. This is the only Deiſm in queſtion, and which it concerneth him to ſtate and vindicate. But he has thought fit all along to repreſent Deiſm and natural Religion as terms of the ſame ſignification: Whereas Deiſm, as we are now conſidering it, is to be underſtood, not preciſely of natural Religion as comprehending thoſe truths which have a real foundation in reaſon and nature, and which is ſo far from being oppoſite to Chriſtianity, that it is one great deſign of the Goſpel to clear and inforce it; but of that religion which every man is to find out for himſelf by the mere force of natural reaſon, independent of all revelation, and excluſive of it. It is concerning this that the enquiry properly proceeds. Dr. *Tindal* was ſenſible of it; and therefore is for ſending every man to the oracle in his own breaſt as the only guide to duty and happineſs, which alone he is to conſult, without having any regard to revelation. And accordingly he frequently repreſents the religion of nature as ſo clearly known to all men, even to *thoſe that cannot read in their mother tongue*, as to render any farther revelation perfectly needleſs and uſeleſs. But if the queſtion be concerning natural religion in this ſenſe, it is far from deſerving all the fine

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encomiums which this writer after Dr. *Tindal* ſo liberally beſtows upon it: He repreſents it as ſo perfect, that nothing can be added to it; and therefore will not allow that Chriſtianity can be ſaid to be "grounded on natural religion, or "to be an improvement of it." For he declares, that he "cannot poſſibly conceive how an en-"tire and perfect ſtructure (which is the caſe of "natural religion) can be only a foundation of "a perfect ſtructure, or how a perfect religion "can be improved*." Here he ſecurely aſſumes the very thing in queſtion, *viz.* That the religion which every man knoweth of himſelf by his own unaſſiſted reaſon, is ſo perfect as to be incapable of receiving any addition or improvement, even from divine revelation: which is in other words to ſay that every man by his own reaſon excluſively of all revelation, takes in the whole of religious truth and duty, which is founded in the nature of things, and knows as much of it already as God can teach him: And that a divine Revelation can give him no farther light or ſtronger aſſurance, relating to any thing that it is proper for him to believe or practice in religion, than what his bare reaſon informs him of without it.

Among the encomiums which our author beſtows upon Deiſm, one is, that it is "no other "than the religion eſſential to man†;" a phraſe that he and others of the Deiſtical writers ſeem fond of.

* Deiſm fairly Stated, p. 13. † Ib. p. 5, 13.

But

But will theſe ſagacious gentlemen undertake to inform the world, what kind or degree of religion is eſſential to the human nature? Or, if they could oblige the world with that diſcovery, is nothing valuable in religion, but what is eſſential to man? If revelation diſcovereth to us ſome things of importance which we could not attain to the knowlege of by bare unaſſiſted reaſon; or giveth us farther aſſurances concerning ſome things, as to which we were doubtful before, and ſetteth them in a clearer light; or exhibiteth a more complete ſyſtem of duty; or furniſheth more powerful motives to animate us to the practice of it; muſt all theſe diſcoveries be rejected, under pretence that what we thus receive by revelation is not eſſential to man? Might not all improvements of every kind be diſcarded for the ſame reaſon? And ſo man muſt be left in his pure eſſentials. And then what a fine figure would the human nature make?

Beſides this general account of Deiſm, our author takes upon him to exhibit ſome fundamental *credenda* of a Deiſt. And he might eaſily find a plauſible ſcheme of natural religion formed ready to his hand by Chriſtian writers, and then put it upon the world for pure genuine Deiſm. Among theſe fundamental articles of the religion of a Deiſt, he reckons the belief of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. But is this a point in which the Deiſts are agreed? Lord *Bolingbroke* every-where ſets up for a Deiſt of the firſt rank, and glories in that character,

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racter, and yet he does all he can to weaken or ſubvert that which is here put upon us as a fundamental article of the Deiſtical creed. And Mr. *Chubb*, who no doubt would paſs with our author for a true Deiſt, though ſometimes, like this writer, he makes a great ſhew of believing not only the truth but the importance of that doctrine, yet in ſeveral paſſages of his *Farewel to his Readers*, and eſpecially in his fourth and fifth ſections, where he treats profeſſedly of this ſubject, ſetteth himſelf to ſhew that it is altogether uncertain, and incapable of being proved, and that the probability lies againſt it *. Thus it is that theſe Gentlemen are ſometimes willing to make a fair appearance with their principles, till perſons are drawn in, and fully initiated in the myſteries of Deiſm.

This author gives us twelve propoſitions with great pomp, moſt of which have nothing to do with the debate between Chriſtians and Deiſts, and others of them are very ambiguous †. In his ſeventh propoſition he layeth it down as a principle, that " to govern our conduct by our " reaſon is our duty, and all that God requireth " of us." If the meaning be, that God requireth nothing from us but what we know by our bare unaſſiſted reaſon to be our duty; and that if any thing farther be revealed to be our duty, we are not obliged to perform it, becauſe we did not know it to be ſo by our own natural reaſon in-

* View of the Deiſtical Writers, Vol. I. p. 326, & ſeq.
† Deiſm fairly Stated, &c. p. 37.——40.

depend-

dependently of that revelation, it is falſe and abſurd. For when God requireth us to be governed by our reaſon, it muſt be ſuppoſed to be his intention, that we ſhould take in all proper helps and aſſiſtances. And if he is pleaſed in his great goodneſs to give us additional diſcoveries of his will and our duty for enlightening and aſſiſting our reaſon, then certainly we are obliged, and it is what reaſon itſelf and the religion of nature requireth of us, to pay a regard to thoſe diſcoveries; ſo as to believe the truths which he has been pleaſed to reveal, and to practice thoſe duties which he has ſeen fit to injoin: and not to do ſo would be highly criminal. LETTER II.

The four laſt of his twelve propoſitions are deſigned to ſhew, that reaſon and nature ſufficiently inſtruct us without revelation, as to the methods of reconciliation with the Deity when we have offended him by our ſins, and give us a certain aſſurance that God will reinſtate us in his favour upon our repentance and reformation. I have elſewhere conſidered this ſubject at large in anſwer to *Tindal* who had particularly inſiſted upon it*. At preſent I ſhall only obſerve, that though nature and reaſon ſeem to direct us to repentance and reformation in caſe of our being conſcious of having offended God, and tranſgreſſed his holy laws, yet reaſon and nature could not give us certain information, how far

* The Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, Vol. I. Chap. vi.

repent-

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repentance ſhall be available to avert the puniſhment we had incurred, or what ſhall be the extent of the divine forgiveneſs, or how far an obedience like our's mixed with many failures and defects, and which falleth ſhort in many inſtances of what the divine law requires, ſhall be rewarded. We do not know enough of God, of the reaſons and ends of the divine Government, and of what may be neceſſary for vindicating the authority of his laws, to be able to pronounce with certainty, by the mere light of our own unaſſiſted reaſon, what meaſures his governing wiſdom and righteouſneſs may think fit to take with regard to guilty creatures that have ſinned againſt him. Will any reaſonable man pretend, that God himſelf cannot diſcover any thing to us, which it might be proper for us to know, relating to the methods of his dealings towards us, the terms of our acceptance with him, or the retributions of a future ſtate, but what we ourſelves knew as well before? Or, if he ſhould condeſcend to make diſcoveries to us of this ſort, and give us aſſurances relating to matters of ſuch great importance, ought we not to be thankful for ſuch diſcoveries? Eſpecially ſince it is certain in fact, that men in all ages and nations have been under great anxieties and uncertainties about the proper means of propitiating an offended Deity.

Our author mentions it to the praiſe of Deiſm, that "it is that religion of nature and reaſon, which was believed and practiſed by *So-*

"*crates*

"*crates* and thoſe of old," whom he repre- LETTER II.
ſents as having been *ornaments* to human nature*. Thus he ſeems to think it a greater honour to be a diſciple of *Socrates* than of *Jeſus Chriſt*. But why are we to be turned back to the religion of *Socrates*, who have a light ſo vaſtly ſuperior to that which he enjoyed? However he may be juſtly commended for having attained ſo far, conſidering the circumſtances he was under (though in many things he fell in with the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtitions of his age and country) is this a reaſon why we ſhould be ſent to that philoſopher to learn a right ſcheme of religion, when we have a much more excellent one in our hands, and recommended by a far higher authority? He was himſelf ſenſible of his need of farther aſſiſtances, and a divine inſtructor; and ſhall we who have that ineſtimable advantage, deſpiſe the light given us from heaven, and be deſirous to return to that ſtate of darkneſs and uncertainty of which he complained, and from which he wanted to be delivered?

The remarks that have been made will help us to judge of thoſe paſſages, in which he pretendeth to give the true ſtate of the queſtion between Deiſts and Chriſtians. "The ſingle "queſtion, ſaith he, between Chriſtians and De- "iſts is, whether the belief of rational doctrines, "and the practice of natural duties, are all that "is ſtrictly neceſſary with regard to the divine

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 5.

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" approbation, and conſequently human happineſs *?" And again, when he profeſſes to come to the point, he ſays, " The grand foundation of the difference between the Deiſts " and the religious of all other perſuaſions is, " whether any doctrine or precept that has not " its foundation *apparently* in reaſon or nature, " can be of the eſſence of religion, and with " propriety be ſaid to be a religious doctrine " or precept †." Here he ſuppoſes, and it runs through his whole book, that nothing can be properly ſaid to belong to religion, but what plainly appeareth to the underſtanding of every man, without any aſſiſtance from divine revelation, to be founded in nature and reaſon. The queſtion then, though not clearly ſtated by this writer, is this: Whether God can make any additional diſcoveries in relation to doctrines to be believed, or duties to be practiſed, concerning which we had no certain information by the bare light of unaſſiſted nature and reaſon? And if God hath made ſuch diſcoveries, whether it would not in that caſe be neceſſary that thoſe to whom theſe diſcoveries are made, ſhould believe thoſe doctrines, and practiſe thoſe duties? Whether becauſe our own natural reaſon did not inform us of them without revelation, therefore when they are revealed to us we may ſafely and innocently reject them as uſeleſs and unneceſſary, and as not belonging

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 7. See alſo p. 8, 9, 10. † Ib. p. 14.

to

to religion at all? Or, whether reaſon and nature do not require it of us as an indiſpenſable duty, to pay a juſt ſubmiſſion and regard to the ſignifications and diſcoveries of the divine will concerning truth or duty, in whatever way they are made known to us? Theſe are queſtions, which one ſhould think, would admit of an eaſy deciſion; ſince nothing could be more abſurd, than to lay it down as a principle, that God can make no farther diſcoveries of truth and duty to be believed and practiſed by us, but what all men know of themſelves by their own unaſſiſted reaſon; or, that if he ſhould, we are not obliged to receive or regard thoſe diſcoveries.

It is very uſual with the Deiſtical writers, and this author among the reſt, to put the queſtion, whether reaſon or revelation be the beſt guide, as if there was an oppoſition or inconſiſtency between them. But the proper queſtion is, whether reaſon left merely to itſelf, and with the many frailties, corruptions, and defects to which it is now ſubject, or reaſon with the aſſiſtance of divine revelation, be the beſt guide to duty and happineſs? Revelation indeed would be of little uſe, if we were to take his account of it. He tells us, that by "pure revelation "muſt be meant that which is of ſuch a nature "as to be quite out of reaſon's province to form "any judgment about it.——That matters ſu-"pernatural are incapable of an examination "by natural reaſon, or of being approved as

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" reaſonable—And that ſurely no man can be " rationally convinced of what lies quite out " of the reach of his reaſoning faculties to " form any judgment at all about*." This he frequently repeats, and ſeems to value himſelf upon this way of putting the caſe. But it is groſly miſrepreſented. None of the friends of revelation underſtand by it, that about which we are not capable of forming any judgment at all. On the contrary, they generally agree, that we muſt make uſe of our reaſon, both in judging of the evidences of divine revelation, whereby it is proved to be from God, and of the ſenſe and meaning of its doctrines and precepts. But our author thinks fit to play upon the word *ſupernatural*, as if by it were meant that which is abſolutely unintelligible and abſurd: Whereas a thing may be ſo far ſupernatural, that we could not have diſcovered it merely by our own reaſon without a divine revelation, and yet when diſcovered to us we may be able to form a judgment concerning it, and may ſee it to be worthy of God, and of an excellent tendency, and as ſuch our reaſon may approve it.

Having conſidered that part of the pamphlet, in which the author pretends to give a fair ſtate and vindication of Deiſm as oppoſed to revelation, I ſhall now take ſome notice of what he

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 2, 24.

hath

hath advanced with regard to the Chriſtian reve- LETTER II.
lation in particular.

He ſays, "The material queſtion between "rational Chriſtians and Deiſts depends upon "the proof that is made by Chriſtians, that "the Scriptures are a divine revelation, and the "very word of God. For if this point be "proved, the controverſy is at an end." But here he complains of the want of unanimity among Chriſtians in a point of ſuch importance. —— "The Roman Catholics ſay, we know "the Scriptures to be the word of God only "by the teſtimony of the church. And among "Proteſtants, ſome ſay, they are known to be "the word of God by *themſelves*, to thoſe "only whoſe eyes the ſpirit of God is pleaſed "to open to perceive the characters of divine "truth impreſſed on them: Others maintain, "that they will manifeſtly appear to be the "the word of God by themſelves, upon an "honeſt inveſtigation of mere natural reaſon, "to any man who ſhall impartially exerciſe it "about them *." But if the matter be rightly conſidered, there is not ſo great a difference among Chriſtian writers about the way of knowing the ſcriptures to be the word of God, as is pretended. Chriſtians in general are agreed, that the extraordinary facts recorded in the Goſpel are true, and that thoſe facts prove the divine miſſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the truth

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 16.—24.

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and divinity of that ſcheme of religion which was publiſhed to the world in his name. They agree, that the ſcriptures contain a faithful and authentic account of the doctrines and laws delivered by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and of the illuſtrious atteſtations whereby they were confirmed. That they were committed to writing by the apoſtles themſelves, who were eye and ear witneſſes of what they relate, or by their moſt intimate companions, and were publiſhed in the firſt age of the Chriſtian church, the age in which thoſe doctrines and laws were delivered, and the facts were done. That theſe writings have remarkable internal characters of truth and divinity in the goodneſs and excellency of the doctrines, the purity of the precepts, the force and power of the motives, that unaffected ſimplicity and impartial regard to truth which every-where appears, and in the admirable tendency of the whole to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind, without any traces or views of worldly policy, ambition, avarice or ſenſuality. And though ſome talk of theſe characters as diſcernible by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and others by the inveſtigation of human reaſon, yet neither do the former intend to exclude human reaſon, from having any concern in that enquiry; nor do the latter deſign to exclude the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; ſince it is generally acknowleged among Chriſtians, and is highly agree-

agreeable to reaſon itſelf, that it is proper to apply to God, *the author of light, and giver of all inward illumination*, as Lord *Herbert* calls him, to aſſiſt us in our enquiries, and by purifying our ſouls from vicious affections and corrupt prejudices to prepare our minds for a due reception of religious and moral truth. I add, that though ſome have talked of corruptions in the ſacred writings, yet Chriſtians are generally agreed, that the ſcriptures are tranſmitted to us without any ſuch general corruption as to make any alteration in the doctrines and facts, and that they are delivered down to us by a credible uninterrupted tradition, greater than can be produced for any other books in the world; by the teſtimony not merely of the church in one age, but in every age, from the time in which they were written; and not merely by any one party of Chriſtians, but by thoſe of different ſects and parties, by friends and enemies. Any one that conſidereth the ſeveral things now mentioned, and which have been often urged by Chriſtians of all denominations, by the beſt of the Popiſh as well as Proteſtant writers, who have appeared in defence of Chriſtianity, will ſee that there is a more general agreement among them, in what concerneth the proofs of the divine original and authority of the ſacred writings, than our author ſeems willing to allow. LETTER II.

With regard to *Prophecy* and *Miracles*, which are inſiſted on by all Chriſtian writers as

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proofs of the divinity of the Chriſtian religion, he will not allow them to be any proofs of it at all. Becauſe they do not prove, that "The "collection of tracts commonly called the Bi- "ble were written by the perſons reſpectively "whoſe names they bear: That the Deity im- "mediately dictated to each writer the ſubject "matter contained therein: And that thoſe "books have been faithfully tranſmitted down "to us without any corruption, alteration, ad- "dition, or diminution*." Mr. *Chubb* has the ſame thought, and ſeems very fond of it, for he has it over and over again in his *Farewel to his Readers.* But if prophecies and miracles exhibited ſufficient credentials to the divine miſſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and of his apoſtles, who publiſhed to the world the doctrines and laws of the Chriſtian religion; and if the ſcriptures contain a juſt and faithful account of thoſe prophecies and miracles, and of the doctrines and laws ſo atteſted and confirmed, and delivered by thoſe divinely authorized teachers; doth not this lay a juſt foundation for receiving thoſe doctrines and laws as of divine authority? As to their being written by the perſons whoſe names they bear, and their being ſafely tranſmitted to us without any material corruption or alteration, this needeth no miracles to prove it. It muſt be proved by other mediums, ſuch as by the acknowlegement of

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 22, 26.

all

all mankind are ſufficient to prove things of that kind. If theſe writings can be traced up, as they certainly may, from our own times by unqueſtionable evidence to the very age in which they were written; and if they have been all along acknowleged to have been written by thoſe to whom they are aſcribed, and even the enemies who lived neareſt thoſe times never conteſted it; and if it can be demonſtrated, that, as the caſe was circumſtanced, a general corruption of thoſe writings in the doctrines and facts, if any had attempted it, would have been an impoſſible thing; this ought to ſatisfy any impartial enquirer. And this is capable of as clear a proof as the nature of the thing can admit, and which, as hath been already hinted, is ſuperior to what can be produced for any other book in the world. And the man that would doubt of ſuch evidence in any other caſe, would be looked upon as ridiculouſly ſcrupulous, and be thought to carry his ſcepticiſm to an unreaſonable height. LETTER II.

As to the ſubject matter of the Chriſtian revelation, this writer is for ſtripping it of every doctrine that is founded in nature and reaſon; though there are ſeveral important doctrines of that kind, *e. g.* thoſe relating to the attributes and providence of God, and a ſtate of future retributions, which Chriſtianity was manifeſtly intended to confirm and eſtabliſh, and ſet in a clearer light. If we are to take his account of it, it conſiſteth wholly of *ſpeculative, metaphyſical,*

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ſical, unintelligible doctrines, which lie out of the reach of reaſon to determine whether they be true or falſe, or to paſs any judgment at all about them; and of poſitive inſtitutions, which he pretends by the confeſſion of Chriſtian divines are no *conſtituent parts of religion**. By ſaying they are no conſtituent parts of religion, he evidently intends that they have nothing to do with religion, and are of no uſe or ſignificancy at all: Whereas the divines he refers to agree, that the poſitive inſtitutions of Chriſtianity do belong to religion as valuable inſtrumental duties, which have a tendency to ſubſerve and promote the great ends of all religion, and are, when rightly improved, of ſignal uſe and benefit.

After having obſerved, that many parts of ſcripture are *myſterious* and *unintelligible*, he ſaith, that to ſuppoſe that God *gives forth unintelligible inſtructions and propoſitions to his creatures, is to prove him in fact a mere trifler*†. And he urges, that "As certain as a being of "perfect rectitude has given a revelation, ſo "certain it is, that not any thing in that reve-"lation can be found on a ſtrict enquiry un-"revealed, *i. e.* not underſtood by men of "learning, penetration, diligence, and induſ-"try‡." The deſign of this is to inſinuate, that if there be any one thing in the bible,

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 2, 6, 16, 24, 58. † Ib. p. 26. 34.
‡ Ib. p. 83.

even

even in the prophetical parts of it, which is not underſtood by men of learning and diligence, the whole is falſe: or, if there can be any circumſtance in the revelation obſcure, it cannot be a true divine revelation. But may it not reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that in a revelation deſigned not merely for any one particular age, but for the uſe of mankind in every ſucceeding age, as there are many things, and thoſe of the greateſt importance, ſufficiently clear and intelligible at all times, ſo there may be ſome things not well underſtood at one time, which afterwards are cleared up by farther inquiry, or a more diligent ſearch, or by comparing predictions with events? Or, may not things which are revealed to us as far as it is neceſſary they ſhould be ſo, yet have ſome things attending them, the manner of which we are not able clearly to explain and underſtand? Is not this the caſe of many important points of what is called natural religion, relating to the providence and attributes of God, the divine eternity, immenſity, omniſcience, the creation of the world, *&c.*? And muſt we reject what we do underſtand, and the great uſefulneſs of which we clearly apprehend, becauſe there is ſomething relating to it which we cannot diſtinctly conceive? LETTER II.

As to the objections he makes againſt ſome particular doctrines of Chriſtianity, as unintelligible and abſurd, or at leaſt as abſolutely uſeleſs, this intirely depends upon the ſtrange and unfair

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unfair repreſentation he has been pleaſed to make of them. Thus he ſuppoſes Chriſtians to maintain it as a doctrine of ſcripture, that "an original, uncompounded, immaterial and pure "ſpirit, ſhould, like one of the derived, compounded, material, human ſpecies, have a "Son *." As if Chriſtians underſtood God's having a Son in the ſame groſs, literal, and carnal ſenſe, in which one man begets another.

He pronounces, that "the ſuppoſed ſatisfaction for ſin by Chriſt's death, is a doctrine intirely repugnant to reaſon, and as ſuch ought "to be rejected with ſcorn †." Mr. *Chubb* has paſſed the ſame cenſure upon it, which is owing to the abſurd light in which he has thought fit to repreſent it, concerning which ſee the firſt volume of *the View*, &c. p. 357, 358. But the doctrine of our redemption and reconciliation through the obedience and ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, conſidered as taught in the holy ſcriptures, hath nothing in it but what is worthy of God, and of an excellent tendency.

He mentions another doctrine, which he owns to be intelligible enough, but repreſents it as good for nothing, and as of no more conſequence to the world in general, than there being a burning mountain in the kingdom of *Naples* is an advantage to the people of *Eng-*

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 66. † Ib. p. 41.

land.

land. And he thinks " it is greatly improbable, LETTER II
" that God ſhould eſpecially interpoſe to ac-
" quaint the world, with what mankind would
" do altogether as well without *." The doctrine he here refers to is that of God's judging the world by Jeſus Chriſt. But this rightly conſidered is a noble part of the Goſpel ſcheme, and capable of being improved to the moſt excellent purpoſes. It renders the whole harmonious and conſiſtent, in that the ſame glorious and divine Perſon by whom God made the world, and by whom as the great inſtrument he carried on his gracious deſigns for recovering mankind from their ruinous and loſt eſtate, is appointed to be the judge of all men, and diſpenſer of future retributions. And what farther ſhews the propriety of appointing Chriſt to be the judge, is, that this is the laſt perfective act of the kingdom and dominion committed to him as Mediator, and that it is to be regarded as a reward of his amazing humiliation and ſelf-abaſement, and of his unparalled obedience and ſufferings in our nature, in compliance with his heavenly Father's will. To which it may be added, that nothing can be fuller of comfort to good men, than that the benevolent Saviour of mankind will judge the world in the Father's name; ſince it yields a ſatisfactory proof that it is the will of God, that the judgment ſhould be conducted, not with the utmoſt rigour of

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 35.

unallayed

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unallayed juſtice, but with great equity, ſo as to make all proper allowances for human weakneſs and infirmity, as far as is conſiſtent with unbiaſſed truth and righteouſneſs. And at the ſame time it hath a manifeſt tendency to ſtrike an awe into the impenitent rejecters of the divine grace and goodneſs, to conſider that they muſt be accountable to that Lord and Saviour whom they rejected and deſpiſed. What a mighty enforcement muſt it give to his authority and laws, that he himſelf ſhall call us to an account as to our obedience or diſobedience to thoſe laws, and will have it in his power to fulfil his own glorious promiſes to them that believe and obey him, and to execute his awful threatnings againſt the finally impenitent and diſobedient!

There are ſeveral other things he repeats which are urged by almoſt every Deiſtical Writer, and which I have had occaſion frequently to mention, ſuch as the contradictory interpretations put on ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture, different tranſlations, errors of tranſcribers, &c. But that which he ſeems to lay a particular ſtreſs upon is the corruption of Chriſtians. He ſpeaks of the *abominable wickedneſs that has rode triumphant* in the Chriſtian world. And that "the *Americans* have too much reaſon to con- "ſider the coming of Chriſtians and Chriſti- "anity among them as the greateſt evil and "curſe that ever befel them *." But if pro-

* Deiſm fairly ſtated, p. 47, 48.

feſſed

feſſed Chriſtians have made religion a cover for their ambition, avarice, and cruelty, Chriſtianity is not accountable for this. And whoſoever conſiders the beſt accounts of the *Americans* before Chriſtianity came among them; their groſs ignorance and barbarity, their human ſacrifices, and the abominable vices and cuſtoms which prevailed among them *, muſt be ſenſible that if the pure religion of Jeſus, as taught in the Goſpel by Chriſt and his apoſtles, had been publiſhed and received among them in its genuine purity and ſimplicity, it would have been the happieſt thing that could have befallen them. And the greateſt fault is, that little care has been taken to inſtruct them and the other heathen nations, in the true Chriſtian religion as delivered in the holy ſcriptures. Notwithſtanding the corruptions ſo complained of in the Chriſtian world, it is undeniable, that what there is of knowlege and true religion among men, is principally where Chriſtianity is profeſſed. But if all were true that is pretended concerning the depravity of thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians, it would only prove that they are very much fallen from the religion they profeſs, but not that Chriſtianity itſelf is falſe, or was not originally from God. Whilſt it can be ſhewn, as it may be with the utmoſt evidence, that conſidered in itſelf, and as contained in the ſcriptures, it is of the moſt excellent tendency, and

* See Bayle's Dictionary, under the article.

that

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that the uniform deſign of its doctrines, precepts, promiſes and threatnings, is to promote the cauſe of virtue and righteouſneſs in the world, and to reclaim men from vice and wickedneſs; it is certainly very unreaſonable and unfair to make Chriſtianity anſwerable for the abuſes and corruptions it condemneth. If every thing muſt be rejected which hath been abuſed, government and civil polity, knowlege and literature, religion, liberty, and reaſon itſelf muſt be diſcarded.

One of the moſt remarkable things in the tract we are now conſidering, is, that the author will not allow that the moral precepts of Chriſtianity properly belong to it at all, or make any part of the Chriſtian religion. He pretends, that Chriſtian divines in order to render Chriſtianity amiable, have decked her with the graceful ornaments of moral precepts; whereas in Chriſtianity the moral precepts are but borrowed ware, the property of the Deiſts, and as much diſtinguiſhed from Chriſtianity, as Chriſtianity is from Mahometaniſm. Thus he hath found out an admirable expedient to ſtrip Chriſtianity of what hath been hitherto eſteemed one of its principal glories, the holy and excellent precepts which the great Author of our religion taught and enjoined in the name of God, and to inforce which by the moſt weighty and important motives was one great deſign of his and his apoſtles miniſtry, do not, it ſeems, belong to Chriſtianity at all. Moral precepts, according

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ing to this writer, make no part of divine revelation, and of the ſcheme of religion delivered in the Goſpel, though to clear and ſhew them in their juſt extent, and enforce them by a divine authority, and by the moſt prevailing motives, ſeems to be one of the nobleſt ends for which a divine revelation could be given to mankind. Suppoſing, which was really the caſe, that the world was ſunk into an amazing darkneſs and corruption, there was nothing that was more wanted, than to have a pure ſyſtem of morals, containing the whole of our duty with reſpect to God, our neighbours, and ourſelves, delivered not as the opinions of wiſe men and philoſophers, but as the laws of God himſelf, and enforced by all the ſanctions of a divine authority, and by all the charms of the divine grace and goodneſs. This is what hath been done by the Chriſtian revelation; and its great uſefulneſs to this purpoſe, and the need the world ſtood in of it, is excellently repreſented by Mr. *Locke* in his *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity* *, quoted at large by Dr. *Benſon* in his remarks on this pamphlet, who very juſtly obſerves, that this great man had fully obviated before-hand, all that the author of *Deiſm fairly ſtated* hath advanced on this ſubject.

The laſt argument he urgeth againſt the Chriſtian revelation, is drawn from its not having been univerſally ſpread in all ages and nations.

* *Locke*'s works, vol. II. p 575—579. 4th edit.

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I ſhall not ſay any thing here to this objection, which hath been often repeated and anſwered. It had been particularly inſiſted upon by Dr. *Tindal*, and was fully conſidered in the anſwers that were made to him. Some notice was taken of it in the obſervations on Lord *Herbert's* ſcheme *. And it may be obſerved that Mr. *Chubb* himſelf ſeems to think that no great ſtreſs ſhould be laid upon it; and he will not take upon him to affirm, that the non-univerſality of a revelation is a juſt objection againſt its divinity †.

Soon after *Deiſm fairly ſtated*, &c. appeared, Dr. *Benſon* publiſhed animadverſions upon it, in the ſecond edition of the *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity as delivered in the Scriptures. London*, 1746. To which there is added an appendix, in which he ſolidly vindicates the arguments he had offered in his *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, &c. againſt the exceptions of this writer; and charges him not only with falſe reaſonings, but with groſs miſrepreſentations. The ſame charge is urged againſt him in a tract publiſhed by the reverend Mr. *Capel Berrow*, though without his name, intitled, "Deiſm "not conſiſtent with the religion of nature "and reaſon, wherein are obviated the moſt "popular objections brought againſt Chriſti-"anity, thoſe eſpecially which are urged by a

* See *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, Vol. I. p, 30, et ſeq. and Vol. II. p. 560, 561. † *Chubb's* poſt. works, Vol. I. p. 218, 219.

noral philoſopher, in a late extraordinary pamphlet, ſtiled, *Deiſm fairly ſtated and fully vindicated,*" in a letter to a friend. *idon*, 1751. There were other anſwers to *iſm fairly ſtated*, which I have not ſeen. I conclude my reflections upon it with obing, that this pamphlet furniſhes remarkable nces to verify the obſervation made in the nning of this letter concerning the unfair uct of the Deiſtical Writers, and the ſtrange ties they take in miſrepreſenting the ſenſe ıe Chriſtian Writers whom they quote. LETTER II.

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LETTER III.

Additional obſervations relating to Mr. Hume. *His account of the nature of belief deſigned to exclude reaſon from any ſhare in it. A tranſcript of a paper containing an examination of Mr.* Hume's *arguments in his* Eſſay on Miracles. *Obſervations upon it. The evidence of matters of fact may be ſo circumſtanced as to produce a full aſſurance. Mr.* Hume *artfully confounds the evidence of paſt facts with the probability of the future. We may be certain of a matter of fact after it has happened, though it might ſeem beforehand very improbable that it would happen. Where full evidence is given of a fact, there muſt not always be a deduction made on the account of its being unuſual and extraordinary. There is ſtrong and poſitive evidence of the miracles wrought in atteſtation to Chriſtianity, and no evidence againſt them. The miraculous nature of the facts no proof that the facts were not done. A ſummary of Mr.* Hume's *argument againſt the evidence of miracles. The weakneſs of it ſhewn. Conſidering the vaſt importance of religion to our happineſs, the bare poſſibility of its being true ſhould be ſufficient to engage our compliance.*

SIR,

I Shall now proceed to lay before you ſome additional obſervations relating to that part of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical*

Deiſtical Writers, which contains remarks on Mr. *Hume*. LETTER II.

It is obſerved, p. 24. that Mr. *Hume* himſelf acknowleges, That "no durable good can ever "be expected from exceſſive ſcepticiſm:"—— And that "nature will always maintain her "rights, and prevaileth in the end over any "abſtract reaſoning whatſoever." After this let it be immediately added line 4 from the bottom —— And if ſo, I think we may juſtly conclude, that any abſtract reaſoning which is contrary to the plain voice of nature ought to be rejected as falſe and trifling, and of no real uſe or ſervice to mankind.

In p. 41. it is ſhewn, That "we may reaſon-"ably argue from the traces of excellencies in "ourſelves to the infinitely ſuperior perfections "in the great Author of the univerſe, ſtill "taking care to remove all thoſe limitations "and defects with which they are attended in "us." Let it be immediately ſubjoined line 11 from the bottom.——This is what Mr. *Hume* himſelf elſewhere allows in his *Eſſay on the Origin of our Ideas*. "The idea of God, "ſaith he, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, "wiſe, and good Being ariſes from reflecting "on the operations of our own minds, and "augmenting thoſe qualities of goodneſs and "wiſdom without bound or limit." See his Philoſoph. Eſſays, p. 24, 25.

It is obſerved, p. 90. that Mr. *Hume* taketh great pains throughout his whole *Eſſay on Li-*

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berty and Neceſſity to ſhew, that there is as great a certainty, and as neceſſary a connexion, in what are called moral cauſes as in phyſical. Let it be there added, line 14.——This author undoubtedly in that Eſſay carrieth it too far, when in order to ſubvert human liberty, he would have it thought, that in all caſes the power of motives worketh with as neceſſary a force upon the mind, as any phyſical cauſe doth upon the effect. But that in many particular caſes things may be ſo circumſtanced with regard to moral cauſes, as to afford a certainty equal to what ariſes from phyſical, cannot reaſonably be denied. And ſuch is the caſe here put.

In p. 134. line 4. from the bottom, a paſſage is quoted from Mr. *Hume*, in which he ſaith, That "our moſt holy religion is founded on "faith, not on reaſon." After *reaſon* let a mark of reference be put, and the following note be inſerted at the bottom of the page.

This author who takes care to make the principles of his philoſophy ſubſervient to his deſigns againſt religion, in the fifth of his *Philoſophical Eſſays*, where he undertakes to treat of the nature of belief, gives ſuch an account of it as ſeems to exclude reaſon from any ſhare in it at all. He makes the difference between *faith* and *fiction* to conſiſt wholly in ſome ſentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the former, not to the latter. That the ſentiment of belief is nothing but the conception of an object more lively and forcible, more intenſe

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and ſteady than what attends the mere fiction of the imagination; and that this manner of conception ariſes from the cuſtomary conjunction of the object with ſomething preſent to the memory or ſenſes. See his *Philoſophical Eſſays*, p. 80—84. This gentleman is here, as in many other places, ſufficiently obſcure, nor is it eaſy to form a diſtinct notion of what he intends. But his deſign ſeems to be to exclude reaſon or the underſtanding from having any thing to do with belief, as if reaſon never had any influence in producing, directing, or regulating it; which is to open a wide door to enthuſiaſm. But this is contrary to what we may all obſerve, and frequently experience. We in ſeveral caſes clearly perceive, that we have reaſon to regard ſome things as fictitious, and others as true and real. And the reaſons which ſhew the difference between a fiction and a reality, ſhew that we ought in reaſon to believe the one and not the other: And ſo reaſon may go before the ſentiment of belief, and lay a juſt foundation for it, and be inſtrumental to produce it. And in this caſe the belief may be ſaid to be ſtrictly rational. LETTER III.

What I ſhall next produce is a much larger addition, occaſioned by a letter I received from a gentleman of ſenſe and learning, ſoon after the publication of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, and which particularly related to that part of it which is deſigned in anſwer to Mr. *Hume*. He was

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pleaſed to ſay it gave him *uncommon ſatisfaction*, and at the ſame time ſent me a paper which he ſeemed to be very well pleaſed with, that had been drawn up by a young gentleman then lately dead. It was deſigned as a confutation of Mr. *Hume* upon his own principles, which he thought had not been ſufficiently attended to in the anſwers that had been made to that writer; and he allowed me, if I ſhould be of opinion that any thing in it might be ſerviceable to a farther confutation of Mr. *Hume*, to make uſe of his ſentiments either by way of note or appendix, as I ſhould judge moſt convenient. I returned an anſwer in a letter which I ſhall here inſert, as it containeth ſome reflections that may be of advantage in relation to the controverſy with Mr. *Hume*. But firſt it will be proper to lay before the reader the paper itſelf here referred to, which is conciſely drawn, and runs thus:

An EXAMINATION *of Mr.* HUME's *Arguments in his* ESSAY ON MIRACLES.

THE objects of human underſtanding may be diſtinguiſhed either into propoſitions aſſerting the relation between general ideas, or matters of fact.

In the former kind, we can arrive at certainty by means of a faculty in our ſouls, which perceives this relation either inſtantly and intimately,

mately, which is called Intuition, or elſe by intermediate ideas, which is called Demonſtration.

But we can only form a judgment of the latter by experience. No reaſoning *a priori* will diſcover to us, that water will ſuffocate or the fire conſume us, or that the loadſtone will attract ſteel: And therefore no judgment can be made concerning the truth or falſhood of matters of fact, but what is conſtantly regulated by cuſtom and experience; and can therefore never go higher than probability.

When we have frequently obſerved a particular event to happen in certain circumſtances, the mind naturally makes an induction, that it will happen again in the ſame circumſtances. When this obſervation has been long, conſtant, and uninterrupted, there our belief that it will happen again approaches infinitely near to certainty. Thus no man has the leaſt doubt of the ſun's riſing to-morrow, or that the tide will ebb and flow at its accuſtomed periods. But where our obſervations are broke in upon by frequent interruptions and exceptions to the contrary; then we expect ſuch an event with the leaſt degree of aſſurance: And in all intermediate caſes, our expectatious are always in proportion to the conſtancy and regularity of the experience.

This method of reaſoning is not connected by any medium or chain of ſteps; but is plainly to be obſerved in all animate beings; brutes as well

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well as men *. And it would be as abſurd to ask a reaſon, why we expect to happen again, that which has regularly come to paſs a great many times before, as it is to enquire, why the mind perceives a relation between certain ideas?

They are both diſtinct faculties of the ſoul. And as it has been authoriſed by ſome writers of diſtinction, to give the denomination of ſenſe to the internal as well as external perceptions; the one may be called the *ſpeculative*, and the other the *probable ſenſe*.

From this laſt-mentioned principle Mr. *Hume* has deduced an argument to ſhew, that there is great improbability againſt the belief of any miraculous fact, how well ſoever atteſted: And as religion may ſeem to be greatly affected by this concluſion, (ſuppoſing it to be true) before we come directly to conſider the argument, it may not be amiſs to enquire how far religion, as a practical inſtitution, may be concerned therein?

And for this purpoſe it is to be obſerved, that probable evidence for the truth or falſhood of any matter of fact differs eſſentially from demonſtration, in that the former admits of degrees, in the greateſt variety, from the higheſt

* May not the ſo long ſought after diſtinction between brutes and men conſiſt in this? That whereas the human underſtanding comprehends both claſſes; the brutal ſagacity is confined only to matters of fact.

moral

moral certainty, down to the loweſt preſumption; which the latter does not. LETTER III.

Let it alſo be further obſerved, that probable evidence is in its nature but an imperfect kind of information, the higheſt degree of which can never reach abſolute certainty, or full proof: And yet to mankind with regard to their practice, it is in many caſes the very guide of their lives.

Moſt of our actions are determined by the higheſt degrees of probability. As for inſtance, what we do in conſequence of the ſun's riſing to-morrow: of the ſeaſons regularly ſucceeding one another: and that certain kinds of meat and drink will nouriſh. Others are determined by leſſer degrees. Thus Rhubarb does not always purge, nor is Opium a ſoporific to every perſon that takes it: and yet for all that they are of conſtant uſe for theſe purpoſes in medicine. In all caſes of moment, when to act or forbear may be attended with conſiderable damage, no wiſe man makes the leaſt ſcruple of doing what he apprehends may be of advantage to him, even though the thing was doubtful, and one ſide of the queſtion as ſupportable as the other. But in matters of the utmoſt conſequence, a prudent man will think himſelf obliged to take notice even of the loweſt probability; and will act accordingly. A great many inſtances might be given in the common purſuits of life, where a man would be

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be conſidered as out of his ſenſes, who would not act, and with great diligence and application too, not only upon an over-chance, but even where the probability might be greatly againſt his ſucceſs.

Suppoſe a criminal under ſentence of death was promiſed a pardon, if he threw twelve with a pair of dice at one throw: here the probability is thirty-ſix to one againſt him; and yet he would be looked upon as mad, if he did not try. Nothing in ſuch a caſe would hinder a man from trying, but the abſolute impoſſibility of the event.

Let us now apply this method of reaſoning to the practice of religion. And ſuppoſing the arguments againſt miracles were far more probable than the evidence for them, yet the vaſt importance of religion to our happineſs in every reſpect would ſtill be very ſufficient to recommend it to the practice of every prudent man; and the bare poſſibility that it might prove true, were there nothing elſe to ſupport it, would engage his aſſent and compliance: or elſe he muſt be ſuppoſed to act differently in this reſpect to what he generally does in all the other concerns of his life. So that whether Mr. *Hume*'s reaſonings be true or falſe, religion has ſtill ſufficient evidence to influence the practice of every wiſe and conſiderate man.

This being premiſed; let us now proceed to conſider Mr. *Hume*'s arguments.

His reaſoning may be briefly expreſſed in this manner:

We have had a long univerſal and uninterrupted experience, that no events have happened contrary to the courſe of nature, from conſtant and unvaried obſervations. We have therefore a full proof, that the uniform courſe has not been broke in upon, nor will be, by any particular exceptions.

But the obſervation of truth depending upon, and conſtantly following human teſtimony, is by no means univerſal and uninterrupted, and therefore it does not amount to a full proof, that it either has, or will follow it in any particular inſtance.

And therefore the proof ariſing from any human teſtimony, can never equal the proof that is deduced againſt a miracle from the very nature of the fact.

This I take to be a full and fair ſtate of this gentleman's reaſoning.

But the anſwer is very plain. If by human teſtimony, he would mean the evidence of any one ſingle man indifferently taken, then indeed his ſecond propoſition would be true. But then the concluſion will by no means follow from it. But if by human teſtimony he would underſtand the evidence of any collection of men, then the ſecond propoſition is falſe; and conſequently the concluſion muſt be ſo too.

That

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That twelve honeſt perſons ſhould combine to aſſert a falſhood, at the hazard of their lives, without any view to private intereſt, and with the certain proſpect of loſing every thing that is and ought to be dear to mankind in this world, is according to his own way of reaſoning, as great a miracle to all intents and purpoſes, as any interruption in the common courſe of nature: Becauſe no hiſtory has ever mentioned any ſuch thing; nor has any man in any age ever had experience of ſuch a fact.

But here it may be objected, that tho' it be allowed to be as great a miracle for twelve honeſt men to atteſt a falſhood contrary to their plain intereſt in every reſpect, as that any alteration ſhould happen in the common courſe of nature, yet theſe evidences being equal, they only deſtroy one another, and ſtill leave the mind in ſuſpence.

This objection draws all its force from Mr. *Hume*'s aſſertion, that an uniform and uninterrupted experience amounts to a full proof, which when examined will not be found true; and indeed I wonder that a writer of his accuracy ſhould venture on ſuch an expreſſion, ſince it is confeſſed on all hands, that all our reaſonings concerning matters of fact, ever fall ſhort of certainty, or full proof.

And beſides, the very ſame objection which he makes againſt the veracity of human teſtimony, to weaken its authenticity, may be retorted with equal force againſt his unvaried certainty

certainty of the courſe of nature: for doubtleſs the number of approved hiſtories we have relating to miracles, will as much leſſen the probability of what he calls a full proof on his ſide of the queſtion, as all the forgeries and falſhoods that are brought to diſcredit human teſtimony, will weaken it on the other.

But the beſt way to be aſſured of the falſhood of this objection is to examine it by what we find in our own minds; for that muſt not be admitted as an univerſal principle, which is not true in every particular inſtance.

According to Mr. *Hume*, we have a full proof of any fact atteſted by twelve honeſt diſintereſted perſons. But would not the probability be increaſed, and our belief of ſuch a fact be the ſtronger, if the number of witneſſes was doubled? I own my mind immediately aſſents to it. But if this be true, it will then evidently follow, that the proof againſt a miracle, ariſing from the nature of the fact, may, and has been exceeded by contrary human teſtimony.

Suppoſe, as before, that the teſtimony of twelve perſons is juſt equal to it, and we have the evidence of twenty, for any particular miracle recorded in the Goſpel; then ſubſtracting the weaker evidence from the ſtronger, and we ſhall have the poſitive evidence of eight perſons, for the truth of a common matter of fact.

Q. E. D.

The

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The anſwer I returned to the letter in which this paper was incloſed was in ſubſtance as follows:

SIR,

I AM very much obliged to you for the kind manner in which you have expreſſed yourſelf with regard to me. And it is a pleaſure to me to find that my reply to Mr. *Hume* is approved by a gentleman of ſo much good ſenſe, and of ſuch eminency in his profeſſion, as I am well informed you are accounted to be.

I agree with you that Mr. *Hume* is an elegant and ſubtil writer, and one of the moſt dangerous enemies to Chriſtianity that have appeared among us. He has a very ſpecious way of managing an argument. But his ſubtilty ſeems to have qualified him not ſo much for clearing an obſcure cauſe, as for puzzling a clear one. Many things in his *Philoſophical Eſſays* have a very plauſible appearance, as well as an uncommon turn, which he viſibly affects; but upon a cloſe examination of them I think one may venture to pronounce, that few authors can be mentioned who have fallen into greater abſurdities and inconſiſtencies. And it were to be wiſhed there was not a ſufficient ground for the ſevere cenſure you paſs upon him, when you ſay, that "with all his art he has plainly diſco-"vered a bad heart, by throwing out ſome bit-"ter ſneers againſt the Chriſtian revelation,

"which

" which are abſolutely inconſiſtent with a ſe- LETTER
" rious belief, or indeed with any regard for it, III.
" tho' in ſome parts of his writings he affects a
" different way of ſpeaking."

You obſerve, that " we ſeem to be greatly de-
" ficient in the logick of probability, a point
" which Mr. *Hume* had ſtudied with great ac-
" curacy." And I readily own, that there is a great appearance of accuracy in what Mr. *Hume* hath advanced concerning the grounds and degrees of probability, and the different degrees of aſſent due to it. But though what he hath offered this way ſeems plauſible in general, he hath been far from being fair or exact in his application of it.

The paper you have ſent incloſed to me, and which you tell me was drawn up by the young gentleman you mention, contains a sketch of an attempt to ſhew how Mr. *Hume* might be confuted on his own principles, and is executed in ſuch a manner, that one cannot but regret that a gentleman of ſo promiſing a genius, and who might have proved ſignally uſeful, was ſnatched away by a fever about the twentieth year of his age. You allow me to make what uſe of it I judge proper, and ſeem to expect that I ſhould tell you my ſentiments of it with the utmoſt frankneſs and candour. And this obligeth me to acquaint you, that though I look upon the confutation of Mr. *Hume* in the way this gentleman hath managed it to be ſubtil and ingenious, yet in ſome things it doth

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not ſeem to me to be quite ſo clear and ſatisfactory, as were to be wiſhed in a matter of ſo great conſequence. He has, I think, from a deſire of confuting Mr. *Hume* upon his own principles, been led to make too large conceſſions to that gentleman, and hath proceeded upon ſome of his principles as true and valid, which I think may be juſtly conteſted.

Mr. *Hume* frequently intimates, that there neither is nor can be any certainty in the evidence given concerning matters of fact, or in human teſtimony, which can be ſecurely depended on; and that at beſt, it can be only probable. And the ingenious author of the paper having obſerved after Mr. *Hume*, that we can form no judgment concerning the truth or falſhood of matter of fact, but what is conſtantly regulated by cuſtom or experience, adds, that "it can never go higher than probability." And again he ſaith, that "probable evidence "is in its nature but an imperfect kind of infor-"mation; the higheſt degree of which cannot "reach abſolute certainty or full proof." Where he ſeems not to allow that the evidence concerning matters of fact can ever arrive at ſuch a certainty as to make up a *full proof*. And he repeats it again, that "it is confeſſed on all "hands, that all our reaſonings concerning "matters of fact ever fall ſhort of certainty or "full proof." And yet if we allow Mr. *Hume*'s definition of a full proof, that it is *ſuch arguments from experience as leave no room*

room for doubt or oppoſition, the evidence for a matter of fact may be ſo circumſtanced as to amount to a full proof, and even to a certainty. For I can ſee no reaſon for confining certainty to the evidence we have by intuition or by demonſtration. In treating of certainty as diſtinguiſhed from probability, a twofold certainty may very properly be allowed. The one is the certainty by intuition or by demonſtration. The other is a certainty relating to matter of fact. This is indeed of a different kind from the former: But I think it may no leſs juſtly be called certainty, when it ſo fully ſatisfieth the mind as to leave not the leaſt room for doubt concerning it, and produceth a full aſſurance. And that this is often the caſe with relation to matters of fact cannot reaſonably be denied. The words *ſure* and *certain* are frequently applied in common language to things of this kind, and for aught I can ſee very properly. And in the beſt and exacteſt writers it is often deſcribed under the term of *moral certainty*, an expreſſion which this gentleman himſelf makes uſe of *. And it is a great miſtake to imagine,

* The ingenious gentleman ſeems to grant what may be ſufficient, when he ſaith, that probability *in ſome caſes approaches infinitely near to certainty*. If it be allowed, that matter of fact may be ſo certain, that the mind may be fully aſſured of it, and ſo as to leave no room for a reaſonable doubt, this is all that is really neceſſary in the preſent controverſy. And this is what Mr. *Hume* himſelf ſeems ſometimes to allow. But at other times he gives ſuch an account of human teſtimony as tends to

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imagine, that the word *moral* in that caſe is always uſed as a term of diminution, as if it were not to be intirely depended on. It is only deſigned to ſhew that this certainty is of a different kind, and proceedeth upon different grounds from that which ariſeth from demonſtration; but yet it may produce as ſtrong an aſſurance in the mind, and which may undoubtedly be depended upon. That there was a war carried on in *England* in the laſt century between King and Parliament, I only know by human teſtimony. But will any man ſay, that for that reaſon I cannot be ſure of it? Many caſes might be mentioned with regard to matters of fact which we know by human teſtimony, the evidence of which is ſo ſtrong and convincing, that we can no more reaſonably doubt of it, than of the truth of any propoſition which comes to us demonſtrated by the ſtricteſt reaſoning. Mr. *Hume* himſelf ſeems ſenſible, that it would be wrong to ſay that every thing which is not matter of demonſtration comes only under the notion of probability. And therefore tho' he frequently ſeems to claſs all matters of fact under the head of probabilities, yet in the beginning of his Eſſay on Probability, he ſeems to find fault with

render it in all caſes uncertain. And the deſign of his repreſenting it as never riſing higher than probability, ſeems to be to convey an idea of uncertainty and doubt as inſeparably attending all human teſtimony. And to guard againſt the wrong uſe that may be made of this is the deſign of what I have here obſerved.

Mr.

Mr. *Locke* for dividing all arguments into *demonſtrative* and *probable*, and obſerves, that to conform our language more to common uſe, we ſhould divide arguments into *demonſtrations*, *proofs*, and *probabilities*: where he ſeems to place what he calls *proofs*, which he explains to be ſuch arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt or oppoſition, in a higher claſs than probabilities. And Mr. *Locke* himſelf, though he ſeems to confine certainty to demonſtration, yet allows concerning ſome probabilities ariſing from human teſtimony, that "they "riſe ſo near to certainty, that they govern "our thoughts as abſolutely, and influence "our actions as fully as the moſt evident de-"monſtration; and in what concerns us we "make little or no difference between them "and certain knowlege. Our belief thus "grounded riſes to aſſurance *." And in that caſe I think probability is too low a word, and not ſufficiently expreſſive, or properly applicable to things of this kind. For according to Mr. *Locke*'s account of it, and the common uſage of the word, that is ſaid to be probable which is *likely to be true*, and of which we have *no certainty*, but only *ſome inducements*, as Mr. *Locke* ſpeaks, to believe and receive them as true. LETTER III.

Another thing obſervable in Mr. *Hume*'s reaſoning on this ſubject is, that in treating of

* Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, book iv. chap. xv. ſect. 6.

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probability or the evidence of facts, which he foundeth wholly upon experience, he confoundeth the evidence of paſt facts with that of the future. And the young gentleman himſelf ſeems not ſufficiently to diſtinguiſh them. The inſtances he produceth to ſhew, that the judgments which the mind forms concerning the probability of events *will always be in proportion to the conſtancy and regularity of the experience*, all relate to the probability of future events from the experience of the paſt. But the queſtion about the probability of any future fact hath properly nothing to do in the preſent controverſy between Mr. *Hume* and his adverſaries, which relateth wholly to the evidence of paſt facts. And it is only an inſtance of this writer's art, that by confounding theſe different queſtions he may perplex the debate, and throw duſt in the eyes of his readers. It will be granted that with relation to future facts or events, the utmoſt evidence we can attain to from paſt obſervation or experience is a high degree of probability; but with relation to paſt matters of fact, we may in many caſes arrive at a certainty, or what Mr. *Hume* calls a full proof, yea, it often happens, that the evidence of paſt facts may be ſo circumſtanced, that we may be certain that ſuch an event really came to paſs, tho' if the queſtion had been put before the event, the probability from paſt experience would have been greatly againſt it. Nothing therefore can be more weak and fallacious than Mr. *Hume*'s reaſoning,

reaſoning, when from this principle of forming concluſions concerning future events from paſt experience, he endeavoureth to deduce an argument againſt the belief of any miraculous fact, how well ſoever atteſted. For though, if the queſtion were concerning a future miracle in any particular inſtance, if we ſhould judge merely from paſt experience, the probability might ſeem to lie againſt it; yet if the queſtion be concerning a paſt miraculous fact, there may be ſuch proof of it, as may not leave room for a reaſonable doubt that the miracle was really done, though before it was done it might ſeem highly improbable that it would be done. LETTER III.

Another fallacy Mr. *Hume* is guilty of, is his ſuppoſing that in all caſes where the fact in itſelf conſidered is unuſual, and out of the way of common experience, whatever be the evidence given for it, there muſt ſtill be a deduction made, and the aſſent given to it is always weakened in proportion to the unuſualneſs of the fact. Now this doth not always hold. A fact of an extraordinary nature may come to us confirmed by an evidence ſo ſtrong, as to produce a full and undoubted aſſurance of its having been done: And in ſuch a caſe there is no deduction to be made; nor is the aſſent we give to the truth of the fact at all weakened on the account of its being unuſual and extraordinary. Thus, *e. g.* that a great king ſhould be openly put to death by his own ſubjects upon a pretended

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formal trial before a court of judicature, is very unuſual, and before it came to paſs would have appeared highly improbable; but after it happened, there is ſuch evidence of the fact as to produce a full aſſurance that it was really done, and the man who ſhould go about ſeriouſly to make a doubt of it, and make a formal deduction from the credit of the evidence, on the account of the ſtrangeneſs of the fact, and ſhould pretend that we muſt believe it with an aſſent only proportioned to the evidence which remaineth after that deduction, would under pretence of extraordinary accuracy only render himſelf ridiculous. It will indeed be readily own'd, that more and greater evidence may be juſtly required with regard to a thing that is unuſual and out of the common courſe, than is required for a common fact; but when there is evidence given ſufficient to ſatisfy the mind, its being unuſual and extraordinary ought not to be urged as a reaſon for not giving a full credit to it, or for pretending that the teſtimony concerning it is not to be depended upon. For the evidence for a fact out of the courſe of common obſervation and experience, may be ſo circumſtanced as to leave no room for the leaſt reaſonable doubt. And the aſſent to it may be as ſtrong and firm as to any the moſt common and ordinary event. Nor is any thing in that caſe to be deducted from the credit of the evidence, under pretence of the fact's being unuſual or even miraculous.

You

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You will allow me on this occaſion to take notice of a paſſage in your letter, in which, after having obſerved that Mr. *Hume* had ſtudied the point about probability, and treated upon it with great accuracy, you give it as your opinion, that "the beſt way of anſwering him "would be in the way himſelf has chalked "out by comparing the degrees of probability "in the evidence on both ſides, and deducting "the inferior." Here you ſeem to ſuppoſe that there is evidence on both ſides in the caſe of miracles, and that upon balancing the evidence, that which hath the higher degrees of probability ought to be preferred, at the ſame time making a deduction from it in proportion to the weight of the contrary evidence. But the ſuppoſition you here proceed upon appears to me to be a wrong one; *viz.* That in the caſe in queſtion there is evidence on both ſides, and conſequently an oppoſition of evidence, *i. e.* evidence againſt the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity, as well as evidence for them. There is indeed poſitive ſtrong evidence on one ſide, to ſhew that thoſe facts were really done, an evidence drawn from teſtimony ſo circumſtantiated, that it hath all the qualifications which could be reaſonably deſired to render it full and ſatisfactory *. But what evidence is there on the other ſide? No counter-evidence

* See this fully ſhewn in anſwer to Mr. *Hume*; *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, Vol. II. from p. 83 to p. 95.

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or teſtimony to ſhew the falſhood of this is pretended by Mr. *Hume* to be produced. Nor are there any circumſtances mentioned attending the evidence itſelf, which may juſtly tend to render it ſuſpicious. Nothing is oppoſed to it but the miraculous nature of the facts, or their being contrary to the uſual courſe of nature. And this cannot properly be ſaid to be any evidence to prove that the facts were not done, or that the teſtimony given to them was falſe. Nor needs there any deduction to be made in the aſſent we give to ſuch a full and ſufficient teſtimony as is here ſuppoſed, on that account: becauſe as the caſe was circumſtanced, it was proper that thoſe facts ſhould be beyond and out of the common courſe of nature and experience: and it was agreeable to the wiſdom of God, and to the excellent ends for which thoſe facts were deſigned, that they ſhould be ſo: ſince otherwiſe they would not have anſwered the intention, which was to give a divine atteſtation to an important revelation of the higheſt uſe and benefit to mankind.

It is an obſervation of the ingenious author of the paper you ſent me, "That twelve honeſt "perſons ſhould combine to aſſert a falſhood "at the hazard of their lives without any view "to private intereſt, and with the certain pro- "ſpects of loſing every thing that is and ought "to be dear to mankind in this world, is, ac- "cording to Mr. *Hume*'s own way of reaſon- "ing, as great a miracle to all intents and pur- "poſes,

" poſes, as any interruption in the common " courſe of nature." But then he obſerves, that the thing theſe witneſſes are ſuppoſed to atteſt being alſo a miracle, contrary to the uſual courſe of nature, it may be objected, that theſe evidences being equal, they only deſtroy one another, and ſtill leave the mind in ſuſpence. The anſwer he gives to this does not ſeem to me to be ſufficiently clear. He firſt obſerves, That " this objection draws all its force from " Mr. *Hume*'s aſſertion, that an uniform and " uninterrupted experience is a full proof, " which when examined will not be found " true, becauſe it is confeſſed on all hands, " that all our reaſonings concerning matters of " fact ever fall ſhort of certainty, or full proof." But beſides that this doth not always hold, ſince it hath been ſhewn, that our reaſonings concerning matters of fact may in ſome caſes amount to ſuch a certainty as may be juſtly called a full proof; it may ſtill be urged, that an uniform uninterrupted experience, though not ſtrictly a full proof, yet is ſuch a proof againſt a miracle as is able to counter-balance the evidence for it: in which caſe the objection ſtill holds, and the mind is kept in ſuſpence. And the gentleman himſelf ſeems afterwards to grant, that a fact's being contrary to the uſual courſe of nature affordeth ſuch a proof againſt it from the nature of the thing, as is ſufficient to counterpoiſe the evidence of twelve ſuch witneſſes as are ſuppoſed, though he thinks it would not do ſo, if

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the number of witneſſes were doubled; and that this ſhews that the proof againſt a miracle ariſing from the nature of the fact may be exceeded by contrary human teſtimony, which is what Mr. *Hume* denies. And he argues, that if we ſuppoſe the teſtimony of twelve perſons for a miracle to be juſt equal to the evidence ariſing from the nature of the thing againſt it, and that we have the evidence of twenty for any particular miracle recorded in the Goſpel, then ſubſtracting the weaker evidence from the ſtronger, we ſhall have a ſurplus of the poſitive teſtimony of eight perſons, without any thing to oppoſe to it.

I am perſuaded, that the deſign of the ingenious gentleman in putting the caſe after this manner, was not to ſignify it as his real opinion, that the teſtimony of twelve ſuch witneſſes as are here ſuppoſed in proof of a miracle's having been really wrought, did not more than countervail the argument againſt it ariſing from the ſtrangeneſs of the fact: But he had a mind to put the caſe as ſtrongly as he could in favour of Mr. *Hume*, and yet to ſhew that there might ſtill be an exceſs of proof, according to his own principles, on the ſide of miracles: which deſtroys his main hypotheſis, that the evidence for a miracle can never exceed the evidence againſt it. It appears to me however, that this is making too large a conceſſion, and that it is not the propereſt way of putting the caſe. It proceedeth upon the ſuppoſition which hath

been already ſhewn to be a wrong one, that a thing's being miraculous, or contrary to the uſual courſe of nature, is alone in all circumſtances a proper *proof* or *evidence* againſt the truth of the fact; whereas the caſe may be ſo circumſtanced, that the miraculouſneſs of the fact is in reality no *proof* or *evidence* againſt it at all. It will indeed be acknowleged, as was before hinted, that greater evidence is required with regard to a fact which is miraculous, than for any fact in the common and ordinary courſe. But when ſuch evidence is given to prove that a miraculous fact was really done, as is ſuitable to the importance of the fact, and which cannot be rejected without admitting ſuppoſitions which are manifeſtly abſurd; in ſuch a caſe, a thing's being miraculous is no juſt reaſon for not giving a full aſſent to the teſtimony concerning it. For its being miraculous, in the caſe that hath been put, hath nothing in it abſurd or incredible; whereas that twelve men of ſound minds, and honeſt characters ſhould combine to atteſt a falſhood in oppoſition to all their worldly intereſts and prejudices, and to every principle that can be ſuppoſed to influence human nature, without any aſſignable cauſe for ſuch a conduct (which has been ſhewn to be the caſe with regard to the witneſſes for Chriſtianity) is abſolutely abſurd, nor can in any way be accounted for. As to the pretence, that in this caſe there is a miracle on both ſides, and that the one is to be oppoſed to the other,

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and deſtroys its evidence; this ſophiſm which has impoſed upon many, and in which the chief ſtrength of Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay lies, deriveth its whole force from an abuſe of the word miracle, and a confounding, as this writer hath artfully done, a miracle and an abſurdity, as if it were the ſame thing. That twelve men ſhould in the circumſtances ſuppoſed combine to atteſt a falſhood, at the hazard of their lives and of every thing dear to men, cannot properly be called a miracle according to any definition that can be reaſonably given of a miracle, or even according to Mr. *Hume*'s own definition of a miracle, that "it is a tranſgreſſion "of a law of nature by a particular volition of "the Deity, or by the interpoſal of ſome invi-"ſible agent;" but is a manifeſt abſurdity. But in the caſe of an extraordinary event contrary to the uſual courſe of natural cauſes, and wrought for a very valuable purpoſe, and by a power adequate to the effect, there is indeed a proper miracle, but no abſurdity at all. It is true, that its being unuſual and out of the ordinary courſe of obſervation and experience, is a good reaſon for not believing it without a ſtrong and convincing evidence, a much ſtronger evidence than would be neceſſary, in common and ordinary facts. But when there is an evidence of its having been actually done, which hath all the requiſites that can be juſtly demanded in ſuch a caſe, and at the ſame time ſufficient reaſons are aſſigned worthy of the divine wiſdom

and goodneſs to ſhew that it was proper it ſhould be done, its being unuſual and extraordinary is no proof at all that it hath not been done, nor can in any propriety of ſpeech be called an *evidence* againſt it: and therefore no ſubſtraction is to be made from the credit given to ſuch a ſuppoſed full and ſufficient evidence merely on this account. Perhaps my meaning will be better underſtood by applying it to a particular inſtance. And I chuſe to mention that which is the principal miracle in proof of Chriſtianity, our Lord's reſurrection. The fact itſelf was evidently miraculous, and required a divine power to accompliſh it. It was therefore neceſſary, in order to lay a juſt foundation for believing it, that there ſhould be ſuch an evidence given as was proportioned to the importance and extraordinarineſs of the fact. And that the evidence which was given of it was really ſuch an evidence, appears, I think, plainly from what I have elſewhere obſerved concerning it *. But if we ſhould put the caſe thus, that not only was the fact extraordinary in itſelf, and out of the common courſe of nature, but the evidence given of it was inſufficient, and not to be depended upon, and had circumſtances attending it which brought it under a juſt ſuſpicion: or, if contrary evidence was produced to invalidate it: *e. g.* If the ſoldiers that watched the ſepulchre, inſtead of

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* See *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, Vol. II.

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pretending that the body of Jeſus was ſtolen away whilſt they were aſleep, which was no evidence at all, and was a plain acknowlegement that they knew nothing at all of the matter, had declared that the diſciples came with a powerful band of armed men, and overpowered the guard, and carried away the body: or, if any of the *Jews* had averred, that they were preſent and awake when the ſoldiers ſlept, and that they ſaw the diſciples carry away the body: or, if any of the diſciples to whom Jeſus appeared, and who profeſſed to have ſeen and converſed with him after his reſurrection, had afterwards declared, that they were among the diſciples at thoſe times when he was pretended to have appeared, and that they ſaw no ſuch appearances, nor heard any ſuch converſations as were pretended. On this ſuppoſition it might be properly ſaid that there was evidence given on both ſides, *viz.* for and againſt Chriſt's reſurrection, and conſequently that there was a real oppoſition of evidence; in which caſe it would be neceſſary carefully to examine the evidences, and compare them one with another, in order to judge which of them deſerved the greater credit, and how far one of them weakened or impaired the force of the other. But as the caſe was circumſtanced, ſince there was a very ſtrong poſitive evidence given that Chriſt really roſe from the dead, and ſhewed himſelf alive after his reſurrection by many infallible proofs, and no contrary evidence produced

produced againſt it, nor any thing alleged to render the evidence that was given of it juſtly ſuſpected; and ſince there are alſo very good reaſons aſſigned worthy of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, which rendered it highly proper that Chriſt ſhould be raiſed from the dead: on this view of the caſe, the extraordinarineſs of the fact, alone conſidered, cannot with any propriety be called an *evidence* againſt the truth of it, nor be juſtly urged as a reaſon for not yielding a full aſſent to the evidence concerning it. For it was neceſſary to the ends propoſed by the divine wiſdom, that the fact ſhould be of an extraordinary and miraculous nature, and if it had not been ſo, it would not have anſwered thoſe ends. I think therefore it may juſtly be affirmed, that taking the caſe in all its circumſtances, conſidering the great ſtrength and force of the evidence that is given for the fact, and the many concurring proofs and atteſtations by which it was confirmed, together with the excellent and important ends for which it was deſigned, there is as juſt ground to believe that Chriſt roſe again from the dead, as that he was crucified; though the latter be a fact not out of the ordinary courſe of nature, and the former was evidently ſo. And here it may not be improper to mention a remarkable obſervation of Mr. *Locke*. He had in giving an account of the grounds of probability ſuppoſed one ground of it to be the conformity of a thing with *our own knowlege, obſervation, and experience*. And

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after taking notice of ſeveral things to this purpoſe, he obſerves, That "though common experience and the ordinary courſe of things have juſtly a mighty influence on the minds of men, to make them give or refuſe credit to any thing propoſed to their belief, yet there is one caſe wherein the ſtrangeneſs of the fact leſſens not the aſſent to a fair teſtimony given of it. For where ſuch ſupernatural events are ſuitable to ends aimed at by him who has the power to change the courſe of nature; there under ſuch circumſtances they may be the fitter to procure belief, by how much the more they are beyond or contrary to common obſervation. This is the proper caſe of miracles, which, well atteſted, do not only find credit themſelves, but give it alſo to other truths which need ſuch a confirmation *."

Thus this great maſter of reaſon is ſo far from thinking with Mr. *Hume*, that a thing's being miraculous, or beyond the common courſe of obſervation and experience, abſolutely deſtroys all evidence of teſtimony that can be given concerning the truth of the fact; that in his opinion it doth not ſo much as leſſen the aſſent given to it upon a fair teſtimony; provided the ſupernatural facts thus atteſted were ſuitable to the ends of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, *i. e.* wrought in atteſtation to a revelation of the

* *Locke*'s Eſſay on Hum. Underſt. book iv. chap. xvi. ſect. 13.

higheſt

higheſt importance, and of the moſt excellent tendency; and that in that caſe the more evidently miraculous the fact is, the fitter it is to anſwer the end propoſed by it.

The ingenious author of the paper you ſent me has very properly ſummed up Mr. *Hume*'s argument againſt the evidence of miracles, thus:

We have had a long univerſal and uninterrupted experience, that no events have happened contrary to the courſe of nature, from conſtant and unvaried obſervations. We have therefore a full proof that this uniform courſe has not been broken in upon, nor will be by any particular exceptions.

But the obſervation of truth depending upon, and conſtantly following human teſtimony is by no means univerſal and uninterrupted. And therefore it does not amount to a full proof, that it either has or will follow it in any particular inſtance.

And therefore the proof ariſing from any human teſtimony, can never equal the proof that is deduced againſt a miracle from the very nature of the fact.

This he takes to be a full and fair ſtate of Mr. *Hume*'s reaſoning: and it appears to me to be ſo. And he ſays, "The anſwer is plain. If by "human teſtimony he would mean of any one "ſingle man indifferently taken, then his ſe-"cond propoſition would be true; but then "the concluſion would by no means follow

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" from it. But if by human teſtimony he " would underſtand the evidence of any col- " lection of men, then the ſecond propoſition " is falſe, and conſequently the concluſion is " ſo too."

This anſwer relateth only to the ſecond propoſition *. But it might have been ſaid, that neither of the propoſitions are to be depended upon, and that they are utterly inſufficient to ſupport the concluſion he would draw from them. For as to the firſt propoſition, it aſſumes the very point in queſtion. It affirms that no events have ever happened contrary to the courſe of nature; and that this we know by a long, univerſal, and uninterrupted experience. If this be meant of the univerſal and uninterrupted experience of all mankind in all ages, which alone can be of any force in the preſent argument, how doth it appear that we know by univerſal and uninterrupted experience, that no ſuch events have ever happened? Are there not ſeveral events of this kind recorded by credible teſtimonies to have happened? The

* Though the ingenious gentleman hath not directly and formally anſwered the firſt propoſition, yet he has plainly ſhewn that he doth not admit it, when he ſaith, That " the very ſame ob- " jection Mr. *Hume* makes againſt the veracity of human teſti- " mony to weaken it authenticity, may be retorted with equal " force againſt his unvaried certainty of the courſe of nature. " And that doubtleſs the many approved hiſtories we have re- " lating to miracles, will as much leſſen the probability of what " he calls a full proof on his ſide of the queſtion, as all the for- " geries and falſhoods that are brought to diſcredit human teſti- " mony will weaken it on the other "

whole

whole argument then is upon a wrong foun- LETTER III.
dation. It proceedeth upon an univerſal and uninterrupted experience, not broken in upon in any inſtance. And there is good teſtimony to prove that it hath been broken in upon in ſeveral inſtances. And if it hath been broken in upon in any inſtances, no argument can be brought from experience to prove that it hath not, or may not be broken in upon: and ſo the whole reaſoning falls. If it be alleged, that theſe teſtimonies, or indeed any teſtimonies at all, ought not to be admitted in this caſe; the queſtion returns. For what reaſon ought they not to be admitted? If the reaſon be, as it muſt be according to Mr. *Hume*, becauſe there is an univerſal uninterrupted experience againſt them, this is to take it for granted, that no ſuch events have ever happened. For if there have been any inſtances of ſuch events, the experience is not univerſal and uninterrupted. So then we ſee what the boaſted argument againſt miracles from uniform experience comes to. It in effect comes to this, that no ſuch events have ever happened, becauſe no ſuch events have ever happened.

As to the ſecond propoſition, though if we ſpeak of human teſtimony in general, it will be eaſily allowed, that it is not to be abſolutely and univerſally depended upon; yet, as hath been already hinted, it may in particular inſtances be ſo circumſtanced as to yield a ſatisfying aſſurance, or what may not improperly be called a

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full proof. Even the teſtimony of a particular perſon may in ſome caſes be ſo circumſtanced, as to leave no room for reaſonable ſuſpicion or doubt. But eſpecially if we ſpeak of what this gentleman calls *a collection of men*, this may in ſome caſes be ſo ſtrong, as to produce a full and intire conviction, however improbable the atteſted fact might otherwiſe appear to be. And therefore if we meet with any teſtimonies relating to particular events of an extraordinary nature, they are not immediately to be rejected under pretence of their being contrary to paſt experience; but we muſt carefully examine the evidence brought for them, whether it be of ſuch a kind as to make it reaſonable for us to believe them. And that the evidence brought for the miraculous facts recorded in the Goſpel are of this kind hath been often clearly ſhewn.

The only farther reflection I ſhall make on this gentleman's paper is, that it contains good and proper obſervations concerning our being determined in matters of practice by probabilities.——That in all caſes of moment, where to act or forbear may be attended with conſiderable damage, no wiſe man makes the leaſt ſcruple of doing what he apprehends may be of advantage to him, even though the thing were doubtful. But in matters of the utmoſt conſequence, a prudent man will think himſelf obliged to take notice of the loweſt probability, and will act accordingly.——This he applies to the practice of religion, and obſerves, that conſidering the vaſt importance

importance of religion to our happineſs in every reſpect,—the bare poſſibility that it might prove true, were there nothing elſe to ſupport it, would engage his aſſent and compliance: or elſe he muſt be ſuppoſed to act differently in this reſpect to what he generally does in all the other concerns of his life. LETTER III.

This obſervation is not intirely new, but it is handſomely illuſtrated by this gentleman, and ſeems very proper to ſhew, that thoſe who neglect and deſpiſe religion, do in this, notwithſtanding their boaſted pretences, act contrary to the plain dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe. But we need not have recourſe to this ſuppoſition. The evidence on the ſide of religion is vaſtly ſuperior. And if this be the caſe, no words can ſufficiently expreſs the folly and unreaſonableneſs of their conduct, who take up with ſlight prejudices and preſumptions in oppoſition to it; and by chooſing *darkneſs rather than light*, and rejecting *the great ſalvation* offered in the Goſpel, run the utmoſt hazard of expoſing themſelves to a heavy condemnation and puniſhment.

Thus I have taken the liberty you allowed me of giving my thoughts upon the paper you ſent me. I cannot but look upon the young gentleman's attempt to be a laudable and ingenious one, though there are ſome things in his way of managing the argument, which ſeem not to have been thoroughly conſidered, and which, I am

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ſatisfied, he would have altered, if he had lived to take an accurate review of the ſubject.

This, with a few additions ſince made to it, is the ſubſtance of the anſwer I returned to the worthy gentleman who had wrote to me, and which I have here inſerted, becauſe there are ſome things in it that may tend to the farther illuſtration of what I had offered in my remarks on Mr. *Hume's Eſſay on Miracles*. My next will contain ſome additional obſervations relating to the *Abbè de Paris*, and the miracles attributed to him; together with reflections on ſome paſſages in Mr. *Hume's Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, which ſeem to be intended to expoſe Chriſtianity.

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LETTER IV.

Some reflections on the extraordinary ſanctity aſcribed to the Abbè de Paris. *He carried ſuperſtition to a ſtrange exceſs, and by his extraordinary auſterities voluntarily haſtened his own death. His character and courſe of life of a different kind from that rational and ſolid piety and virtue which is recommended in the Goſpel. Obſervations on ſome paſſages in Mr.* Hume's Enquiry concerning the principles of morals. *He reckons* ſelf-denial, mortification, *and* humility *among the Monkiſh virtues, and repreſents them as not only uſeleſs, but as having a bad influence on the temper and conduct. The nature of ſelf-denial explained, and its great uſefulneſs and excellency ſhewn. What is to be underſtood by the mortification required in the Goſpel. This alſo is a reaſonable and neceſſary part of our duty. Virtue, according to Mr.* Hume, *hath nothing to do with ſufferance. But by the acknowlegement of the wiſeſt moraliſts one important office of it is to ſupport and bear us up under adverſity. The nature of humility explained. It is an excellent and amiable virtue.*

SIR,

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SIR,

THE miracles of the *Abbè de Paris* have made ſo great a noiſe in the world, and ſo much advantage hath been taken of them by the enemies of Chriſtianity, and particularly by Mr. *Hume*, that I thought it neceſſary to conſider them pretty largely in the 4th Letter of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*. Some things have occurred ſince, which have ſome relation to that matter, and which I ſhall here take notice of.

In p. 120 of that volume lin. 1. mention is made of the high opinion the people had conceived of the Abbè's extraordinary ſanctity, as what tended very much to raiſe their expectations of miracles to be wrought at his tomb, and by his interceſſion. If we inquire whence this opinion of his extraordinary ſanctity aroſe, and upon what it was founded, we ſhall find it to have been principally owing to the exceſſive auſterities in which he exerciſed himſelf for ſeveral years, of which therefore, and of ſome remarkable things in his life and character, it may not be improper to give ſome account. The particulars I ſhall mention are ſet forth at large by the learned Mr. *Moſheim* in a diſſertation on the miracles of the *Abbè de Paris*, and which I did not meet with till after the publication of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*. It is intitled *Inquiſitio in veritatem miraculorum Franciſci de*

de Paris ſæculi noſtri thaumeturgi *. What he there tells us concerning Monſ. *de Paris* is faithfully taken from thoſe who hold him in the higheſt admiration, the *Janſeniſtical* writers. And from their accounts it ſufficiently appears, that his whole life, and eſpecially the latter part of it, was one continued ſcene of the moſt abſurd ſuperſtition, and which he carried to an exceſs that may be thought to border upon madneſs. LETTER IV.

He was the eldeſt ſon of an ancient, rich, and honourable family, and therefore born to an opulent fortune: though his father, when he ſaw his turn of mind, very prudently left him but a part of it, and that in the hands, and under the care of his younger brother. But though he ſtill had an ample proviſion made for him, he voluntarily deprived himſelf of all the conveniencies, and even the neceſſaries of life. He choſe one obſcure hole or cottage after another to live in, and often mixed with beggars, whom he reſembled ſo much in his cuſtoms, ſordid and tattered garb, and whole manner of his life, that he was ſometimes taken for one, and was never better pleaſed, than when this expoſed him in the ſtreets and ways to deriſion and contempt. Poverty was what he ſo much affected, that though he applied to his brother for what his father had left him, yet that he might not

* Vide Jo. Laur. Moſhemii Diſſertationum ad Hiſtoriam Eccleſiaſticam pertinentium Volumen ſecundum.

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have the appearance of being rich, he choſe not to take it as what was legally due to him, but to ſupplicate for it in the humbleſt terms as for an alms freely beſtowed upon a miſerable object that had nothing of his own. And yet afterwards in his laſt will, he diſpoſed of it as his own to various uſes as he thought fit, eſpecially for the benefit of thoſe who had been ſufferers for the *Janſeniſt* cauſe. For ſeveral of the laſt years of his life he ſeemed to make it his buſineſs to contrive ways to weaken, or harraſs, and torment his body, and thereby haſten his own death. Whilſt he gave away his income to the poor, he himſelf voluntarily endured all the evils and hardſhips which attend the extremity of want and poverty. Mean and wretched was his garb, black bread, water, and herbs, but without oil, ſalt, or vinegar, or any thing to give them ſavour, was his only ſuſtenance, and that but once a day. He lay upon the ground, and was worn away with continual watching. After his death were found his hair ſhirt, an iron croſs, a girdle, ſtomacher, and bracelets of the ſame metal, all beſtuck with ſharp points. Theſe were the inſtruments of penitence, with which he was wont to chaſtiſe himſelf, the plain marks of which he bore in his body. By ſuch a courſe he brought himſelf not only into great weakneſs of body, but into diſorders of mind: And this, which was the natural effect of his manner of living, he attributed to the influence of the devil, whom God had in juſt judgment

permitted to puniſh him for his ſins. And in inquiring into the cauſes of the divine diſpleaſure, he fixed upon this, that he had ſtill too great a love for human learning and knowlege, and therefore from thenceforth did all he could to diveſt himſelf of it, and would have ſold his well furniſhed library, if he had not been prevented by ſome of his friends, whoſe intereſt it was to preſerve it. For two years together he refuſed to come to the holy ſupper, under pretence that it was not lawful for him to come, God having required him to abſtain from it: And it was with great difficulty that he was brought to it at laſt, by the threatenings and even reproaches of his confeſſor. Finally, that no kind of miſery might be wanting to him, he choſe for his companion to dwell with him in his cottage, a man that was looked upon to be crazy, and who treated him in the moſt injurious manner. He did all he could to hide himſelf from his friends in one ſorry cottage after another, and about a month before his death fixed himſelf in a hut in the corner of a garden, expoſed to the ſun and wind. When by ſuch ſeverities he had brought himſelf into an univerſal bad habit of body, and it was viſible to his friends, that if he continued in that courſe he could not long ſupport under it, a phyſician was called in, who only deſired him to remove to a more commodious habitation, to allow himſelf more ſleep, and a better diet, and eſpecially to take nouriſhing broths for reſtoring

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his enfeebled conſtitution. But all the perſuaſions of his phyſician, confeſſor, and of his friends, and the tears of an only brother, could not prevail with him to follow an advice ſo reaſonable and practicable; though he was aſſured that if he uſed that method there was great hope of his recovery, and that his life could not be preſerved without it. And when at laſt to ſatisfy their importunity, he ſeemed ſo far to comply, as to be willing to take ſome broth, it was only an appearance of complying, for he took care to give ſuch orders to the perſon who was to prepare it for him, that it really yielded little or no nouriſhment. Thus it was manifeſt, that he had determined to haſten, as much as in him lay, his own death. And accordingly he told his confeſſor, that this life had nothing in it to make it worth a Chriſtian's care to preſerve it. His friends acknowlege that his death was the effect "of the almoſt incredible auſterities that he exerciſed during "the laſt four years of his life." His great admirer the *Abbè de Asfeld* teſtifies, that he heard him declare it as his purpoſe to yield himſelf a ſlow ſacrifice to divine juſtice. And this his extraordinary courſe of auſterities, together with the zeal he expreſſed to the very laſt for the *Janſeniſt* cauſe, which he ſhewed alſo by the diſpoſitions he made in his will, as well as by his appealing as with his dying breath to a future general council againſt the conſtitution *Unigenitus*, procured him ſo extraordi-

nary a reputation, that he has paſſed for one of the greateſt ſaints that ever appeared in the Chriſtian church. No ſooner was he dead, but an innumerable multitude of people ran to his corpſe, ſome of whom kiſſed his feet, others cut off part of his hair as a remedy againſt all manner of evil; others brought books or bits of cloth to touch his body, as believing it filled with a divine virtue. Thus were they prepared to believe and expect the moſt wonderful things. LETTER IV.

Whoſoever impartially conſiders the ſeveral things that have been mentioned, and which are amply verified in the places referred to in the margin*; will not think the learned *Moſheim* in the wrong, when he pronounceth that it cannot in conſiſtency with reaſon be ſuppoſed, that God ſhould extraordinarily interpoſe by his own divine power, to do honour to the bones and aſhes of a man weak and ſuperſtitious to a degree of folly, and who was knowingly and wilfully acceſſory to his own death. In vain do his admirers, as he himſelf had done, extol his thus deſtroying himſelf as an offering up himſelf a voluntary ſacrifice to divine juſtice If a man ſhould under the ſame pretence diſpatch himſelf at once with a piſtol or poniard, would this be thought a proper juſtification of his conduct? And yet I ſee not why the pretence might not as well hold in the one caſe as in the other;

* See *Moſheim*, ut ſupra, from p. 364. to p. 395.

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ſince it makes no great difference, whether the death was ſwifter or ſlower, provided it was brought on with a deliberate intention and deſign.

How different is this from the beautiful and noble idea of piety and virtue which the Goſpel furniſheth us with, and from the perfect pattern of moral excellence which is ſet us by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf in his own holy life and practice! That the great apoſtle St. *Paul* was far from encouraging ſuch auſterities as tended to hurt and deſtroy the bodily health, ſufficiently appeareth from the advice he gave to *Timothy*, *Drink no longer water, but uſe a little wine, for thy ſtomach's ſake, and thine often infirmities.* 1 Tim. v. 23. He condemneth thoſe that under pretence of extraordinary purity, were for obſerving the *ordinances* and *traditions* of men, *Touch not, taſte not, handle not*; and brands their practice under the name of *will-worſhip*, a *voluntary humility*, and *neglecting*, or as the word might be rendered, *not ſparing the body*, Col. ii. 20, 21, 22, 23. That which in the caſe of *Abbè de Paris* is cried up by his admirers as a carrying religion to the higheſt degree of perfection, *viz.* his abſtaining from fleſh and confining himſelf to herbs, is repreſented by the apoſtle *Paul* as a ſign of weakneſs in the faith. *Rom*, xiv. 2.

It hath always appeared to me to be the glory of the Chriſtian religion as preſcribed in the New Teſtament, that the piety it teacheth us

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is ſolid and rational, remote from all ſuperſti- LETTER IV.
tious extremes, worthy of a God of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs to require, and becoming the true dignity of the reaſonable nature. It comprehendeth not only immediate acts of devotion towards God, but a diligent performance of all relative duties, and the faithful diſcharge of the various offices incumbent upon us in the civil and ſocial life. It requireth us indeed to bear with a noble fortitude the greateſt evils, when we are regularly called to ſuffer for the cauſe of God, but not raſhly to expoſe ourſelves to thoſe evils, or to bring them upon ourſelves.

The wiſe and beneficent Author of nature hath ſtored the whole world about us with a variety of benefits: And can it be thought to be agreeable to his will, that inſtead of taſting his goodneſs in the bleſſings he vouchſafeth us, we ſhould make a merit of never allowing ourſelves to enjoy them? How much more rational is it to receive thoſe bleſſings with thankfulneſs, and enjoy them with temperance, according to that of St. *Paul, Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving: For it is ſanctified by the word of God and prayer.* 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. Can it be pleaſing to our merciful heavenly father, that we ſhould not merely humble and chaſten ourſelves on ſpecial occaſions, but make it our conſtant buſineſs to torment ourſelves, and to impair and deſtroy the bodies he hath given us, and thereby unfit ourſelves for the proper offices of life? Is it reaſonable to imagine, that under the

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mild diſpenſation of the Goſpel; which breathes an ingenuous chearful ſpirit, and raiſeth us to the noble liberty of the children of God, the beſt way of recommending ourſelves to his favour ſhould be to deny ourſelves all the comforts he affordeth us, and to paſs our lives in perpetual ſadneſs and abſtinence? Could it be ſaid in that caſe, that *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?* 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. It is true, that mortification and ſelf-denial are important Goſpel-duties, but how different from the extremes of ſuperſtitious rigour will appear, when I come to vindicate the evangelical morality againſt the objections of Mr. *Hume.* It was not indeed till Chriſtians began to degenerate from that lovely form of rational, ſolid piety and virtue, of which Chriſt himſelf exhibited the moſt perfect example, that they laid ſo mighty a ſtreſs on thoſe ſevere and rigorous auſterities, which neither our Saviour nor his apoſtles had commanded. And in this reſpect ſome of thoſe who were antiently deemed heretical ſects carried it to a greater degree of ſtrictneſs than the orthodox themſelves. And many zealots there have been in falſe religions, and particularly ſome of the heathen devotees in the *Eaſt-Indies*, who in ſevere penances, and rigid auſterities, and in voluntary torments inflicted on their own bodies, have far exceeded the *Abbè de Paris* himſelf.

I think no farther obſervations need be made with regard to Mr. *Hume's* eſſay on miracles, which

which is directly levelled againſt Chriſtianity. But any one that is acquainted with his writings muſt be ſenſible, that he often takes occaſion to throw out inſinuations againſt religion, which he uſually repreſents either under the notion of ſuperſtition or enthuſiaſm. Even the morals of the Goſpel have not eſcaped his cenſure, though their excellency is ſuch as to have forced acknowlegements from ſome of thoſe who have been ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it.

There is a paſſage to this purpoſe in his *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, which deſerves particular notice. In that *Enquiry*, as in all his other works, he aſſumes the merit of making new diſcoveries, and placing things in a better light than any man had done before him; and wonders that a theory ſo *ſimple and obvious* as that which he hath advanced, *could have eſcaped the moſt elaborate ſcrutiny and examination**. I will not deny that there are in that *Enquiry* ſome good and curious obſervations; but I can ſee little that can be properly called new in his theory of morals, except his extending the notion of virtue (and it is concerning the principles of morals, and therefore concerning moral virtue that his *Enquiry* proceeds) ſo as to comprehend under it every agreeable quality and accompliſhment, ſuch as *wit*, *ingenuity*, *eloquence*, *quickneſs of conception*, *facility of expreſſion*, *delicacy of*

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Mo als, p. 172.

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taſte in the finer arts, *politeneſs*, *cleanlineſs*, and even *force of body**. I cannot ſee what valuable end it can anſwer in a treatiſe of morals to extend the notion of virtue ſo far. It is of high importance to mankind rightly to diſtinguiſh things that are morally good and excellent from thoſe which are not ſo; and therefore great care ſhould be taken, that both our ideas of theſe things, and the expreſſions deſigned to ſignify them, ſhould be kept diſtinct. Wit, eloquence, and what we call natural parts, as well as acquired learning, politeneſs, cleanlineſs, and even ſtrength of body, are no doubt real advantages, and when under a proper direction, and rightly applied, are both ornamental and uſeful, and are therefore not to be neglected, but as far as we are able, to be cultivated and improved. This will be eaſily acknowleged: and if this be all Mr. *Hume* intends, it is far from being a new diſcovery. But theſe things make properly no part of moral virtue; nor can a man be ſaid to be good and virtuous on the account of his being poſſeſſed of thoſe qualities. He may have wit, eloquence, a polite behaviour, a fine taſte in arts, great bodily ſtrength and reſolution, and yet be really a bad man. And when theſe things are ſeparated from good diſpoſitions of the heart, from probity, benevolence, fidelity, integrity, gra-

* See the 6th, 7th, and 8th Sections of the Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, particularly p. 127, 128, 131, 135, 137, 162, 165.

titude,

titude, inſtead of rendering a man uſeful to the community, they qualify him for doing a great deal of miſchief. Theſe qualities therefore ſhould be carefully diſtinguiſhed from thoſe which conſtitute a good moral character, and which ought to be principally recommended to the eſteem and approbation of mankind, as having in themſelves a real invariable worth and excellence, and as deriving a merit and value to every other quality. Nor is it proper in a treatiſe of morals, which pretends to any degree of accuracy, to confound them all together under one common appellation of virtue.

And as Mr. *Hume* enlargeth his notion of virtue, ſo as to take in ſeveral things that do not ſeem properly to belong to the moral diſpoſitions and qualities, ſo he excludeth from that character ſome things which are recommended in the Goſpel as of importance to the moral temper and conduct, particularly humility and ſelf-denial. He obſerves, that "Celi-
"bacy, faſting, penance, mortification, ſelf-de-
"nial, humility, ſolitude, and the whole train
"of Monkiſh virtues, are every-where rejected
"by men of ſenſe, becauſe they ſerve no man-
"ner of purpoſe. They neither advance a man's
"fortune in the world, nor render him a more
"valuable member of ſociety, neither qualify
"him for the entertainment of company, nor
"increaſe his power of ſelf-enjoyment.——On
"the contrary, they croſs all theſe deſirable
"ends, ſtupify the underſtanding, and harden

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" the heart, obſcure the fancy, and ſour the " temper*." Our author is here pleaſed to claſs *humility*, *mortification*, and *ſelf-denial*, which are evidently required in the Goſpel, with *penances*, *celibacy*, and what he calls the Monkiſh virtues; and pronounceth concerning all alike that they are rejected by all *men of ſenſe*, and not only ſerve no manner of purpoſe, but have a bad influence in ſtupifying the underſtanding, hardening the heart, and ſouring the temper. This is no doubt deſigned to caſt a ſlur upon the Goſpel ſcheme of morality. And on the other hand he cries up his own theory of morals, as repreſenting *Virtue in all her engaging charms*. That " nothing appears " but gentleneſs, humanity, beneficence, affa- " bility, nay even at proper intervals, play, " frolic, and gaiety. She talks not of uſeleſs " auſterities and rigours, ſufferance and ſelf- " denial, *&c* †." A ſcheme of morals which includeth *play*, *frolic*, and *gaiety*, and has nothing to do with *ſelf-denial*, *mortification*, and *ſufferance*, will no doubt be very agreeable to many in this gay and frolicſome age. But let us examine more diſtinctly what ground there is for our author's cenſures, as far as the Chriſtian morals are concerned.

To begin with that which he ſeemeth to have a particular averſion to, *ſelf-denial*. This is

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 174.
† Ib. p. 188.

certainly

certainly what our Saviour expreſly requireth of thoſe who would approve themſelves his faithful diſciples. He inſiſteth upon it as an eſſential condition of their diſcipleſhip, that they ſhould deny themſelves. *Matt.* xvi. 24. *Mark* viii. 34. And if we do not ſuffer ourſelves to be frighten'd by the mere ſound of words, but conſider what is really intended; this is one of the moſt uſeful leſſons of morality, and a neceſſary ingredient in a truly excellent and virtuous character. One thing intended in this ſelf-denial is the reſtraining and governing our appetites and paſſions, and keeping them within proper bounds, and in a due ſubjection to the higher powers of reaſon and conſcience. And this is certainly an important part of ſelf-government and diſcipline, and is undoubtedly a noble attainment, and which argueth a true greatneſs of ſoul. And however difficult or diſagreeable it may at firſt be to the animal part of our natures, it is really neceſſary to our happineſs, and layeth the beſt foundation for a ſolid tranquility and ſatisfaction of mind. Again, if we take ſelf-denial for a readineſs to deny our private intereſt and advantage for valuable and excellent ends, for the honour of God, or the public good, for promoting the happineſs of others, or our own eternal ſalvation, and for ſerving the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs in the world; in this view nothing can be more noble and praiſe-worthy. And indeed whoever conſiders that an inordinate

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ſelfiſhneſs, and addictedneſs to a narrow fleſhly intereſt, and the gratification of the carnal appetites and paſſions is the ſource of the chief diſorders of human life, will be apt to look upon ſelf-denial to be of great conſequence in morals. Without ſome degree of ſelf-denial nothing truly great, noble, or generous is to be atchieved or attained. He that cannot bear to deny himſelf upon proper occaſions, will never be of any great uſe either to himſelf or to others, nor can make any progreſs in the moſt virtuous and excellent endowments, or even in agreeable qualities, and true politeneſs. This writer himſelf ſpeaking of *the love of fame*, which, he tells us, rules in all generous minds, obſerves, that as this prevaileth, *the animal conveniencies ſink gradually in their value**. And elſewhere in the perſon of the Stoic philoſopher, he ſaith, that "we muſt often make ſuch important ſacrifices, as thoſe "of life and fortune to virtue." And that "The man of virtue looks down with con-"tempt on all the allurements of pleaſure, "and all the menaces of danger——Toils, dan-"gers, and death itſelf carry their charms, "when we brave them for the public good †." And even after having told us, that virtue talks not of ſufferance and ſelf-denial, he adds, that "Virtue never willingly parts with any plea-

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 188. † See the 19th of his moral and political Eſſays, p. 213.

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" ſure, but in hope of ample compenſation in LETTER
" ſome other period of their lives. The ſole IV.
" trouble ſhe demands is of a juſt calculation,
" and a ſteady preference of the greater hap-
" pineſs*." Here he allows that virtue may reaſonably part with preſent pleaſure in hope of an ample compenſation in ſome other period of our lives, when upon a juſt calculation it contributes to our greater happineſs. But then he ſeems to confine the hope of the compenſation which virtue is to look for to ſome future period of this preſent life, which conſidering the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of it is little to be depended on, and may perhaps be thought not to be a ſufficient foundation for a man's denying himſelf preſent pleaſures and advantages. But the Goſpel propoſeth a much more noble and powerful conſideration, *viz.* the ſecuring a future everlaſting happineſs; and ſuppoſing the certainty of this, of which we have the fulleſt aſſurance given us, nothing can be more agreeable to all the rules of reaſon and juſt calculation, than to part with preſent pleaſure, or to undergo preſent hardſhips to obtain it.

What hath been offered with regard to the important duty of ſelf-denial may help us to form a juſt notion of *mortification*, which is nearly connected with it, and which our author alſo findeth great fault with. The chief thing

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 188.

intended

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intended by it is the ſubduing our fleſhly appetites, and our vicious and irregular inclinations and deſires. To this purpoſe it is required of us, that we *mortify the deeds of the body* Rom. viii. 13. that we *mortify our members that are on the earth, fornication, uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, evil concupiſcence, and covetouſneſs, which is idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. And that we *crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts.* Gal. v. 24. Mortification taken in this view is a noble act of virtue, and abſolutely neceſſary to maintain the dominion of the ſpirit over the fleſh, the ſuperiority of reaſon over the inferior appetites. Where theſe prevail, they tend to *ſtupify the underſtanding, and harden the heart*, and hinder a man from being a *valuable member of ſociety*, which is what Mr. *Hume* moſt unjuſtly chargeth upon that mortification and ſelf-denial which is required in the Goſpel. Mortification is properly oppoſed to that indulging and pampering the fleſh, which tendeth to nouriſh and ſtrengthen thoſe appetites and luſts, which it is the part of a wiſe and virtuous man to correct and ſubdue. Even faſting upon proper ſeaſons and occaſions, however ridicul'd by Mr. *Hume* and others, may anſwer a very valuable end, and make a uſeful part of ſelf-diſcipline. It may tend both to the health of the body, and to keep the mind more clean and vigorous, as well as when accompanied with prayer, promote a true ſpirit of devotion. But in this as in every thing elſe, the

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Chriſtian religion, conſidered in its original purity as laid down in the New Teſtament, preſerveth a moſt wiſe moderation, and is far from carrying things to extremes, as ſuperſtition hath often done. It doth not any-where inſiſt upon exceſſive, or what our author calls uſeleſs rigours and auſterities. And ſo far is that mortification which the Goſpel preſcribeth, and which is nothing more than the keeping the body under a juſt diſcipline, and in a due ſubjection to the law of the mind, from being inconſiſtent with the true pleaſure and ſatisfaction of life, that it layeth the moſt ſolid foundation for it. Mr. *Hume* himſelf takes notice of the "*ſupreme joy* which is to be found in the victories over vice, when men are taught to govern their paſſions, to reform their vices, and ſubdue their worſt enemies, which inhabit within their own boſoms*."

Not only does this gentleman find fault with ſelf-denial and mortification, but with *ſufferance*. Virtue, according to his repreſentation of it, *talks not of ſufferance and ſelf-denial*. And yet certain it is that among the beſt moraliſts of all ages it has been accounted one of the principal offices of virtue to ſupport us with a ſteady fortitude under all the evils that befal us in this preſent ſtate, and enable us patiently and even chearfully to bear them. A virtue that cannot ſuffer adverſity, nor bear us up under it with

* Moral and political Eſſays, p. 213.

dignity,

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dignity, and in a proper manner, is of little value in a world where we are expoſed to ſuch a variety of troubles and ſorrows. And in this the Goſpel morality is infinitely ſuperior to that of the moſt admired Pagan philoſophers. Mr. *Hume* has reckoned among virtues "an "undiſturbed philoſophical tranquillity, ſupe-"rior to pain, ſorrow, anxiety, and each aſ-"ſault of adverſe fortune*." But what is this philoſophic tranquillity, ſo much boaſted of, relying only upon itſelf, compared with that which ariſeth from the conſolations ſet before us in the Goſpel, from the aſſurances of divine aſſiſtances and ſupports, from the love of God and ſenſe of his favour, from the lively animating hopes of glory, and the eternal rewards which ſhall crown our patience, and perſevering continuance in well doing?

The laſt thing I ſhall take notice of, as repreſented under a diſadvantageous character by Mr. *Hume*, though highly commended and inſiſted on by our Saviour, is Humility. And this rightly underſtood is one of the moſt amiable virtues, and greateſt ornaments of the human nature. Our author is pleaſed to talk of a *certain degree of pride and ſelf-valuation*, the want of which is *a vice*, and the oppoſite to which is *meanneſs*†. But to call a proper generoſity of mind, which is above a mean or baſe thing,

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 152.
† Ib. p. 146, 147.

pride,

pride, is an abuſe of words, which ought not to be admitted, if we would ſpeak with exactneſs, in an enquiry concerning morals. It is to give the name of an odious vice to a very worthy diſpoſition of ſoul. The Goſpel humility is a very different thing from meanneſs. It is very conſiſtent with ſuch a juſt ſelf-valuation, as raiſeth us above every thing falſe, mean, baſe, and impure, and keepeth us from doing any thing unbecoming the dignity of the reaſonable nature, and the glorious character and privileges we are inveſted with as Chriſtians. True humility doth not abſolutely exclude all ſenſe of our own good qualities and attainments; but it tempers the ſenſe we have of them with a juſt conviction of our abſolute dependence upon God for every good thing we are poſſeſſed of, and of our manifold ſins, infirmities, and defects. It is oppoſed to a vain-glorious boaſting and ſelf-ſufficiency, and to ſuch a high conceit of our abilities and merits, as puffeth us up with a preſumptuous confidence in ourſelves, and contempt of others, and which is indeed one of the greateſt hinderances to our progreſs in the moſt excellent and worthy attainments. It manifeſteth itſelf towards God, by an entire unreſerved ſubjection and reſignation to his authority and will, by proper acknowlegements of our own unworthineſs before him, and a ſenſe of our continual dependence upon him, and conſtant need of his gracious aſſiſtance. And it expreſſeth

itſelf

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itſelf towards men, by cauſing us to yield a due ſubmiſſion to our ſuperiors, and to be affable and condeſcending to our inferiors, courteous and obliging towards our equals, in honour preferring one another, as St. *Paul* expreſſeth it, and ready to bear with each other's weakneſſes and infirmities. In a word, it diffuſeth its kindly influence through the whole of our deportment, and all the offices of life. Nothing is ſo hateful as pride and arrogance. And true humility is ſo amiable, ſo engaging, ſo neceſſary to render a perſon agreeable, that no man can hope to pleaſe, who hath not at leaſt the appearance of it. Our author himſelf obſerves, that "among well-bred people, a mutual de-"ference is affected, contempt of others diſ-"guiſed*." And that "as we are naturally "proud and ſelfiſh, and apt to aſſume the "preference above others, a polite man is "taught to behave with deference towards "thoſe he converſes with, and to yield the "ſuperiority to them in all the common oc-"currences of ſociety†." So that according to him a ſhew of humility, and prefering others to ourſelves, is a neceſſary part of good behaviour; and yet he is pleaſed to reckon humility among thoſe things that neither render a man a more valuable member of ſociety, nor qualify him for the entertainment of company,

* Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 161, 162.
† Moral and political Eſſays, p. 184, 185.

but

but on the contrary croſs thoſe deſirable purpoſes, and harden the heart, and ſour the temper. LETTER IV.

But enough of Mr. *Hume*; who, if we may judge of him by his writings, will ſcarce be charged with the fault of having carried humility to an exceſs. A pity it is that he hath not made a better uſe of his abilities and talents, which might have laid a juſt foundation for acquiring the praiſe he ſeems ſo fond of, as well as rendered him really uſeful to the world, if he had been as induſtrious to employ them in ſerving and promoting the excellent cauſe of religion, as he hath unhappily been in endeavouring to weaken and expoſe it.

LETTER

LETTER V.

Additions relating to the remarks on Lord Bolingbroke. *The natural immortality of the ſoul does not imply a neceſſity of exiſtence independent on the will of God. No juſt ground for Lord* Bolingbroke's *ſneer as to what he calls the edifying anecdote of* Lot's *daughters. The ancient* Chineſe *ſages, according to him, expreſſed themſelves very obſcurely concerning the Divinity: great difference between them and* Moſes *in this reſpect. The moſt ancient nations had traditions among them concerning ſome of the facts recorded in the* Moſaic *hiſtory. The parallel drawn by Lord* Bolingbroke *between the times of the judges and the heroical ages of the* Greeks *examined. No proof that* Moſes *adopted the* Egyptian *rites and cuſtoms. It is not true that the* Jews *abhorred only the worſhip of carved or graven images, but not of painted ones, and that picture-worſhip came from them to the Chriſtians.* Abraham *and the* Jews *did not derive their knowlege of the one true God from the* Egyptians *and* Chaldeans. *Concerning God's having repented that he made man. The ſcripture account of the evil angels, hath nothing in it abſurd or contrary to reaſon.*

SIR,

SIR,

THE obſervations I now ſend you relate to that part of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, which is deſigned as a defence of natural and revealed religion againſt the attempts of the late Lord *Bolingbroke*. The additions propoſed are for the moſt part not ſo large as thoſe in the foregoing Letters, and conſiſt of obſervations in a great meaſure independent one of another. But if they contain hints that may be of advantage to the main deſign, it will be ſufficient to anſwer the end I have in view. Such as they are I commit them to your and the reader's candour, referring to the pages in the ſecond volume to which they ſeverally belong. LETTER V.

In the eighth Letter of that volume I have endeavoured to ſhew, that there is a real foundation in reaſon for the doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, and to take away the force of Lord *Bolingbroke*'s exceptions againſt it. To what is there obſerved I would add this farther obſervation, which may be inſerted in p. 259. as a new paragraph between line 9 and 10 from the bottom.

But though it is agreeable to reaſon to believe that the human ſoul is immaterial and immortal, this doth not imply, as Lord *Bolingbroke* is pleaſed to inſinuate, that "it is immortal by "the neceſſity of its nature, as God is ſelf-

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" exiſtent by the neceſſity of his *." Nor is it ſo underſtood by thoſe who maintain the natural immortality of the human ſoul. What they intend by it is only this: That God made the ſoul originally of ſuch a nature as to be fitted and deſigned for an immortal duration, not naturally liable, as the body is, to corruption and diſſolution: but not, as if it were rendered ſo neceſſarily exiſtent as to be independent of God himſelf. Still it is in his power to annihilate it, if he ſeeth fit to put an end to its exiſtence; though there is no reaſon to think that he will ever do ſo. For ſince it was fitted for immortality by his own original conſtitution, this may be regarded as an indication of his will, that it ſhall continue in immortal being, though ſtill in a dependence on the power and will of the Creator.

In the ſame eighth Letter, l. 6, 7. notice is taken of the unjuſt charge his Lordſhip hath advanced: That " the Chriſtian goes murmuring " and complaining through this life againſt the " juſtice of God, *&c.*" Let there be a note added at the bottom of that page thus:

It is in the ſame ſpirit of miſrepreſentation and abuſe, that he thinks fit to charge Chriſtians with aſſuming, that happineſs conſiſts principally in health and the advantages of fortune, and with pretending to keep an account with God, and to barter ſo much virtue, and ſo *many acts*

* Lord *Bolingbroke*'s works, Vol. III. p. 559.

of

of devotion, againſt ſo many degrees of honour, or power, or riches *. LETTER V.

It is obſerved, p. 302. that Lord *Bolingbroke* ſpeaks honourably of thoſe nations among whom "no regard was had to degrees of con-"ſanguinity or affinity, but brothers mixed "with ſiſters, fathers with daughters." Let the following note be inſerted at the bottom of that page:

Though our author in ſome of the paſſages above cited ſpeaks of this worſt kind of inceſt in ſoftening terms, which ſeem to ſhew no great abhorrence of it, yet when he takes notice in a ſneering way of *the edifying anecdote of* Lot's *daughters*, he calls that inceſt *a monſtrous crime*, and intimateth as if according to the *Moſaic* accounts, the goodneſs of their intention *ſanctified it* †. But *Moſes* contenteth himſelf with relating the fact as it really happened; nor can it poſſibly be ſuppoſed, that he had any deſign to ſanctify that crime, which is forbidden and condemned in his law in the ſtrongeſt terms, and cenſured as an *abomination*.

In the latter end of p. 344. and beginning of p. 345. it is obſerved, that Lord *Bolingbroke* ſuppoſes that in *China*, in the moſt ancient times, they were governed by pure natural religion: but that of this he produceth no proof. Let there be a reference here to this marginal note:

* Vol. V. p. 401, 402. † Ib. p. 112.

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His Lordſhip expreſſes himſelf on this head with a caution and modeſty not uſual with him. He ſaith, That "among the countries with "which we are better acquainted, he can find "none where natural religion was eſtabliſhed "in its full extent and purity, as it *ſeems* to "have been once in *China.*" It may be obſerved by the way, that having highly extolled the ancient *Chineſe* ſages, he takes notice of "the conciſe manner in which they expreſſed "themſelves, whenever they ſpoke of the Su-"preme Being." And that "their refining "ſucceſſors have endeavoured in part at leaſt to "found their Atheiſm upon what thoſe ſages "had advanced *." I think according to this account there muſt have been a great obſcurity in their manner of expreſſing themſelves concerning the Divinity, and that they were greatly deficient in the inſtructions they gave with relation to this great fundamental article of all religion. How vaſtly ſuperior in this reſpect was *Moſes* to all thoſe admired ſages, in whoſe writings, and in every part of the holy ſcriptures, the exiſtence, the perfections, and providence of God are aſſerted and deſcribed in ſo plain and ſtrong a manner, as is fitted to lead people of common capacities to the firm belief, obedience, and adoration of the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Governor of the world.

* Vol. V. p. 228.

In p. 367. line 12, *&c.* mention is made of conſiderable traces of tradition, which have been preſerved in other nations, relating to ſome of the events recorded in the *Moſaic* writings.——Let there be a reference here to a marginal note; and let that note run thus:

His Lordſhip frequently ſpeaks with great contempt of the attempts made by the learned to ſupport the hiſtory of *Moſes* by collateral teſtimonies, thoſe of *Egyptians*, *Phœnicians*, *Chaldeans*, and even *Greeks* *. Yet he ſays, "The man who gives the leaſt credit to the "*Moſaic* hiſtory will agree very readily, that "theſe five books contain traditions of a very "great antiquity; ſome of which were pre-"ſerved and propagated by other nations as "well as the *Iſraelites*, and by other hiſtorians "as well as *Moſes*. Many of them may be "true, though they will not ſerve as vouchers "for one another." And he farther obſerves, that "three or four ancient neighbouring na-"tions, of whom we have ſome knowlege, "ſeemed to have a common fund of traditions, "which they varied according to their different "ſyſtems of religion, philoſophy, and policy †." And ſince he here ſuppoſes, that the nations he refers to had different ſyſtems of religion and policy, and were evidently neither of the ſame country, nation, or religion with the people of *Iſrael*, the teſtimony they give to the facts re-

* Vol. III. p. 280, 281. † Ib. p. 282.

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corded in the *Moſaic* writings, may be juſtly regarded as *collateral teſtimony*, even according to the account he himſelf is pleaſed to give of it; *viz.* that it is the teſtimony of thoſe *who had no common intereſt of country, religion, or profeſſion.* So that after all his clamours againſt the *Moſaic* hiſtory for want of *collateral teſtimony*, he himſelf in effect owns, that in ſeveral inſtances at leaſt, and with regard to ſome of the facts there related, collateral teſtimony may be produced, which is therefore very properly taken notice of by the learned. See alſo concerning this what is obſerved in the firſt volume of *the View*, &c. p. 407, 408.

In p. 375. line 20, *et ſeq.* notice is taken of Lord *Bolingbroke*'s inſinuations, that the *Moſaical* writings were forged; and that the likelieſt time for ſuch a forgery was that of the Judges. Here let there be a marginal note, as thus:

His Lordſhip is pleaſed to obſerve, That "the "four centuries the *Iſraelites* paſſed under "their Judges, may be well compared to the "heroical" (by which he underſtands the fabulous) "ages of the *Greeks.*" The reaſon he gives for this is pretty extraordinary. He ſays, "Thoſe of the *Greeks* were generally baſtards "of ſome god or other, and thoſe of the *Jews* "were always appointed by God to defend his "people, and deſtroy their enemies." As if the being a baſtard of ſome god or other, and the being appointed by God for defending and delivering

delivering his people, were of the ſame ſignificancy, and equally abſurd and fabulous: tho' under ſuch a polity as the *Moſaical* was, their having their Judges and Deliverers extraordinarily raiſed and appointed by God, had nothing in it but what was perfectly agreeable to the nature of their conſtitution. And whereas he mentions it to the diſadvantage of the *Jewiſh* hiſtory under that period, that we there read of *Ehud an aſſaſſin*, and *Jephthah a robber*, and *David a captain of banditti*; it may be obſerved, that this laſt does not properly belong to the times of the Judges, and is only thrown in out of his great good-will to the memory of that illuſtrious prince: and as to the two former, without entering into a particular conſideration of the accounts which are given of them *, it may juſtly be affirmed, that theſe inſtances do not afford a ſhadow of a proof, that the hiſtory is fabulous, and doth not contain a true account of facts.

In p. 397. which by miſtake is printed p. 367. line 7, 8. it is obſerved, that it is far from being ſo certain as Lord *Bolingbroke* pretends, that *Moſes* adopted the *Egyptian* rites and cuſtoms in accommodation to the prejudices of the people. And here let there be a reference to a marginal note, as follows:

* See concerning *Ehud*, *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. II. p. 334. 2d edit.

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It appears indeed from the accounts of the *Egyptian* rites and cuſtoms given by ſome ancient writers, that there is a reſemblance between ſome of thoſe rites and cuſtoms, and thoſe that were inſtituted in the *Moſaical* law. But there is no proof that the latter were derived from the former. Nor indeed is there any proof which can be depended on, that thoſe particular rites were in uſe among the *Egyptians* ſo early as the time of *Moſes*; ſince the authors who mention them are of a much later date. And notwithſtanding all that hath been ſaid of the improbability of the *Egyptians* borrowing them from the *Iſraelites*, yet the very high opinion the *Egyptians* of his time had conceived for *Moſes*, as appeareth from *Exod.* xi. 3. and the great impreſſions which we may well ſuppoſe to have been made upon them by the extraordinary divine interpoſitions in favour of the *Iſraelites* at their departure out of *Egypt*, and during their abode in the wilderneſs, as well as at their entrance into the Land of *Canaan*, of which the *Egyptians* could ſcarce be ignorant, might give occaſion to their copying after ſome of the *Moſaic* inſtitutions. They might poſſibly apprehend that this would tend to draw down divine bleſſings upon them, or to avert judgments and calamities. Theſe obſervances they might afterwards retain, tho' in ſucceeding ages, when the firſt impreſſions were over, they were too proud to acknowlege from

from whence they had originally derived them. Beſides, it ſhould be conſidered, that ſeveral of the rites and cuſtoms common to the *Iſraelites* and *Egyptians*, might be derived to both from the patriarchal times. The famous Mr. *Le Clerc*, notwithſtanding the zeal he frequently expreſſeth for the hypotheſis, that many of the *Moſaic* rites were inſtituted in imitation of the *Egyptians*, yet in his notes on *Levit.* xxiii. 10. ſpeaking of the offering up of the firſt-fruits to God, obſerves, that this was neither derived from the *Egyptians* to the *Hebrews*, nor from the *Hebrews* to the *Egyptians*, but was derived to both from the earlieſt ages, and probably was originally of divine appointment. The ſame he thinks of the oblation of ſacrifices; and adds, that there were perhaps many other things which both people derived from the ſame ſource. *Et alia forte multa ex æquo indidem traxit uterque populus.* So that many of thoſe *Jewiſh* obſervances, which ſome learned men, and Mr. *Le Clerc* among the reſt, have been fond of deriving from the *Egyptians*, had probably been in uſe in the times of the ancient patriarchs, and were retained, and farther confirmed, as well as other additional rites inſtituted, in the law of *Moſes*.

In ſhewing how advantageouſly the *Jews* were diſtinguiſhed in matters of religion above the moſt learned and polite heathen nations, it is obſerved, p. 400. that "all worſhip of in-

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" ferior deities, and of the true God by images, " was moſt expreſly prohibited in their laws." Here let there be a reference to this marginal note:

Lord *Bolingbroke* takes notice that *Moſes* had made the deſtruction of idolatrous worſhip a principal object of his laws: and the zeal againſt images was great among the *Jews*. But he pretends that it was only carved or emboſſed images that were had in horror; but a flat figure, either painted or embroidered, was allowed; as, he thinks, is very clear from a paſſage which he has read quoted from *Maimonides*. And he intimates, that " picture-worſhip " came from the *Jews* to the Chriſtians, as " did that of carved images from the Pagans *." If that was the *caſuiſtry*, as he calls it, of the *Jews*, it is certainly not chargeable on their law, which moſt expreſly prohibiteth the worſhipping not only of *graven images*, but *the likeneſs* of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. But this is one inſtance among many that might be produced of the wrong uſe his Lordſhip has made of his too ſuperficial reading. He was ready to take up with the ſlighteſt appearances in favour of any darling point he had in view. He has here confounded the making or drawing pictures or images with the worſhipping them. Neither *Maimonides*,

* Vol. IV. p. 308.

nor

nor any other *Jewiſh* author, ever pretended that it was lawful for them to worſhip painted, any more than carved figures. But as to the lawfulneſs of making images, or of painting and embroidering them, there were different opinions. Some carried it ſo far, that they were not for allowing any figures at all, either painted or carved, not ſo much as for ornament, for fear of giving occaſion to idolatry. Others thought it lawful to have the figures of animals either painted or carved, except thoſe of men, which were not allowed to be carved or emboſſed, though they might be painted, or drawn upon a plane. But neither the one nor the other were to be worſhipped. If his Lordſhip had conſulted Mr. *Selden*, whom he hath ſometimes quoted, he would have found all this diſtinctly repreſented. *De jure nat. et gent. apud Hebr. lib.* ii. *cap.* 6, 7, 8, 9. There is no foundation therefore for his new diſcovery, that picture-worſhip came from the *Jews* to the Chriſtians. LETTER V.

There is another note relating to the *Jews*, which may properly be inſerted in p. 402. as follows:

His Lordſhip ſhews a ſtrange unwillingneſs, that the *Jews* ſhould have the honour of having had the knowlege and worſhip of the true God among them, in a degree far ſuperior to other nations. Sometimes he inſinuateth, as ſome others of the Deiſtical Writers have done, that the *Iſraelites*

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ites borrowed it from the *Egyptians*, though, according to his own repreſentation of the caſe, this was among the *Egyptians* part of their ſecret doctrine, not communicated to the vulgar, or from the *Babylonians*. And then the wonder will be how it came to paſs, that the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God was preſerved among the *Jews*, whilſt the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians* were immerſed in the moſt abſurd and ſtupid idolatries. He thinks, he might *venture to affirm, that* Abraham *himſelf learned the orthodox faith*, viz. relating to the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God, *in* Egypt, *and the neighbouring countries* *, And he had ſaid the ſame thing before †. There cannot be a greater proof of unreaſonable prejudice than this. It is ſurmiſed not only without evidence, but againſt it; ſince nothing can be plainer from the account given us of *Abraham*, than that he knew and worſhipped the one true God before he came into *Canaan* at all, and therefore long before he went into *Egypt*. Nor did he learn it from the *Chaldeans*, among whom idolatry had then made a conſiderable progreſs: as appears from *Joſh.* xxiv. 2. And agreeable to this is the univerſal tradition of the Eaſt; that he was the great reſtorer of the ancient true religion, which had been corrupted with idolatry.

* Vol. IV. p. 205. † Vol. III. p. 299.

In

In p. 442. ſome notice is taken of the intention of thoſe paſſages of ſcripture in which God is ſaid to repent. At the bottom of that page let the following note be inſerted:

His Lordſhip ſeems to think it an unanſwerable objection againſt the *Moſaic* writings, that in the account there given of the flood, God is repreſented as having *repented that he made man.* But it is manifeſt, that this is only an emphatical way of expreſſion to ſignify God's juſt diſpleaſure at the great and univerſal wickedneſs of mankind, and at their having ſo far fallen from the noble end of their creation; and that therefore after having tried the methods of indulgence towards them, he ſaw fit to ſend a deſtructive deluge for exterminating that incorrigible race. And it is plain that according to the doctrine of the ſacred writings, which every-where repreſent God as fore-knowing the actions of men, this corruption of mankind was what he foreſaw from the beginning; and the puniſhing them in this manner made a part of the original ſcheme of Divine Providence, though it did not actually take effect till the proper time came for executing it. As to what he mentions in a ſneering way, concerning God's *ſmelling the ſweet ſavour of* Noah's *burnt-offering*, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that the deſign of the expreſſion is plain and eaſily intelligible, *viz.* to ſignify God's gracious acceptance of the act of devotion performed

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formed by that good man, to acknowlege his gratitude, and implore the divine mercy; and that on that occaſion God was pleaſed, after having made ſo ſignal a diſplay of his juſtice, to allay and diſſipate the fears which might be apt to ariſe in the hearts of men, and to aſſure them of his merciful intentions towards them, and that he would not any more ſend an univerſal deluge upon the earth; of which the rainbow in the clouds ſhould be a conſtant memorial.

In p. 483. line 6, *et ſeq.* mention is made of an objection of Lord *Bolingbroke* againſt the doctrine of an inferior dependent evil being, ſuch as Satan is repreſented to be. To what is there hinted in anſwer to that objection, may be added the following marginal note:

That God made creatures of a noble order, and of ſublime capacities and powers, vaſtly ſuperior to man, is what our author himſelf allows to be very probable *. And as it is reaſonable to believe that they were made free agents, why may it not be ſuppoſed that ſome of them made a wrong uſe of their liberty, and became depraved and corrupt? And if one of them of diſtinguiſhed power and dignity above the reſt, by a perverſion of his great abilities, became eminent in evil and wickedneſs, and particularly inſtrumental to draw others to

* Vol. IV. p. 177. Vol. V. p. 329, 330.

ſin

ſin and diſobedience, it cannot be pretended that this ſuppoſition carrieth any abſurdity in it. And in ſuch a caſe it might be expected, that he and his aſſociates would prove enemies to all goodneſs and virtue, and that having fallen from their own felicity and glory, they would envy the happineſs of others, and endeavour to draw them into guilt and miſery. This is what we often ſee bad men do, who are arrived to a great degree of corruption and depravity. His Lordſhip indeed pretendeth, that the ſuppoſition of *an inferior dependent being*, who is *aſſumed to be the author of all evil*, is more abſurd than the doctrine of *two independent principles, the one good, the other evil.* But it is evident to the common ſenſe of mankind, that there is a vaſt difference between the ſuppoſition of an almighty and independent evil being, a ſuppoſition full of abſurdity and horror, and that of an inferior dependent being, who was made originally upright, but fell by his own voluntary defection into vice and wickedneſs, and who, though permitted in many inſtances to do miſchief, and to act according to his evil inclinations, as wicked men are often permitted to do in this preſent ſtate, yet is ſtill under the ſovereign controul of the moſt holy, wiſe, and powerful Governor of the world. For in this caſe we may be ſure from the divine wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs, that God will in the propereſt

ſeaſon

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ſeaſon inflict a puniſhment upon that evil being, and his aſſociates, proportionable to their crimes, and that in the mean time he ſets bounds to their malice and rage, and provideth ſufficient aſſiſtances for thoſe whom they endeavour to ſeduce to evil, whereby they may be enabled to repel their temptations, if it be not their own faults: and that he will in his ſuperior wiſdom bring good out of their evil, and over-rule even their malice and wickedneſs, for promoting the great ends of his government. This is the repreſentation made to us of this matter in the holy ſcriptures; and there is nothing in all this that can be proved to be contrary to ſound reaſon. And we may juſtly conclude, that in the final iſſue of things, the wiſdom as well as righteouſneſs of this part of the divine adminiſtrations will moſt illuſtriouſly appear.

In p. 490. after having obſerved, line 6, *et ſeq.* That the *Jews* were taught that noble leſſon, That in and from God alone, they were to look for happineſs, whether relating to the people in general, or to particular perſons: —— add as follows, without breaking the line: —— And they were inſtructed to regard him as exerciſing a conſtant inſpection over them, and taking cognizance both of their outward actions, and of the inward affections and diſpoſitions of their hearts.

There

There are ſeveral other additional obſerva- LETTER V.
tions relating to the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, which I ſhall reſerve to be the ſubject of another Letter. At preſent theſe may ſuffice.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER VI.

LETTER VI.

St. Paul *vindicated againſt Lord* Bolingbroke's *charge of madneſs. The revelation publiſhed by Chriſt's apoſtles under the direction of his Spirit, truly and properly the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, as well as that which he delivered himſelf in the days of his perſonal miniſtry. Some manuſcripts of the ſacred writings, particularly the* Alexandrian, *ſo ancient, as to bring us near to the firſt ages of the Chriſtian Church. Some of Chriſt's precepts in his ſermon on the mount, which have been exclaimed againſt as exceſſively ſevere, own'd by Lord* Bolingbroke *to be reaſonable and juſt. The primitive Chriſtians unjuſtly charged by him with owning themſelves to be Gnoſtics. The proſperity of the* Roman *ſtate, according to him, owing to the belief of Religion and a Providence, and the neglect of Religion the cauſe of its ruin.*

SIR,

IN the beginning of p. 529. before the firſt line, let there be a new paragraph inſerted, as follows:

Among other charges Lord *Bolingbroke* bringeth againſt St. *Paul* one is that of madneſs. He asks,

asks, " Can he be leſs than mad, who boaſts a " revelation ſuperadded to reaſon to ſupply " the defects of it, and who ſuperadds reaſon " to revelation, to ſupply the defects of this " too, at the ſame time? This is madneſs, or " there is no ſuch thing incident to our nature." And he mentions ſeveral perſons of great name as having been guilty of this madneſs, and particularly St. *Paul* *. That reaſon and revelation are in their ſeveral ways neceſſary, and aſſiſtant to each other, is eaſily conceivable, and ſo far from being an abſurdity, that it is a certain truth. But the ſtreſs of his Lordſhip's obſervation lies wholly in the turn of the expreſſion, and in the improper way of putting the caſe. That revelation may be of ſignal uſe to aſſiſt and enlighten our reaſon in the knowlege of things which we could not have known at all, or not ſo certainly by our own unaſſiſted reaſon without it, is plainly ſignified by St. *Paul*, and is what the whole Goſpel ſuppoſes. And on the other hand it is manifeſt, that reaſon is neceſſary to our underſtanding revelation, and making a proper uſe of it, and that in judging of that revelation, and of its meaning and evidences, we muſt exerciſe our reaſoning faculties and powers: *i. e.* revelation ſuppoſeth us to be reaſonable creatures, and to have the uſe of our reaſon, and addreſſeth us as ſuch. But this doth not imply that revelation is defective, or that

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* Lord *Bolingbroke*'s works, Vol. IV. p. 172.

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reaſon is ſuperadded to ſupply the defects of it. For let revelation be never ſo ſufficient and perfect in its kind, or well fitted to anſwer the end for which it is given, yet ſtill reaſon is neceſſary to underſtand and apply it. This is St. *Paul*'s ſcheme, and there is nothing in it but what is perfectly conſiſtent. It is evident from his writings that he ſuppoſeth the revelation which hath been given to be ſufficient for all the purpoſes for which it was deſigned, able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, and to inſtruct us in things of great importance, which reaſon, if left merely to itſelf, could not have diſcovered. And at the ſame time he ſuppoſeth thoſe to whom the revelation is publiſhed to be capable of exerciſing their reaſoning faculties for examining and judging of that revelation, and exhorteth them to do ſo *. And though he frequently aſſerteth his own apoſtolical authority, and the revelation he received from Jeſus Chriſt, yet he uſeth a great deal of reaſoning in all his epiſtles. Thus are reaſon and revelation to be joined together, and are mutually helpful to one another. And in this view there is a real harmony between them. And what there is in this ſcheme that looks like madneſs is hard to ſee.

In p. 540. l. 4. add as follows, without breaking the line—— And whereas he urgeth, That " if " we do not acknowlege the ſyſtem of belief

* See 1 *Cor.* x. 15. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 21.

" and

" and practice which Jeſus left behind him to LETTER
" be complete and perfect, we muſt be re- VI.
" duced to the greateſt abſurdity, and to little
" leſs than blaſphemy; and that it muſt be
" otherwiſe ſaid, that he executed his commiſ-
" ſion imperfectly *." It will appear, if the matter be rightly conſidered, that it was no way diſhonourable to our Saviour, that there were ſeveral things more explicitly revealed to the apoſtles afterwards, than was done during his perſonal miniſtry. Some things were not proper to be openly and diſtinctly publiſhed till after Chriſt's reſurrection: nor were his diſciples fully prepared for receiving them before that time. He himſelf told them before his paſſion, that there were ſome things they did not know then, but ſhould know afterwards. And the revelation publiſhed by his apoſtles according to his commiſſion, and under the influence of his Spirit, and by power derived from him, was as truly *the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, as St. *Paul* calls it, as that which he delivered himſelf in the days of his perſonal miniſtry. Nor did it really differ from it in any article, but more fully explained ſeveral things than was ſeaſonable, or could be conveniently done before. So that Chriſt was faithful to the commiſſion he had received, and the whole was conducted with admirable wiſdom, and condeſcending goodneſs.

* Vol. IV. p. 315, 316.

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In p. 543, line 20, *et ſeq.* it is obſerved, that by the acknowlegement of all mankind, there may be ſufficient evidence of the truth and authenticity of ancient writings, though neither the originals, nor any atteſted copies of the originals be now in being. — Let a marginal note be here added, as follows:

How long the originals of the apoſtolic writings continued in the churches we cannot certainly take upon us to determine. Whether the noted paſſage of *Tertullian*, in which he ſpeaks of the *Authenticæ literæ Apoſtolorum* as ſtill read in the apoſtolical churches, relateth to the original manuſcripts of the apoſtolic writings, or not, about which the learned are not agreed; it is very poſſible, and not at all improbable, that ſome of the originals might have continued to that time. And conſidering how long pieces of that kind may be preſerved, we are not removed at ſo vaſt a diſtance from the originals as may appear at firſt view. In the year 1715, when Cardinal *Ximenes* ſet forward the *Complatenſian* edition of the ſcriptures, there were ſome manuſcripts made uſe of which were looked upon to be then twelve hundred years old. The famous *Alexandrian* manuſcript preſented by *Cyrillus Lucaris* to our King *Charles* the firſt, though learned men are not quite agreed about its age, is univerſally allowed to be of very high antiquity. Dr. *Grabe* thinks it might have been written about the latter end of the fourth century. Others, as Dr. *Mill*, ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe it was not written till near the end of the fifth century. If we take the latter computation, it may fairly be ſuppoſed that there were at that time, *viz* at the end of the fifth century, copies two or three hundred years old: and if the *Alexandrian* manuſcript was copied from one of this ſort, which is no unreaſonable ſuppoſition, this will bring us to the third or latter end of the ſecond century, when probably the very originals, or at leaſt ſeveral copies taken from the originals, were in being. LETTER VI.

In p. 565. it is obſerved, that Lord *Bolingbroke* owns, that our Saviour's ſermon on the mount contains excellent precepts of morality, and that it was right to carry the notion of virtue as high as poſſible. To what is there hinted, line 3 from the bottom, add as follows, without breaking the line. —— Some have objected it as an inſtance of our Saviour's carrying things to an exceſſive rigour, that he not only forbids *murder*, but the being *angry without a cauſe*, and not only prohibits the groſs act of *adultery*, but hath declared, That *whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart*, Matt. v. 28. But his Lordſhip acknowlegeth, that the law which forbids the commiſſion of a crime, does certainly imply, that we ſhould not deſire to commit it; and that to want or extinguiſh that deſire is the beſt ſecurity of our obedience *. Yet he afterwards obſerves, *&c.*

* Vol. IV. p. 298, 299.

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P. 567. line 7, *et ſeq.* from the bottom, ſome notice is taken of the unfair repreſentation his Lordſhip makes of the *legal* cauſes of divorce among the *Jews.*——Let the following marginal note be there added:

He is pleaſed to obſerve, That "the people "of God had an advantage in this reſpect above "other people. Plurality of wives might have "made divorces leſs neceſſary: or, if they "were all alike diſagreeable, the husbands had "the reſource of concubines." Where he repreſents it, as if there was an allowance to the people of God in their law itſelf, both to have a plurality of wives, and beſides theſe to have concubines which were not wives. So it is indeed in the law of *Mahomet*, where every man is allowed four wives, and as many female ſlaves as he can keep. But there is no ſuch conſtitution in the *Moſaical* law. And the concubines we read of in ſcripture were really wives, tho' without a dowry. Thus in the caſe of the Levite's concubine, *Judg.* xix. he is ſaid expreſly to be her husband, and her father is ſeveral times called his father-in-law, ver. 3, 4, 5, 7, *&c.*

In p. 569. line 18. after *they ſhould be one fleſh*,——add,——The firſt inſtance of polygamy *Moſes* mentions is that of *Lamech*, one of the deſcendants of wicked *Cain*, and who ſeems by the ſhort hints given of him to have been of a very bad character. And though he afterwards gives inſtances, *&c.*

In

In p. 635. line 18, 19. notice is taken of the injurious repreſentation Lord *Bolingbroke* has made of the primitive Chriſtians.——And here let the following marginal note be inſerted: LETTER VI.

As a ſpecimen how ready our author is to lay hold of the ſlighteſt appearances for caſting a ſlur upon the ancient Fathers, and primitive Chriſtians, I would obſerve, that after mentioning the Gnoſtics, and their pretences, he adds, That " the Orthodox grew in time as much " Gnoſtics as others, and we ſee that the Church " of *Alexandria* thought it neceſſary to be ſo " in order to be truly religious *." He is ſo fond of this thought, that he afterwards repeateth it, and talks of the " Heretics aſſuming " the pompous title of Gnoſtics, and deſpiſing " the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity, as ignorant " and illiterate men: and that *Clement* of *Alex-* " *andria* maintained, that to be a good Chri- " ſtian it was neceſſary to be a good Gnoſtic †." It would be hard to produce an inſtance of greater diſingenuity than Lord *Bolingbroke* is here guilty of, and it can ſcarce be ſuppoſed that he himſelf was ſo ignorant as not to be ſenſible of it. The word Gnoſtic properly ſignifies a man of knowlege. Some corrupters of Chriſtianity in the primitive times, who made high pretences to extraordinary knowlege, aſſumed that title to themſelves. And becauſe *Clement* deſcribes the true Gnoſtic in oppoſition to the falſe, to ſhew that this name in which thoſe

* Vol. IV. p. 336. † Ib. p. 458.

Heretics

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Heretics gloried, belonged in its juſt ſenſe only to the true Chriſtian: therefore he and the orthodox Chriſtians were Gnoſtics, *i. e.* of the ſame principles and practices with that ſect which they condemned. It may be ſafely left to the reader to judge of the fairneſs of ſuch a conduct.

In p. 655. line 13, 14. it is obſerved, that never was there any civilized government that did not take in religion for its ſupport. Here let there be this note added at the bottom of the page:

His Lordſhip obſerves, That "the good effects of maintaining, and bad effects of neglecting, religion were extremely viſible in "the whole courſe of the *Roman* government. "—That though the *Roman* religion eſtabliſhed by *Numa* was very abſurd, yet by "keeping up an awe of ſuperior power, and "the belief of a Providence that ordered the "courſe of events, it produced all the marvelous effects which *Machiavel*, after *Polybius*, "*Cicero*, and *Plutarch*, aſcribes to it.' He adds, That "the neglect of religion was a "principal cauſe of the evils that *Rome* afterwards ſuffered. Religion decayed, and the "ſtate decayed with her *." And if even a falſe religion, by keeping up an awe of ſuperior power, and the belief of a Providence, had ſo advantageous an influence on the proſperity of the ſtate, and the neglect of religion brought

* Vol. IV. p. 428.

ſuch evils upon it; can they poſſibly be regarded as true friends to the public, who take ſo much pains to ſubvert the religion profeſſed among us, a religion eſtabliſhed upon the moſt rational and ſolid foundations, and to ſet men looſe from the awe of a ſuperior power, and the belief of a Providence ordering the courſe of events, and a manifeſt tendency of whoſe attempts and endeavours is to leave us without any religion at all?

I have now finiſhed the additions I purpoſe to make to my former obſervations on the late Lord *Bolingbroke*'s poſthumous works; and as you and ſome others of my friends have thought it proper to reprint my REFLECTIONS on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, I have carefully reviſed that little pamphlet, and ſubmit it to your judgment, whether it may not come in properly in this part of the ſupplement.

I am, Yours, &c.

REFLECTIONS

ON

The late Lord BOLINGBROKE's Letters

ON THE

Study and Uſe of Hiſtory;

Eſpecially ſo far as they relate to

CHRISTIANITY,

AND THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The THIRD EDITION, corrected,
With large ADDITIONS.

By *JOHN LELAND*, D. D.

Advertiſement *to the* Reader.

IN the former editions of theſe *Reflections*, beſides the remarks that were made upon thoſe paſſages in Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters which relate to Chriſtianity and the Holy Scriptures, there were ſeveral things added of a *political nature*, and care was taken to examine and detect his Lordſhip's miſrepreſentations. But in this edition it is thought proper not to intermix any thing *of a political nature*, which would not be ſo well ſuited to the deſign of the preſent work. For this reaſon, whereas in page 18 of theſe Reflections it was propoſed to diſtribute the remarks into three heads, the third of which related to the ſevere reflections Lord *Bolingbroke* had made upon the conſequences of the late revolution, and the ſtate of things under the preſent eſtabliſhment.——This third head, which in the former editions reached from p. 133 to p. 166, is omitted.

THE

THE PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH no man needs to make an apology for uſing his beſt endeavours in defence of our common Chriſtianity, when it is openly attacked; yet as my engaging again in this cauſe, after having done it on ſome former occaſions, might have an appearance of too much forwardneſs; it was with ſome reluctance that I was perſuaded to undertake it. What had great weight with me was, the judgment and advice of a perſon of great worth *, of whoſe ſincere friendſhip I have had many proofs, and whom I greatly honour for his truly Chriſtian and

* The Rev. Dr. THOMAS WILSON, Rector of WALBROOK, and PREBENDARY of *Weſtminſter*.

candid ſpirit, as well as his zeal for our holy religion. He urged, that it was highly proper to take notice of the contempt and abuſe attempted to be thrown upon Chriſtianity and the holy Scriptures, by a writer of ſo great name, and whoſe ſpecious inſinuations, and confident aſſertions, might probably make diſadvantageous impreſſions upon minds too well prepared to receive them. And, as he had not then heard that any other had undertaken it, or intended to do ſo; he thought my drawing up Remarks on theſe Letters, which had made ſo much noiſe, might be of ſome uſe. This determined me to attempt it; and how far what is now offered is fitted to anſwer the intention, muſt be ſubmitted to the judgment of the public. I am ſenſible of the diſadvantage one is under in appearing againſt a writer of ſo diſtinguiſhed a character as the late Lord Viſcount *Bolingbroke*. His Lordſhip's admirers will no doubt expect, that a proper decent reſpect ſhould be paid to his great abilities and talents, as well as quality. This I readily acknowlege. But there is certainly a ſtill greater regard due to the honour of Chriſtianity, which he hath unworthily inſulted. However, it is hoped the reader will find, that care has been taken

taken not to tranſgreſs the rules of decency, or to puſh the charge againſt him farther than his own words give juſt ground for; and that angry and reproachful expreſſions have not been made uſe of, even where there ſeemed to be a ſufficient provocation given.

It might have been expected, from a perſon of his Lordſhip's genius, and who ſeems fond of ſaying things which had not been inſiſted upon before, that when he thought fit to appear againſt the authority of the holy Scriptures, and the Chriſtian religion, he would have managed the argument in a different manner, and to greater advantage, than had been done by others in the ſame cauſe before him. But I do not find, that, with all his ſagacity and penetration, he hath advanced any thing on the argument, that can be properly called a new diſcovery; or that he hath given any additional force to the objections which have been urged by others, and to which ſufficient anſwers have been made.

In that part of his Letters, in which he attempteth to expoſe the Scripture hiſtory as falſe or uncertain, there are ſeveral things thrown in, which ſeem rather calculated to ſhew his Lordſhip's reading, than to anſwer the main deſign he appears to have had in view. It would be no

difficult matter to point to ſome miſtakes and inaccuracies he hath fallen into. But I have choſen for the moſt part to paſs them by, and confine myſelf to thoſe things that have a nearer relation to the argument.

Any one that is converſant with thoſe that are called the Deiſtical Writers, muſt have obſerved, that it is very uſual for them to put on an appearance of reſpect for Chriſtianity, at the ſame time that they do all in their power to ſubvert it. In this his Lordſhip hath thought fit to imitate them.

He hath ſometimes expreſſed a ſeeming regard for the holy Scriptures; and hath carried it ſo far as to make a ſhew of owning the divine inſpiration of ſome parts of them. But I believe he would have been loth to have had it thought, that he was in earneſt. It is not eaſy to ſee the juſtice, or even the good ſenſe, of ſuch a conduct; ſince the diſguiſe is too thin to impoſe upon the moſt unwary reader: nor can I ſee what end it can anſwer, but to give one no very good opinion of the writer's ſincerity.

This juſtice, however, muſt be done to the noble author, that he hath brought the controverſy, relating to the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion, into a narrower compaſs than ſome others engaged in the ſame cauſe have ſeemed willing

willing to do. He aſſerteth, that Chriſtianity is a religion founded upon facts; and fairly acknowlegeth, that if the facts can be proved to be true, the divine original and authority of the Chriſtian religion are eſtabliſhed. And what he requireth is, that theſe facts ſhould be proved, as all other paſt facts, that are judged worthy of credit, are proved; *viz.* by good hiſtorical evidence. This bringeth the controverſy to a ſhort iſſue: for if it can be ſhewn, that the great, important facts, recorded in the evangelical writings, have been tranſmitted to us with as much evidence as could be reaſonably expected, ſuppoſing thoſe facts to have been really done; then, by his Lordſhip's conceſſions, and according to his own way of ſtating the caſe, they are to be received as true; and conſequently the Chriſtian religion is of divine authority.

His Lordſhip had too much ſenſe to deny (as ſome have been willing to do) the certainty of all hiſtorical evidence as to paſt facts, or to inſiſt upon ocular demonſtration for things done in former ages. Since therefore the beſt way of knowing and being aſſured of paſt facts is, by authentic accounts, written and publiſhed in the age in which the facts were done; all that properly remains is, to prove the credibility and authenticity of the Goſpel-records; and that they

have been tranſmitted to us with ſuch a degree of evidence, as may be ſafely depended upon. And notwithſtanding what his Lordſhip hath inſinuated to the contrary, this hath been often done with great clearneſs and force, by the writers that have appeared on the behalf of Chriſtianity. What is offered in this way in the following Reflections, will, I hope, be judged ſufficient; though I have done little more than point to the heads of things, which might eaſily have been enlarged upon, if I had not been afraid of ſwelling theſe Reflections to too great a bulk.

The chief danger to be apprehended from his Lordſhip's book, appears to me to ariſe from the contemptuous inſinuations he has thrown out againſt Chriſtianity, as if it could not bear the light, or ſtand the teſt of an impartial inquiry; and as if every man of ſenſe that examines into firſt principles without prejudice, muſt immediately ſee through the deluſion. This, from a man of his Lordſhip's known abilities, and fine taſte, may be apt to do miſchief among thoſe, who, without any uncommon abilities, or giving themſelves the trouble of much thinking, yet want to paſs for perſons of extraordinary penetration, and raiſed above vulgar prejudices. But if authority were to decide this cauſe, it were eaſy to produce, on the ſide of Chriſtianity,

many

many great names of perſons, whoſe learning and good ſenſe, and eminent merit, are univerſally acknowleged. I ſhall not mention any of the *Clergy* on this occaſion, becauſe they might perhaps be excepted againſt: tho', if extenſive knowlege and learning, if depth of thought, and exactneſs of judgment, if great candour and probity of manners, or if fineneſs of genius, and elegance of taſte, in polite literature, might recommend them as fit to judge in theſe matters; many of them might be named, ſo confeſſedly eminent in all theſe reſpects, as would render them ornaments to any profeſſion in the world. But it may not be improper to mention ſome illuſtrious *Laymen*, who have either profeſſedly written in defence of Chriſtianity, and the holy Scriptures, or have, in their writings, ſhewn an high eſteem and veneration for them. Of foreigners, among many that might be mentioned to advantage, I ſhall only take notice of the Lord *Du Pleſſis Mornay*, who was both a very wiſe ſtateſman, and eminently learned; the celebrated Monſieur *Paſcal*, one of the fineſt writers, and greateſt genius's of the laſt age; that extraordinary man *Grotius*, not eaſily to be paralleled for force and extent of genius, as well as variety of learning; thoſe great men the Barons *Puffendorf* and *Ezekiel Spanheim*, the

former deſervedly admired for his great knowlege of the law of nature and nations, the latter peculiarly eminent for his acquaintance with the *Belles Lettres*, and refined taſte in the politer parts of learning. To theſe might be added many excellent perſons of our own nation, ſuch as Lord *Bacon*, Mr. *Selden*, Sir *Charles Wolſely*, Sir *Matthew Hale*, the honourable *Robert Boyle*, Mr. *Locke*, Sir *Iſaac Newton*, Mr. *Addiſon*, Mr. *Forbes* the late Lord Preſident of *Scotland*. I believe there are few but would think it an honour to be ranked with theſe illuſtrious names, ſome of them remarkable for their eminent ſtation and figure in the world, and great political abilities; and all of them juſtly admired for the extent of their learning and knowlege, the ſolidity of their judgment, or correctneſs of their taſte. And I cannot help, on this occaſion, mentioning two gentlemen now living, of acknowleged learning and fine ſenſe, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their writings in defence of Chriſtianity; Sir *George Lyttelton*, and Mr. *Weſt*.

No man needs therefore be apprehenſive, as if his appearing to ſhew a zeal for Chriſtianity, might be looked upon as a reflection upon his underſtanding, or as a mark of a narrow and bigotted way of thinking; ſince it cannot be denied,

denied, that ſome of the wiſeſt men, the greateſt genius's, and exacteſt reaſoners of the age, have been perſons that profeſſed an high regard for the Chriſtian religion. And the ſame might, I doubt not, be ſaid of numbers of gentlemen now living, of eminent abilities, and diſtinguiſhed worth, who might be mentioned with great honour, though they have had no occaſion of appearing in the world as writers. But the controverſy is not to be decided by the authority of great names. Chriſtianity doth not ſtand in need of that ſupport. It ſtandeth fixed on its own ſolid baſis; and only requireth to be conſidered with an attention ſuitable to its vaſt importance. It hath nothing to fear from a true freedom of thought, from deep reaſoning, and impartial inquiry. What it hath moſt to apprehend, is a thoughtleſs levity and inattention of mind, and an abſolute indifferency to all religion, and to all inquiries about it. It is no eaſy matter to prevail with thoſe to think cloſely in ſuch a caſe as this, who are under the power of ſenſual affections and appetites, who are ſunk in *Indolence* and a *Love of Eaſe*, or carried off with a perpetual hurry of *Diverſions* and *Amuſements*, or engaged in the warm purſuits of *Ambition* or *Avarice*. But ſurely, if the voice of reaſon is to be heard, and if there be any thing at all that deſerveth

a ſerious

a ſerious attention it is this. The inquiry whether Chriſtianity be true, and of a divine original, or not, is a matter of high importance, and upon which a great deal dependeth. The Goſpel itſelf moſt certainly repreſenteth it ſo. If Chriſtianity be true and divine, thoſe to whom it is publiſhed, and who have an opportunity of inquiring into it, and yet neglect to do ſo, can never be able to juſtify their conduct to the great Ruler and Judge of the world. It cannot with any conſiſtency be ſuppoſed, that if God hath ſent his Son into the world, to bring a clear revelation of his will, and to guide men in the way of ſalvation, it is a matter of indifferency whether thoſe to whom it is offered, and made known, pay any regard to this ſignification of the divine will or not, or comply with the terms which are there preſcribed. And therefore for ſuch perſons to reject it at a venture, without giving themſelves the trouble of a ſerious inquiry, or to continue in a wilful negligence and careleſs ſuſpenſe of mind in a matter of ſuch vaſt conſequence, is a moſt unaccountable and inexcuſable conduct, altogether unworthy of reaſonable, thinking beings.

Let Chriſtianity therefore be carefully examined. Let the evidence for the facts on which its divine authority is ſupported, be coolly and

impartially conſidered, whether it is not as much as could be reaſonably deſired, ſuppoſing thoſe facts were true, and which would be accounted ſufficient in any other caſe. Let the original records of Chriſtianity be inquired into, whether they have not the characters of genuine ſimplicity, integrity, and a ſincere regard to truth; and whether they have not been tranſmitted to us with an evidence equal or ſuperior to what can be produced for any other writings whatſoever. Let the nature and tendency of the religion itſelf be conſidered; whether the idea there given us of the Deity be not ſuch as tendeth to render him both moſt amiable and moſt venerable, to fill our hearts with a ſuperlative love to God, as having given the moſt amazing proofs of his wonderful love and goodneſs towards mankind, and at the ſame time with a ſacred awe and reverence of him as the wiſe and righteous Governor of the world, a lover of order, and an hater of vice and wickedneſs; whether its precepts be not unqueſtionably pure and holy, and ſuch as, if faithfully complied with, would raiſe our natures to an high degree of moral excellence; whether the uniform tendency of the whole ſcheme of religion there held forth to us, be not to promote the honour of God, and the good of mankind, and the cauſe of piety, righteouſneſs, and virtue,

in

in the world; to engage us to worſhip God with a pure adoration and devotion, to deal juſtly, kindly, and equitably, with all men, and to ſubdue the ſenſual irregular affections and luſts, and keep them within proper bounds. Superſtition, and falſe devotion, have frequently put men upon unnatural and exceſſive rigours and auſterities; but Chriſtianity, like the bleſſed Author of it, keeps clear of all extremes. It abridgeth us of no pleaſures within the bounds of purity and innocence: nor doth it oblige us to extinguiſh our natural appetites and paſſions, but to govern and moderate them, and preſerve them in a regular ſubjection to reaſon, and the law of the mind: and certainly it is neceſſary for our own quiet and happineſs, and for the good order of ſociety, that we ſhould do ſo. And finally, let it be conſidered, whether any motives could poſſibly be exhibited more powerful and engaging, than thoſe which the Goſpel ſetteth before us. It propoſeth the nobleſt models for our imitation, God himſelf, in his imitable moral excellencies; and his well-beloved Son, the moſt perfect image of his own goodneſs and purity. It diſplayeth all the charms and attractions of redeeming grace and love to allure us. It giveth the greateſt encouragement to ſinners to repent, and forſake their evil ways; and promiſeth the moſt gracious

aſſiſtances to help our infirmities, and to ſtrengthen our weak, but ſincere, endeavours in the performance of our duty. It raiſeth us to the moſt glorious *proſpects*, and ſublime *hopes*, than which nothing can poſſibly have an happier tendency to engage us to a patient continuance in well doing, amidſt the many difficulties and temptations of this preſent ſtate. The *rewards* it propoſeth are ſuch as are fitted to animate holy and generous ſouls, and to produce, not a ſervile and mercenary frame of ſpirit, but a true greatneſs of mind; *viz.* an happineſs conſiſting in the perfection of our natures, in a conformity to God, and the eternal enjoyment of him, and in the pure pleaſures of ſociety and friendſhip with glorious angels, and the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect. And on the other hand, to make an impreſſion upon thoſe that are inſenſible to the charms and beauty of virtue, it maketh the moſt lively and affecting repreſentations of the *terrors* of the wrath to come, and the *puniſhments* that ſhall be executed in a future ſtate upon thoſe that obſtinately perſiſt in a courſe of preſumptuous ſin and diſobedience.

This is an imperfect ſketch of the nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, as laid down in the Goſpel. In this view let it be conſidered, and not be unjuſtly charged, as it hath often been,

with

with corruptions that are only owing to a deviation from its original purity; or with the practices of thoſe, who, though they make a profeſſion of believing it, allow themſelves in courſes which it forbids and condemns. What an happy world would this be, if men could be more generally perſuaded to yield a willing ſubjection to its divine authority, and to comply with its true ſpirit and deſign, and to give up themſelves to be governed by its excellent precepts, and important motives!

What then can thoſe propoſe that take pains to turn men from ſuch a religion as this, and to weaken or ſubvert the evidences of its divine authority? Can they pretend to introduce a more pure and ſublime morality, or to enforce it with more powerful motives? Do they propoſe to render men more holy and virtuous, more pious and devout towards God, more juſt and kind and benevolent towards men, more temperate and careful in the due government of their appetites and paſſions, than the Goſpel requireth and obligeth them to be? Do they intend to advance the intereſts of virtue by depriving it of its moſt effectual encouragements and ſupports, or to exalt the joys of good men by weakening their hopes of everlaſting happineſs, or to reſtrain and reclaim the wicked and

vicious

vicious by freeing them from the fears of future puniſhment?

There is a great complaint of a growing *diſſoluteneſs* of manners, and of a general *corruption*. His Lordſhip repreſenteth this in the moſt lively terms; but, inſtead of aſcribing it to the proper cauſes, he is for laying the whole load of it on the preſent eſtabliſhment. Far from directing to the proper cure, he hath done what he could to take away that which would be the moſt effectual remedy, the influence of Chriſtianity on the minds and conſciences of men. When the *reſtraints* of religion are once taken off, what can be expected, but that they ſhould abandon themſelves to the conduct of their paſſions? *Human Laws* and *Penalties* will be found to be weak ties, where there is no fear of God, nor regard to a future ſtate, or the powers of the world to come. In proportion as a *neglect* or *contempt* of religion groweth amongſt us, a *diſſoluteneſs* of morals will prevail; and when once this becometh *general* among a people, *true probity* and *virtue*, a *right public ſpirit*, and *generous concern for the real intereſts of our country*, will be *extinguiſhed*. Surely then all that wiſh well to the good order of ſociety, and to the happineſs of mankind, ought to wiſh, that true uncor-

rupted

rupted Chriſtianity ſhould generally obtain and prevail; and that men ſhould not only heartily believe, but ſeriouſly conſider it, and endeavour to get it wrought into the very frame and temper of their ſouls. For Chriſtianity is not a mere outward form and profeſſion, but a living principle, of a practical nature and tendency. And it is not enough to have a ſpeculative notion and belief of it, but we muſt conſider it with that attention which becometh us, and do what we can to enforce its excellent doctrines and motives upon our own hearts.

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RE-

E R R A T A.

In page 262. line 21. for *others observed*, read *others have observed*. P. 263. l. 20. for *crime*, r. *event*. P. 265. l. 28. for them, r. *Ham*.

REFLECTIONS

On the Late

Lord BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

PART I.

On the Study *and* Uſe *of* HISTORY.

THE late Lord *Bolingbroke* has generally obtained the Reputation of being one of the fineſt writers in our language. This hath procured him a kind of authority in the world, which makes way for an eaſy and favourable reception of any thing that is publiſhed under his name. A writer poſſeſſed of ſuch talents hath it in his power to be ſignally ſerviceable to religion, and the true intereſt of his country; and on the other hand, there is ſcarce any thing of more pernicious influence than ſuch talents miſapplied. When the public was firſt informed of Letters written by him on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, it was natural to expect ſomething very entertaining and improve-

ing from ſuch an author on ſuch a ſubject. And it will not be denied, that he has many good, and ſome very curious obſervations, expreſſed in a very genteel manner, and with great elegance and purity of ſtile: but theſe are interſperſed with others of a very different kind, and of a dangerous tendency.

In theſe letters his lordſhip has done what he could to expoſe the authority of the Scriptures to contempt; and at the ſame time has made the moſt diſadvantageous repreſentation of the preſent ſtate of the government and conſtitution of his country. If we are to truſt the accounts he giveth us, Chriſtianity hath no real foundation of truth in fact to depend upon; it hath been upheld by ſuperſtition, ignorance, and impoſture; and hath been viſibly decaying ever ſince the revival of learning and knowlege. And our civil conſtitution, inſtead of being rendered better at the late revolution, hath been ever ſince growing worſe; and our liberties are in more real danger than they were in before. The natural tendency of ſuch repreſentations is to inſpire a thorough contempt and diſregard of the religion into which we were baptized, and to produce endleſs jealouſies and diſcontents, if not open inſurrections, againſt the government under which we live. No man therefore who hath a juſt zeal for either of theſe, can ſee without concern ſuch an inſolent attempt againſt both. And in this caſe, the quality, the ability, the reputation of the writer, as it maketh the attempt more

dangerous,

dangerous, rendereth it more neceſſary to guard againſt it. If an inferior writer had ſaid all that his Lordſhip hath advanced, it would have deſerved very little notice. But there are too many that are ready almoſt implicitly to ſwallow down any thing that cometh to them recommended by a great name; eſpecially if it be advanced with a very peremptory and deciſive air. And if an author's account of himſelf muſt be taken, there perhaps ſcarce ever was a writer whoſe judgment ought to have greater weight, or who better deſerves, that an almoſt implicit regard ſhould be had to his dictates, than the author of theſe Letters.——

He enters upon his firſt Letter with declaring, that the rules he is going to recommend as neceſſary to be obſerved in the ſtudy of hiſtory, were--- "very different from thoſe which writers on the "ſame ſubject have recommended, and which "are commonly practiſed."—But he aſſureth his reader (and I believe him) that—"this "never gave him any diſtruſt of them."—And therefore he propoſeth to tell his ſentiments—— "without any regard to the opinion and practice "even of the learned world *."——He declareth it as his opinion, that—"A creditable kind "of ignorance is the whole benefit, which the "generality of men, even of the moſt learned, "reap from the ſtudy of hiſtory, which yet ap-"pears to him of all other the moſt proper to "train us up to private and public virtue †."—

* Vol. I. p. 1, 2. † Ib. p. 15.

Surely then the world muſt be mightily obliged to an author who comes to give them inſtructions and directions in a matter of ſuch great importance, which the generality of men, even of the moſt learned, were unacquainted with before.

In his Letter on the *true uſe of retirement and ſtudy*, he finely repreſenteth, what —— "a de- "ſirable thing it muſt be to every thinking man, "to have the opportunity indulged to ſo few, "of living ſome years at leaſt to ourſelves in a "ſtate of freedom, under the laws of reaſon, "inſtead of paſſing our whole time under thoſe "of authority and cuſtom."—And asks — "Is "it not worth our while to contemplate our- "ſelves and others, and all the things of this "world, once before we leave them, through the "medium of pure and undefiled reaſon *?"—— "He obſerves, that — "They who can abſtract "themſelves from the prejudices, and habits, "and pleaſures, and buſineſs of the world, "which, he ſays, is what many are, though "all are not, capable of doing, may elevate "their ſouls in retreat to a higher ſtation, and "may take from thence ſuch a view of the "world, as the ſecond *Scipio* took in his dream "from the ſeats of the bleſſed."——That this will enable them to —— "diſtinguiſh every de- "gree of probability, from the loweſt to the "higheſt, and mark the difference between this "and certainty, and to eſtabliſh peace of mind, "where alone it can reſt ſecurely, on reſigna-

* Vol. II. p. 197.

"tion."

" tion *." —— In what follows he ſeems to apply this to his own caſe. He repreſents himſelf as in a ſtate of retirement from the world, abſtracted from its pleaſures, and diſengaged from the habits of buſineſs: though at the ſame time he declareth his reſolution *in his retreat* to contribute as much as he can to *defend and preſerve the* Britiſh *conſtitution of government*; for which he expected his reward from God alone, to whom he *paid this ſervice* †. He goes on to obſerve in the ſame Letter, that —— " he who has not " cultivated his reaſon young, will be utterly " unable to improve it old." —— And that —— " not only a love of ſtudy, and a deſire of " knowlege, muſt have grown up with us, but " ſuch an induſtrious application likewiſe, as " requires the whole vigour of the mind to be " exerted in the purſuit of truth, through long " trains of diſcourſe, and all thoſe dark receſſes, " wherein man, not God, has hid it."——And then he declares, that *this love*, and *this deſire*, he has *felt all his life*, and is *not quite a ſtranger to this induſtry and application* ‡.

His Reflections upon Exile tend alſo to give one an high idea of the author. Speaking of the neceſſity of ſtanding watchful as centinels, to diſcover the ſecret wiles and open attacks of that capricious goddeſs Fortune before they can reach us, he adds,--" I learned this important leſſon long " ago, and never truſted to Fortune, even while

* Vol. II. p. 199. † Ib. p. 201, 202. ‡ Ib. p. 205, 206.

" ſhe ſeemed to be at peace with me. The " riches, the honours, the reputation, and all " the advantages which her treacherous indul- " gence poured upon me, I placed ſo, that ſhe " might ſnatch them away without giving me " any diſturbance. I kept a great interval be- " tween me and them. She took them, but " ſhe could not tear them from me *." He frequently expreſſeth himſelf in thoſe Reflections, as one ſuperior to fortune and exile, and that had attained to a perfect philoſophic calmneſs and tranquillity, whoſe mind was not to be diſcompoſed by any outward evils; as one who was *far from the hurry of the world, and almoſt an unconcerned ſpectator of what paſſes in it*, and who, *having paid in a public life* what he *owed to the preſent age*, was reſolved to *pay in a private life what he owes to poſterity*; and who was determined to *write* as well as *live without paſſion* †. And who would not be inclined to pay a vaſt regard to the ſentiments of a great genius, that had always from his youth loved ſtudy, and deſired knowlege, and to this added induſtry and application; who had an opportunity for retirement from the world, and knew how to improve it; and who had made uſe of his ſolitude to contemplate himſelf and others, and all the things of this world, through the medium of pure and undefiled reaſon!

But there are ſeveral things that tend to take off from that dependence one might otherwiſe

* Vol. II. p. 234. † Ib. p. 282.

be

be apt to have upon an author poſſeſſed of ſo many advantages.

It can ſcarce be denied, that there is a great appearance of vanity in theſe Lettets. A certain air of ſufficiency breathes through the whole. He every-where pronounceth in a dogmatical and deciſive way, and with a kind of dictatorial authority; and ſeemeth to regard himſelf as placed in a diſtinguiſhed ſphere, from whence he looketh down with ſuperiority and contempt upon thoſe that have hitherto paſſed for learned and knowing. To this may be added, what can ſcarce eſcape the notice of the commoneſt reader, a viſible affectation of advancing ſomething new, and which had not been thought of, or inſiſted upon, before. How often doth the polite author of theſe Letters, when giving his directions, and making his obſervations upon the ſtudy and uſe of hiſtory, put his noble correſpondent in mind, that they were quite different from any thing that had been obſerved by thoſe learned men who had treated of this ſubject before him! In this I think him miſtaken. But at preſent I only mention it as a proof of the deſire he was poſſeſſed with of appearing to think in a way different from, and ſuperior to, the reſt of mankind, even of the learned world. Such a deſire and affectation of novelty, and of thinking out of the common way, may lead perſons of great parts aſtray in their inquiries after truth, and hath often done ſo.

But there are other paſſions and affections, that have a ſtill leſs friendly influence, and which are apt to give a wrong bias to the mind. Such is that keenneſs and bitterneſs of ſpirit, which diſpoſeth a man to find fault, and to put the moſt unfavourable conſtructions upon perſons and things. I will not charge the late Lord *Bolingbroke* with having been really under the influence of ſuch a temper; but there are ſeveral things in his Letters which have that appearance. In his Reflections upon Exile he layeth it down as a rule, *to live and write without paſſion*; he talks as if he had got above all outward evils, and had attained to a perfect tranquility. And yet in theſe very Reflections there are ſeveral paſſages that diſcover a very ſtrong reſentment, and great bitterneſs of ſpirit. He there intimates, that — "his country had reaped the benefit of his ſer- "vices, and he ſuffered for them—That the per- "ſons in oppoſition to whom he ſerved, and "even ſaved the public, conſpired and accom- "pliſhed his private ruin: That theſe were his "accuſers, and the giddy ungrateful croud his "judges: That art joined to malice endeavoured "to make his beſt actions paſs for crimes, and "to ſtain his character — That for this purpoſe "the ſacred voice of the Senate was made to "pronounce a lie; and thoſe records, which "ought to be the eternal monuments of truth, "become the vouchers of impoſture and ca- "lumny *." — This is very ſtrongly expreſſed.

* Vol. II. p. 270, 271.

I ſhall

I ſhall not at preſent inquire into the truth and juſtneſs of thoſe Reflections. I ſhall only obſerve, that this is not the language of a man who *lives and writes without paſſion*, or who is ſo *indifferent to common cenſure or approbation*, as he profeſſeth himſelf to be *. Nor is it eaſy to reconcile this with that philoſophic calmneſs, that moderation, and tranquility of mind, which he ſometimes maketh ſo great a ſhew of. There are ſeveral parts of his Letters, as I may have occaſion more diſtinctly to obſerve afterwards, in which he expreſſeth himſelf with all the rage and virulence of a paſſionate party-writer.

It were not ſo much to be wondered at, if he diſcovered a reſentment againſt thoſe whom he might apprehend to be the authors of his ſufferings; but there are ſeveral things that look as if he were out of humour with mankind. Of the Critics, Chronologers, Antiquaries, and of the learned in general, even thoſe of them that have been in the higheſt reputation, he frequently expreſſeth the utmoſt contempt. He inveighs ſeverely againſt the Divines, antient and modern; and repreſents even thoſe of them, who, he ſays, may be called ſo without a ſneer, as not ſagacious or not honeſt enough, to make an impartial examination. The gentlemen of the Law fall under his heavy cenſure; and he will ſcarce allow, that ſince Lord *Bacon*, and the Earl of *Clarendon*, there have been any of them that have attained to any eminent degree of

* Vol. I. p. 6.

learning

learning and knowlege; and he taketh upon him to foretel, that except there ſhould come ſome better age, there will not be any ſuch among them for the future. The Members of Parliament he repreſents as regarding the buſineſs of Parliament only as a trade; that few know, and ſcarce any reſpect, the *Britiſh* conſtitution, and that the very idea of wit, and all that can be called taſte, has been loſt among the Great. Such general cenſures might be expected in a writer that profeſſedly ſets himſelf to diſplay his talents in ſatire and ridicule; but do not look ſo well in one that appeareth in a ſuperior character, and who taketh upon him to inſtruct and guide, to form mens taſte, and direct their conduct, and enable them to paſs right jndgments on perſons and things. Such a temper is not a very good diſpoſition for an impartial inquiry; it is apt to repreſent perſons and things in a diſadvantageous light, and to give a malignant tincture to the Reflections: nor is it very ſurpriſing to ſee a writer of this turn paſs harſh and ſevere cenſures, not only on the adminiſtration, but on the religion, of his country.

All the uſe I would make of theſe obſervations is, to keep us from ſuffering ourſelves to be too ſtrongly biaſſed in favour of a writer ſo diſtinguiſhed by his abilities, and who putteth on ſuch ſpecious appearances.

I ſhall now proceed to a more diſtinct examination of Lord *Bolingbroke*'s Letters.

In

In them we may find, as hath been already hinted, many good and fine obſervations relating to the ſtudy and uſe of hiſtory; delivered with great clearneſs of expreſſion, and propriety of ſentiment. His directions are full of good ſenſe, and many of them very aptly illuſtrated by proper and well-choſen inſtances. In general, it muſt be allowed, that his obſervations concerning the uſefulneſs of hiſtory, the advantages he aſcribes to it, and the ends to be propoſed in it, are, for the moſt part, juſt; but there is not much in them that can be regarded as perfectly new. I do not ſay this by way of diſparagement, to detract from the merit of his Reflections: perhaps on ſuch a ſubject it is ſcarce poſſible to make any obſervation which hath not been made by ſome one or other before. It is a ſufficient commendation of an author, if he hath placed his reflections and obſervations in an agreeable and advantageous light, if he hath diſpoſed them in a beautiful order, and illuſtrated his rules by proper exemplifications. But his Lordſhip ſeems not to be contented with the praiſe of having done this. He appears to be extremely deſirous to have it thought, that his obſervations are not only juſt, but new, and ſuch as other writers have not made before him. He declareth, in a paſſage cited before from his firſt Letter, that the rules he gives——"are very "different from thoſe which writers on the ſame "ſubject have recommended, and which are "commonly

" commonly practiſed *."——And that——" he " will have no regard to the methods preſcribed " by others, or to the opinion and practice even " of the learned world †."——And he ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe in his third letter ‡. And after having declared, that the ſtudy of hiſtory will prepare us for action and obſervation; and that —— " hiſtory is converſant about the paſt; " and by knowing the things that have been, " we become better able to judge of the things " that are,"—he adds,—— " This uſe, my Lord, " which I make the proper and principal uſe of " the ſtudy of hiſtory, is not inſiſted on by thoſe " who have writ concerning the method to be " followed in this ſtudy; and ſince we propoſe " different ends, we muſt of courſe take dif- " ferent ways §."—— He immediately ſubjoins, " —— Few of their treatiſes have fallen into " my hands."—— And is it not a little ſtrange, that he ſhould ſo poſitively pronounce, that others have not, in their treatiſes concerning the method to be followed in the ſtudy of hiſtory, inſiſted on that which he makes the proper and principal uſe of it, when at the ſame time he acknowlegeth, that few of their treatiſes had fallen into his hands? One would think by his way of repreſenting it, that none before this noble writer had mentioned it as the proper uſe and end of hiſtory to promote our improvement in virtue, to make us better men and better

* Vol. I. p. 1. † Ib. p. 2. ‡ Ib. p. 69.
§ Ib. p. 67, 68.

citizens,

citizens, to teach us by example, and to prepare us for action and obſervation, that by knowing the things that have been, we may become better able to judge of the things that are. And yet I am apt to think, that few have ſet themſelves to ſhew the uſe that is to be made of hiſtory, the ends to be propoſed in it, and the advantages ariſing from it, but have in effect ſaid the ſame thing. And it were no hard matter, if it were neceſſary, to fill up ſeveral pages with quotations to this purpoſe, from authors antient and modern.

Hiſtory is, no doubt, capable of being improved to excellent purpoſes: and yet the author of theſe Letters ſeems ſometimes to have carried it too far; as if hiſtory (not ſacred hiſtory; for this, with the examples it affordeth, he diſcards as of little or no uſe) were the beſt, the only ſchool of virtue, the moſt univerſal and neceſſary means of inſtruction, alone ſufficient to make us good men and good citizens, and to furniſh us with all the knowlege that is proper for our direction in practice. He obſerves,——That "hi-"ſtory is philoſophy, teaching us by example, "how to conduct ourſelves in all the ſtations of "private and public life."—— And that —— "it is of all other the moſt proper to train us "up to public and private virtue *."—— He declares, that —— "every one that is able to read, "and to reflect upon what he reads, is able to "make that uſe of hiſtory which he recom-

* Vol. I. p. 15. 57.

mends:

" mends: and every one who makes it, will " find in his degree the benefit that ariſes from " an early acquaintance with mankind, con- " tracted in this method *."—He adds, that —— " we are only paſſengers or ſojourners in this " world; but we are abſolute ſtrangers at the " firſt ſteps we take in it. Our guides are often " ignorant, often unfaithful. But by this map " of the country which hiſtory ſpreads before " us, we may learn, if we pleaſe, to guide our- " ſelves." —— So that hiſtory is the guide he propoſeth to all men to conduct them in their journey through this world, and by which every man is capable of guiding himſelf in all the ſituations and circumſtances of public and private life.

Hiſtory is, no doubt, very uſeful in its proper place; but there are other means of inſtruction to be joined with it in order to its anſwering the end. It is not to ſerve inſtead of every thing, and to ſuperſede all other methods of inſtruction. We ſtand in need of being well-ſeaſoned and principled with a juſt ſenſe of the moral differences of things, and with the excellent rules of religion, and the important conſiderations it ſetteth before us, that we may form juſt ſentiments of things, and may make a right uſe of hiſtory for our improvement in virtue, and may know how properly to apply the examples it furniſheth. Accordingly our author himſelf inſiſteth upon it, that we muſt apply ourſelves to

* Vol. I. p. 171, 172.

hiſtory

hiſtory —— "in a philoſophical ſpirit and man-
"ner *."——He obſerveth, that—— "particular
"examples in hiſtory may be of uſe ſometimes
"in particular caſes, but that the application
"of them is dangerous."——He would have a man therefore ſtudy hiſtory as he would ſtudy philoſophy. And in the account he gives in his third Letter of what is neceſſary in order to make a right uſe of hiſtory, he carrieth it ſo far, and really maketh the work ſo difficult, as to be above what can be expected from the generality of mankind; and concludeth with ſaying, that—
"by ſuch methods as theſe a man of parts may
"improve the ſtudy of hiſtory to its proper and
"principal uſe †."——Where he ſeemeth to repreſent the making a right uſe of hiſtory as a very difficult thing, which none but men of parts and of philoſophic ſpirits are capable of, and which requireth the exacteſt judgment, and niceſt diſcernment, as well as a very cloſe application. In this paſſage the uſe and advantage of hiſtory ſeems to be confined within too narrow bounds, as in ſome of the former it had been extended too far.

As to the method to be followed in the ſtudy of hiſtory, though the author of theſe Letters ſpeaks with great diſregard, and even contempt, of thoſe that have written on this ſubject before him, yet the only one he particularly mentions is *Bodin*. He obſerveth, that—"in his method

* Vol. I. p 58. † Ib. 65, 66.

"we

" we are to take firſt a general view of univer-
" ſal hiſtory and chronology in ſhort abſtracts,
" and then to ſtudy all particular hiſtories and
" ſyſtems." —— Upon which his Lordſhip re-marketh, that —— " This would take up our
" whole lives, and leave us no time for action,
" or would make us unfit for it *." —— And afterwards he obſerves, that —— " the man
" who reads without diſcernment and choice,
" and, like *Bodin's* pupil, reſolves to read all,
" will not have time, nor capacity neither, to do
" any thing elſe †."—But I cannot think it was *Bodin's* intention to lay it as an injunction upon his pupil to read without choice and diſcern-ment all the particular hiſtories that have ever been publiſhed. But the meaning is, that the beſt and moſt regular way of reading and ſtudy-ing hiſtory is, firſt to take a brief general view and ſurvey of univerſal hiſtory and chronology, and then to proceed to the hiſtories of particular countries, nations, and ages. And this appeareth to be a very reaſonable and natural method. And if *Bodin* propoſes the taking a large ſcope and compaſs in reading hiſtory, his Lordſhip, though he ſeems here to blame him for it, ſome-times expreſſeth himſelf in a manner that looks no leſs extenſive: for he recommendeth the read-ing hiſtory of all kinds, of civilized and unci-vilized, of ancient and modern nations, as neceſ-ſary to give us a right knowlege of the human ſpecies, and of ourſelves. He obſerves in his

* Vol. I. p. 69. † Ib. p. 142, 143.

fifth

fifth Letter, that —— " man is the ſubject of " every hiſtory, and to know him well, we muſt " ſee him and conſider him as hiſtory alone can " preſent him to us in every age, in every coun- " try, in every ſtate, in life and in death. " Hiſtory therefore of all kinds, of civilized " and uncivilized, of antient and modern na- " tions, in ſhort, all hiſtory that deſcends to a " ſufficient detail of human actions and charac- " ters, is uſeful to bring us acquainted with our " ſpecies, nay, with ourſelves *."——And particularly, with reſpect to antient hiſtory, he mentioneth it in his ſecond Letter as a great advantage, that——" in antient hiſtory the beginning, " the progreſſion, and the end, appear not of " particular reigns, much leſs of particular enter- " prizes, or ſyſtems of policy alone, but of go- " vernments, of nations, of empires, and of all " the various ſyſtems that have ſucceeded one " another in the courſe of their duration †."— And yet he afterwards ſeems to confine our attention to modern hiſtory. He will allow us indeed to *read* the hiſtories of former ages and nations, becauſe it would be ſhameful to be intirely ignorant of them; but he would not have us *ſtudy* any hiſtories, but thoſe of the two laſt centuries. That theſe deſerve a particular attention, will eaſily be acknowleged for ſeveral reaſons; and, among others, for that which he aſſigns; the great change that has been brought

* Vol. I. p. 170. † Ib. p. 42.

about in the civil and eccleſiaſtical policy of theſe parts of the world ſince the latter end of the fifteenth century; of which he gives an elegant repreſentation in his ſixth Letter. But certainly there are many things in the hiſtories of the preceding ages, both in other countries, and in our own, that well deſerve to be not only read, but to be thoroughly conſidered by us; and which are capable of furniſhing very uſeful reflections, and anſwering thoſe excellent ends, for which, in the former part of theſe Letters, he had recommended the ſtudy of hiſtory. This might eaſily be ſhewn, if it admitted of any doubt, both with regard to civil hiſtory and eccleſiaſtical.

But, not to inſiſt longer upon this, and ſome other obſervations that might be made on particular paſſages in theſe Letters, I ſhall proceed to what is the principal intention of theſe Remarks; *viz.* to conſider thoſe things in them, of which a bad uſe may be made, or which appear to be of a pernicious tendency:

And here firſt conſider the reflections he has caſt upon literature.

And then ſhall proceed to thoſe paſſages in his Letters, which are deſigned to expoſe the holy Scriptures, and the Chriſtian religion.

It may ſeem a little ſurpriſing, that ſo polite a writer, and one who, as he lets us know, always from his youth loved ſtudy and application, ſhould yet, in ſeveral parts of theſe Letters, expreſs himſelf

himſelf in a manner that ſeems calculated to throw a contempt upon learning, and to put men off from applying themſelves to the purſuit of it. Every friend of learning ſhould, I think, acknowlege, that there is a regard due to thoſe that in their ſeveral ways have contributed to promote it. But this ingenious writer takes every occaſion to place them in a ridiculous or contemptible light. In his firſt Letter, he gives a very diſadvantageous idea of thoſe who, as he expreſſeth it, —— " make fair copies of foul ma- " nuſcripts, give the ſignification of hard words, " and take a great deal of other grammatical " pains." —— He owns indeed, that *they enable others to ſtudy with greater eaſe, and to purpoſes more uſeful;* but he aſſures us, that *they neither grow wiſer nor better by ſtudy themſelves.* He adds, that —— " the obligation to theſe men " would be great indeed, if they were in gene- " ral able to do any thing better, and ſubmitted " to this drudgery for the uſe of the public, as " ſome of them, it muſt be own'd with grati- " tude, have done; but not later, I think, than " about the time of the reſurrection of letters."-- And he at length condeſcendeth to declare, that " they deſerve encouragement, whilſt they con- " tinue to compile, and neither affect wit, nor " preſume to reaſon *." This is a very hard cenſure pronounced upon all thoſe, without diſtinction, that ſince the time of the reſurrection

* Vol. I. p. 5, 6.

of letters, *i. e.* for theſe two centuries paſt, have compiled dictionaries or gloſſaries, or have reviſed and publiſhed antient manuſcripts, or correct editions of books; or who have been employed in explaining hard words, and in clearing obſcure paſſages in antient authors, or making critical obſervations upon them, and in other things of that kind. Not content to repreſent them as abſolutely void of genius, and having no pretenſions to wit or reaſon, and as neither wiſer nor better for their ſtudies themſelves, he will not allow, that any of them had the public good in view in the drudgery they ſubmitted to. But I ſcarce know a greater ſign of a malignity of temper, than a diſpoſition to give the worſt turn to every thing, and to judge harſhly of the inward intentions of mens hearts, when there is nothing in their actions to ſupport ſuch a judgment. It were eaſy to name perſons, that within theſe two laſt centuries, have employed themſelves in the way he mentions, who were unqueſtionably men of great judgment and genius, as well as induſtry: or, at leaſt, a ſmall ſhare of good-nature and candour would incline one to allow them the praiſe of having had the public utility in view in works, which, by his own acknowlegement, have greatly ſerved the intereſts of learning, and contributed to the ſpreading of it.

But how meanly ſoever he thinks of the grammarians, critics, compilers of dictionaries, and reviſers and publiſhers of manuſcripts, he maketh a ſtill

a ſtill more diſadvantageous repreſentation of antiquaries and chronologers. Speaking of perſons that have hitherto been regarded as of great figure and eminence in the republic of letters, he avoweth —— "a thorough contempt for the "whole buſineſs of their learned lives; for all "the reſearches into antiquity, for all the ſy"ſtems of chronology and hiſtory, that we owe "to the immenſe labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Bo*"*chart*, a *Petavius*, an *Uſher*, and even a *Mar*"*ſham* *." —— It ſeems very odd, for one that ſpeaks ſo highly of the advantage of hiſtory, to expreſs ſuch a contempt for the labours of chronologers, which certainly are of great uſe for digeſting hiſtory into its proper periods, in order to a regular and orderly conception and underſtanding of it. In a paſſage cited above, he mentioneth it among the advantages of hiſtory, eſpecially antient hiſtory, that we there ſee events as they followed one another;—"that there the begin"ning, the progeſſion, and the end, appear not of "particular reigns, much leſs of particular enter"prizes or ſyſtems of policy alone, but of go"vernments, of nations, of empires, and of all "the various ſyſtems that have ſucceeded one "another in the courſe of their duration." —— This ſeems to ſhew the advantage, and even neceſſity, of chronology; and, with regard to this, the labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Petavius*, and *Uſher*, are highly uſeful and commendable. To endea-

* Vol. I. p. 6.

vour to digeſt the hiſtory of mankind, and of the principal events that have happened in the world, in a regular ſeries, to mark the riſe and fall of cities and empires, to compare and connect the hiſtories of different countries and nations, ſacred hiſtory and profane; and, in order to this, to lay together the ſcattered hints and fragments of different ages, is, notwithſtanding his degrading repreſentation of it, a noble employment, an employment that even a Sir *Iſaac Newton* judged not to be unworthy of his great genius. One would be apt to think, that every impartial perſon, who hath a juſt value for learning, muſt have a great honour for thoſe that have taken pains to ſet theſe things in a proper light: and where abſolute certainty cannot be attained to, an happy conjecture may be both pleaſing and uſeful.

In his third Letter, he findeth great fault with thoſe that make laborious inquiries into the firſt originals of nations. And in his fifth Letter, he warneth the noble Lord to whom he writes, to *throw none of his time away*, as he ſaith he himſelf had done, in *groping in the dark in his ſearches into antiquity* *. He ſpeaks with contempt of what he calls *dry regiſters of uſeleſs anecdotes*; and declares, that —— " ten millions of ſuch " anecdotes, though they were true; and com- " plete authentic volumes of *Egyptian* or *Chal- " dean*, of *Greek* or *Latin*, of *Gallic* or *Britiſh*, " of *French* or *Saxon* records; would be of no " value in his ſenſe, becauſe of no uſe towards

* Vol. I. p. 149.

" our

" our improvement in wiſdom and virtue; if " they contained nothing more than dynaſties " and genealogies, and a bare mention of remark- " able events in the order of time, like jour- " nals, chronological tables, or dry and meagre " annals *." —— But whatever opinion I may have of his Lordſhip's taſte, I cannot help thinking, that in this he is too rigid. It ſeems to be a very natural and unblameable curioſity, to ſearch as far as we can into the receſſes of antiquity, and the originals of nations; and there is a pleaſure even in thoſe glimmerings of light that break through the obſcurity, provided we do not repreſent thoſe things as certainties, which are only conjectural. And I believe there are few but would be apt to wiſh, that there were —— " au- " thentic volumes of *Egyptian* or *Chaldean*, " *Greek* or *Latin*, *Gallic* or *Britiſh* records," —— even though they were only like what he calls —— " dry and meagre annals," —— or, as he elſewhere ſpeaks, —— " the gazettes of anti- " quity;"—and contained dynaſties and genealogies, with a mention of remarkable events that happened to thoſe nations in the order of time, like journals, or chronological tables. And if any learned man could diſcover ſuch antient authentic records or monuments, few, I ſhould think, would blame him, or think him idly employed in publiſhing them to the world.

It looks a little odd, that there is no kind of men for whom, throughout theſe Letters, he

* Vol. I. p. 150.

ſheweth a leſs regard than for thoſe that are generally accounted men of learning. Speaking of thoſe who — " affect the reputation of great " ſcholars, at the expence of groping all their " lives in the dark mazes of antiquity," — he ſays, that — " all theſe miſtake the true " deſign of ſtudy, and the true uſe of hiſtory." — Great as the advantages are that he aſcribeth to hiſtory, and which he thinks every man is capable of that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, yet — " a creditable kind " of ignorance is, in his opinion, the whole be- " nefit which the generality even of the moſt " learned reap from it."—And he intimates, that that the only effect of their reading and ſtudying hiſtory is, to become pedants, *i. e.* as he explaineth it,—" worſe than ignorant, always incapa- " ble, ſometimes meddling and preſuming *."— And elſewhere he repreſenteth the credulous learned as only employed — " in wrangling " about antient traditions, and ringing different " changes on the ſame ſet of bells †."

To all which may be added, what he ſaith, in his Letter on the true uſe of retirement and ſtudy, concerning — " the ſcholar and philoſopher, " who, far from owning that he throws away " his time, reproves others for doing it; that ſo- " lemn mortal who abſtains from the pleaſures " and declines the buſineſs of the world, that he " may dedicate his whole time to the ſearch

* Vol. I. p. 14, 15. 21 † Ib. p. 169.

" of

" of truth, and the improvement of know-
" lege."——He ſuppoſes him to have read——
" till he is become a great critic in *Latin* and
" *Greek*, in the Oriental tongues, in hiſtory and
" chronology; and not only ſo, but to have
" ſpent years in ſtudying philoſophers, commen-
" tators, rabbies, and whole legions of modern
" doctors, and to be extremely well verſed in all
" that has been written concerning the nature of
" God, and of the ſoul of man, about matter and
" form, body, and ſpirit, *&c.* *"——And yet he pronounceth, that, notwithſtanding all his learning, he is in a ſtate of ignorance, for want of having——" examined the firſt principles, and the " fundamental facts, on which theſe queſtions " depend, with an abſolute indifference of judg-
" ment, and ſcrupulous exactneſs †."——This he ſuppoſeth to be the caſe of——" many a " great ſcholar, many a profound philoſopher, " many a dogmatical caſuiſt."——Yea, and, as appeareth from other paſſages in his Letters, of every learned man, of every philoſopher and divine whatſoever, that believeth Chriſtianity. On the other hand, he declareth concerning——" the " man who hath paſſed his life in the pleaſures " or buſineſs of the world,"——that whenever he ſets about the work of examining principles, and judging for himſelf——" concerning thoſe " things that are of greateſt importance to us " here, and may be ſo hereafter, he will ſoon

* Vol. II. p. 211, 212. † Ib. p. 213, 114.

" have

" have the advantage over the learned philoſo-
" pher. For he will ſoon have ſecured what is
" neceſſary to his happineſs, and may ſit down
" in the peaceful enjoyment of that knowlege;
" or proceed with greater advantage and ſatiſ-
" faction to the acquiſition of new knowlege;
" whilſt the other continues his ſearch after
" things that are in their nature, to ſay the beſt
" of them, hypothetical, precarious, and ſu-
" perfluous *."

The natural tendency of theſe, and other reflections of a like kind, which occur in theſe Letters, ſeems to be to pour contempt upon what have been hitherto eſteemed valuable branches of literature. Reſearches into antiquity, chronological ſtudies, criticiſm and philoſophy, diſquiſitions concerning the nature of God, the human ſoul, and other philoſophical and theological ſubjects, all theſe are repreſented as of little or no uſe; and only a more ſpecious kind of idleneſs. And if this be the caſe, I think it is wrong to complain of the *Goths*, *Vandals*, *Saracens*, and other barbarous nations, that burnt whole libraries, and deſtroyed the monuments of learning. They rid the world of a great deal of uſeleſs lumber, which tempted men to miſ-ſpend their time and pains; and it would have been an advantage to mankind, if more of them had been deſtroyed: inſtead of being thankful to thoſe learned perſons that have taken ſuch pains to recover and publiſh antient monuments, we are

* Vol. II. p. 216, 217.

only

only to regard them as induſtrious triflers, to whoſe labours the world is very little obliged. Nor can I ſee, upon ſuch a view of things, what uſe or need there is of ſeminaries of learning. But, in good earneſt, can this be regarded as a proper way to mend our taſte, and help forward our improvement? Such a way of thinking, if it generally obtained, would, it is to be feared, inſtead of producing an extraordinary refinement of taſte, tend rather to ſink us into ignorance and barbariſm, and bring us back to the darkneſs of the moſt illiterate ages.

Taken in this view, I cannot think, that theſe Letters have a favourable aſpect on the intereſts of literature. Methinks there appeareth to be no great neceſſity at preſent of warning perſons not to ſpend their lives in laborious purſuits of learning. The prevailing turn of the age doth not ſeem to lie this way. Many of our gentlemen will no doubt be very well pleaſed to be aſſured, that though they paſs their lives in the buſineſs or pleaſures of the world, yet if they at length ſet themſelves to examine firſt principles, and conſult the oracle of their own reaſon, without any regard to the opinion of others, or troubling themſelves to read the writings of philoſophers or divines, they are in a more likely way of diſcovering truth, and making a progreſs in uſeful knowlege, than any of thoſe —— "ſo-"lemn mortals, who abſtain from the plea-"ſures and decline the buſineſs of the world, "that they may dedicate their whole time to

"the

" the ſearch of truth, and the improvement of " knowlege."——This is certainly a very flattering ſcheme, and ſeems to open a very ſhort and eaſy way for attaining to wiſdom. When they find a man of his Lordſhip's fine and elegant taſte, and great talents, and who by his own account hath ſpent ſo much time and pains in learned inquiries, pronouncing them abſolutely vain and uſeleſs; they will be very apt to take his word for it, and not give themſelves the trouble of laborious ſtudy; the reſult of which might be only filling their heads with what he calleth *learned lumber*, and expoſing them to the ridiculous character of *pedants*, i. e. as he deſcribeth them, —— " men worſe than ignorant, always " incapable, ſometimes meddling and preſum- " ing."——Inſtead of ſuch learned drudgery, the more eaſy and delightful task of ſtudying modern hiſtory, may be ſufficient to furniſh them with all the knowlege they want, and anſwer every end of uſeful improvement.

But ſurely ſuch a manner of repreſenting things is not altogether juſt, nor is this the moſt effectual way of promoting real improvement in wiſdom and virtue. Great is the extent, and wide the field, of ſcience. Many noble ſubjects there are of inquiry, which well deſerve our attention. The deſire of knowlege is the ſtrongeſt in the nobleſt minds; but comparatively ſmall is the progreſs that a man is capable of making by his own unaſſiſted ability, within the ſhort compaſs of this preſent life: and therefore, be his

abilities never ſo great, he will need the aſſiſtance of others, and ought to be very thankful for it. Many excellent perſons in different ages have employed their pains this way; and a mighty advantage that man hath, who has the opportunity, and knows how to improve it, of profiting by their labours. He may, by reading, vaſtly increaſe his ſtock of knowlege, may meet with many valuable hints, which elſe would not have occurred to him, and may find important ſubjects ſet in a clearer light than otherwiſe he would have ſeen them. The Author of our beings, who hath implanted in us the deſire of knowlege, and fitted us for communicating our ſentiments, undoubtedly deſigned, that, in acquiring knowlege, as well as in other things, we ſhould be helpful to one another, and not depend merely upon ourſelves. And this is the great advantage of language, and of letters. We muſt indeed make uſe of our own reaſon, but we ought alſo to take in all the helps and advantages we can get: and he that is careful to improve thoſe helps which are afforded him, and who, without ſubmitting implicitly to the judgments and opinions of others, endeavours to make the beſt uſe he can of their labours and ſtudies, as well as of his own thoughts, is in a far more likely way of improving his knowlege, and will better approve himſelf to God, and to all wiſe men, than he that, from a vain confidence in his own judgment, deſpiſeth and rejecteth thoſe helps,

and,

and, under pretence of conſulting the oracle of reaſon in his own breaſt (for, as his Lordſhip expreſſeth it, —— " every man's reaſon is every " man's oracle,") —— will not give himſelf the trouble to read and to examine what others have ſaid and thought before him. Such an high conceit of a man's own capacity and judgment, ſuch an arrogant ſelf-ſufficiency, and a contempt of the labours and judgments of others, is not a very proper diſpoſition for finding out truth. A man of this character was *Epicurus*, who boaſted that his knowlege was all of his own acquiring, and ſcorned to ſeem to be beholden to any other for his notions.

Having conſidered thoſe parts of the late Lord *Bolingbroke*'s Letters that ſeem not very favourable to the intereſts of literature, I ſhall now proceed to what is the principal deſign of theſe Remarks, to examine the reflections he has caſt upon the ſacred monuments of our religion. He firſt attacks the hiſtory of the Bible, eſpecially as contained in the books of the Old Teſtament; and then proceeds to a more direct attempt upon Chriſtianity. And this appears not to be a thing he treats of merely by-the-bye, but to be a point he has formally in view, and for which he profeſſes a kind of zeal. I ſhall therefore conſider diſtinctly what he hath offered.

In his third Letter on the ſtudy of hiſtory, he ſetteth himſelf to conſider the ſtate of antient hiſtory, both ſacred and profane: and begins with

with declaring his reſolution —— " to ſpeak " plainly and particularly in favour of common " ſenſe, againſt an abſurdity which is almoſt " ſanctified *."—— After having made ſome obſervations on the ſtate of antient profane hiſtory, and ſhewn, that it is full of fables, and altogether uncertain; he next comes to apply theſe obſervations to antient ſacred hiſtory †. What he ſeems at firſt to propoſe, is, to ſhew, that it is —— " inſufficient to give us light into the " original of antient nations, and the hiſtory of " thoſe ages we commonly call the firſt ages." —— But it is evident, that, under pretence of ſhewing this, his intention is, to repreſent the whole hiſtory of the Bible as abſolutely uncertain, and not at all to be depended upon for a juſt account of facts. He not only denieth, that the writers of the hiſtorical parts of the Old Teſtament were divinely inſpired, but he will not allow them the credit that is due to any common honeſt hiſtorians. He repreſents thoſe hiſtories as —— " delivered to us on the faith of a " ſuperſtitious people, among whom the cuſtom " and art of lying prevailed remarkably ‡."—— And obſerves, that —" the *Jewiſh* hiſtory never " obtained any credit in the world, till Chriſti- " anity was eſtabliſhed §." He ſometimes expreſſeth himſelf, as if he were willing to allow the divine inſpiration of the doctrinal and pro-

* Vol. I. p. 70. † Ib. p. 83. et ſeq. ‡ Ib. p. 87. § Ib. p. 91.

phetical

phetical parts of the Bible, and were only for rejecting the hiſtorical. And this he pretends to be the beſt way to defend the authority of the Scriptures *. But it is evident, that this is only a ſneer. For he was, no doubt, ſenſible, that the ſacred hiſtory is ſo interwoven with the prophecies and laws, that if the former is to be regarded as lying fiction, and not at all to be depended upon, the divine authority of the other cannot be ſupported. And what he afterwards repeatedly affirmeth of Chriſtianity, that the credit of its divine inſtitution dependeth upon facts, holdeth equally concerning the Old Teſtament œconomy.

After having done what he can, in his third Letter, to ſhew the uncertainty of antient ſacred as well as profane hiſtory, he begins his fourth with obſerving, that as——" we are apt naturally " to apply to ourſelves what has happened to " other men; and as examples take their force " from hence; ſo what we do not believe to " have happened we ſhall not thus apply; and, " for want of the ſame application, the examples " will not have the ſame effect."——And then he adds——"Antient hiſtory, ſuch antient hiſtory " as I have deſcribed," ——[in which antient ſacred hiſtory is manifeſtly comprehended]—— " is quite unfit in this reſpect to anſwer the ends " that every reaſonable man ſhould promiſe to " himſelf in this ſtudy; becauſe ſuch antient

* Vol. I. p. 93. 98, 99.

" hiſtory

" hiſtory will never gain ſufficient credit with " any reaſonable man *." —— And afterwards ſpeaking of antient fabulous narrations, he declares, that —— " ſuch narrations cannot make " the ſlighteſt momentary impreſſions on a mind " fraught with knowlege and void of ſuper- " ſtition. Impoſed by authority, and aſſiſted " by artifice, the deluſion hardly prevails over " common ſenſe; blind ignorance almoſt ſees, " and raſh ſuperſtition heſitates: nothing leſs " than enthuſiaſm and phrenſy can give credit " to ſuch hiſtories, or apply ſuch examples."—— He thinks, that what he has ſaid will —— " not " be much controverted by any man that has " examined our antient traditions without pre- " poſſeſſion :"—— and that all the difference between them, and *Amadis* of *Gaul*, is this, that —— " In *Amadis* of *Gaul* we have a thread of " abſurdities that lay no claim to belief; but " antient traditions are an heap of fables, under " which ſome particular truths inſcrutable, and " therefore uſeleſs to mankind, may lie con- " cealed, which have a juſt pretence to nothing " more,"——[*i. e.* to no more credit than *Amadis* of *Gaul*] —— " and yet impoſe themſelves upon " us, and become, under the venerable name of " antient hiſtory, the foundation of modern " fables †." He doth not directly apply this to the Scriptures. But no one can doubt that this was his intention. It is too evident, that theſe

* Vol. I. p. 118. † Ib. p. 120, 121.

are deſigned to be included in what he calleth —"our antient traditions"—(a word which he had applied ſeveral times before to the ſacred records); and which he repreſenteth as "impoſed by authority, and aſſiſted by artifice." —And I think it is ſcarce poſſible to expreſs a greater contempt of any writing, than he here doth of the hiſtory of the Bible, and the examples it affords.

RE-

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The Hiſtory and Scriptures of the Old Teſtament *vindicated againſt his Lordſhip's Exceptions.*

HAVING given this general view of the author's deſign, I ſhall now proceed to a more diſtinct and particular examination of the principal things he hath offered to invalidate the authority of the Old Teſtament Hiſtory. What he ſaith of Chriſtianity ſhall be conſidered afterwards.

I need not take much notice of what he hath urged to ſhew, that the writers of the Sacred Books did not intend an univerſal hiſtory, or ſyſtem of chronology *. I know nobody that ſuppoſes they did; ſo that he might have ſpared that part of his pains. But notwithſtanding the Bible was not deſigned for an univerſal hiſtory, or to exhibit a complete ſyſtem of chronology, though it may ſafely be affirmed, that no one book in the world gives ſo great helps this way, it is ſufficient if it gives us a true hiſtory as far as it goes, and which may be ſafely depended upon. This is what our author will not allow. It is manifeſt, that he placeth it in the ſame rank with the moſt fabulous accounts of antient times. This then is the point we are to conſider. Let us therefore examine what proofs or arguments he hath brought againſt the truth and credit of the ſacred hiſtory.

Some of the things offered by him to this purpoſe have ſcarce ſo much as the appearance of argument. Of this kind is what he ſaith concerning the uſe that has been made by *Jewiſh* Rabbies, and Chriſtian Fathers, and *Mahometan* Doctors, of the ſhort and imperfect accounts given by *Moſes* of the times from the creation to the deluge. Let us grant, that the fables they have feigned concerning *Adam* and *Eve*, *Cain* and *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, and his ſons, *&c.* are ſuch as——"*Bonzes* or *Talapoins* would almoſt "bluſh to relate;"——I do not ſee how this can

* Vol. I. p. 202, et ſeq.

be

be reaſonably turned to the diſadvantage of the books of *Moſes*, or hurt the credit of them; ſince his Lordſhip owns, that theſe fables are— "profane extenſions of this part of the *Moſaic* "hiſtory."——And that hiſtory is certainly no-way anſwerable for the additions which have been made to it. It would have been eaſy for *Moſes*, if he had been a fabulous writer, to have filled up this part of his hiſtory with marvelous relations, and to have embelliſhed it with ſuch fictions concerning our firſt parents, and the moſt antient patriarchs, as our author here referreth to: and his not having done ſo is a ſtrong preſumption in his favour, that he did not give way to fancy or invention, but writ down the facts as they came to him, with an unaffected ſimplicity. His accounts are ſhort, becauſe he kept cloſe to truth, and took care to record no more of thoſe times than he had good information of, or than was neceſſary to the deſign he had in view; which ſeems principally to have been to give a brief account of the creation, the formation of the firſt human pair, the placing them in Paradiſe, the fall, and the flood, which were the moſt remarkable events of that period; and to continue the line from *Adam* by *Seth* to *Noah*, as afterwards he does from him to *Abraham*.

What his Lordſhip obſerves concerning the blunders of the *Jewiſh* chronologers *, is not

* Vol. I. p. 104.

much more to his purpoſe, except he could prove, that thoſe blunders are chargeable upon the Scriptures; which is ſo far from being true, that, if accurately examined, arguments may be brought from thoſe very Scriptures to confute the blunders he mentions.

As to the differences he takes notice of * between the Scripture-accounts of the *Aſſyrian* empire, and thoſe given by profane authors, *i. e.* by *Cteſias*, and them that copy from him, very able chronologers have endeavoured to ſhew, that thoſe accounts may be reconciled. But if not, it would only follow, that the Scripture-hiſtory differeth from *Cteſias*, who, in his Lordſhiy's own judgment, and by the acknowlegement of the moſt judicious among the *Greeks* themſelves, was a very fabulous writer †; and how this can be fairly thought to derogate from the credit and authority of the Sacred Hiſtory, I cannot ſee.

But to come to thoſe things on which he ſeems to lay a greater ſtreſs. The ſum of what he hath offered to deſtroy the truth and credit of the Sacred Writings amounteth to this, —— "That the *Jews*, upon whoſe faith they are "delivered to us, were a people unknown to "the *Greeks*, till the time of *Alexander the* "*Great*.——That they had been ſlaves to the "*Egyptians*, *Aſſyrians*, *Medes*, and *Perſians*, as "theſe ſeveral empires prevailed.—That a great "part of them had been carried captive, and loſt

* Vol. I. p. 114, 115. † Ib. p. 76. 80.

"in

they were for a long time unknown to the Greeks, *or deſpiſed by them.* 217, 218

The Heathen writers generally took up with idle reports againſt the Jews, *without making a due enquiry.* 219

The advantageons teſtimony given by Strabo *concerning* Moſes *and the* Jewiſh *nation.* 219. *marg. note.*

The excellent nature and tendency of the Jewiſh *Scriptures, ſhews they were not fictions of a ſuperſtitious and lying people.* 222, et ſeq.

There are peculiar characters of ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, in the ſacred hiſtory. 225, 226

The Scriptures were not forged or corrupted by the latter Jews, 227, 228. *Nor by* Ezra, *and the compilers of the ſacred canon, upon their return from the* Babyloniſh *captivity.* 228, et ſeq.

The Hebrew *language was not intirely forgotten in the captivity, but continued in uſe after it.* 229

The Jewiſh *ſacred books not loſt in the captivity.* 231, et ſeq.

The people were in poſſeſſion of thoſe books, and had a great veneration for them before Ezra *was ſent to* Jeruſalem. 233, 234, 235

The eſtabliſhing of the ſacred canon by Ezra, *and the men of the great ſynagogue, how to be underſtood.* 236, 237

Ezra *did not give authority to the law of* Moſes, *nor firſt publiſh the facts by which that law was atteſted.* 238

Thoſe facts were of a very public nature, and could not have been impoſed upon the people, if they had not been true—and were in all ages received and acknowleged by the whole nation. 239, 240

No parallel between the Helleniſtical fables and the ſacred records. 242

The accidents to which the Scriptures were liable from errors of tranſcribers, &c. *no argument againſt their truth or divine authority.* 243, &c.
The variations of the copies in ſmaller inſtances confirm their harmony in the main. 245
The objections drawn from the differences between Jews *and Chriſtians examined.* 248
They are generally agreed in what relates to the divine authority of the Jewiſh *Scriptures.* 250, 251
The curſe pronounced by Noah *upon* Canaan *largely conſidered, and ſhewn to be no juſt objection againſt the authority of the* Moſaic *writings.* 252

SECTION II.

The Scriptures and Hiſtory of the *New Teſtament* vindicated againſt his Lordſhip's exceptions.

The frauds and falſhoods of profeſſed Chriſtians no juſt prejudice againſt the authority of the ſacred books of the New Teſtament, *or the credibility of the facts recorded there.* 270
No encouragement given to ſuch frauds in the New Teſtament, *nor have any perſons taken more pains to detect thoſe frauds than Chriſtian divines and critics.* 271, 272
The pretence that the Church deſtroyed the Heathen writings, eſpecially thoſe that were written againſt Chriſtianity, examined. 272, 273
Lord Bolingbroke *charges Chriſtians, even the moſt learned, as not having honeſty or ſagacity enough, to take an accurate examination of the* Jewiſh *and Chriſtian ſyſtem.* 275
He allegeth, that Chriſtianity is wholly founded upon facts, and that thoſe facts have not been proved, as all

" in the Eaſt: and the remainder were carried
" captive to *Babylon*, where they forgot their
" country, and even their language——And
" he intimates, that there alſo they loſt their
" antient ſacred books: that they were a ſu-
" perſtitious people, among whom the cuſtom
" and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably—
" That the original of the Scriptures was com-
" piled in their own country, and, as it were,
" out of the ſight of the reſt of the world——
" That the *Jewiſh* hiſtory never obtained any
" credit till Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed; but
" though both *Jews* and Chriſtians hold the
" ſame books in great veneration, yet each con-
" demns the other for not underſtanding, or for
" abuſing them——That the accidents which
" have happened to alter the text of the Bible
" ſhew, that it could not have been originally
" given by divine inſpiration; and that they
" are come down to us broken and confuſed,
" full of additions, interpolations, and tranſpo-
" ſitions——That they are nothing more than
" compilations of old traditions, and abridg-
" ments of old records made in later times——
" and that *Jews* and Chriſtians differ among
" themſelves concerning almoſt every point that
" is neceſſary to eſtabliſh the authority of thoſe
" books. He concludes with ſome obſervations
" on the curſe ſaid to be pronounced by *Noah*
" upon *Canaan*, which he would have paſs for
" an abſurd fiction of the writer of the book
" of *Geneſis*; and he ſeemeth to have ſingled

" out this as one of the propereſt inſtances he " could find for expoſing the Scripture."——

Let us conſider theſe things diſtinctly.

It is no juſt prejudice againſt the credit of the Scripture-hiſtory, that the *Jews*, among whom thoſe writings were preſerved, and whoſe affairs are there recorded, were, as appeareth from thoſe writings—— " Slaves to the *Egyptians*, " *Aſſyrians*, *Medes*, and *Perſians*, as theſe ſeve- " ral empires prevailed *."——It rather furniſheth a proof of the truth and impartiality of thoſe records, that they give an undiſguiſed account, not only of the flouriſhing times of their ſtate; for there were times in which they were flouriſhing, free, and independent; but of their diſgraces, defeats, captivities, and all the calamities that befel them, which, according to theſe accounts, were in a way of juſt puniſhment for their national iniquities, their diſobedience and ingratitude. Yet under all theſe various revolutions their nation was never intirely loſt, nor incorporated with their conquerors. Though many of them revolted, ſtill there was a number of them that with an unalterable zeal and conſtancy adhered to their antient religion and laws, which they regarded as of a divine original: a religion remarkably diſtinct from that of the nations to which they were ſubjected, and, on the account of which, they were frequently expoſed to hatred, perſecution, and reproach.

* Vol. I. p. 84.

If the *Jews* were unknown to the *Greeks* before *Alexander* the Great, this affordeth not the leaſt probable preſumption, that their antient hiſtory is not to be depended upon. The *Greeks*, by this author's own acknowlegement, did not begin to write hiſtory till very late. The knowlege they had of other nations was very narrow and confined. And, particularly, they were in a great meaſure ſtrangers to the languages, laws, cuſtoms, and hiſtory, of the eaſtern nations. He himſelf obſerves, that after the times of *Alexander* the Great, and even long after the *Jewiſh* Scriptures were tranſlated into *Greek*, the *Jews*, and their hiſtory, were neglected by them, and continued to be almoſt as much unknown as before*. And yet certain it is, that the *Jews* were then a conſiderable people, and that the *Greeks* had many opportunities of being acquainted wirh them. Let us grant what he inſinuates, that this was owing, not to want of curioſity in the *Greeks*, ſince—— "they were, as "he obſerves, inquiſitive to the higheſt degree, "and publiſhed as many idle traditions of other "nations as of their own†" —— but to the contempt they had for the *Jews*. What can be inferred from thence? Doth it follow, that the *Jewiſh* Scriptures are not authentic, nor their hiſtories to be credited, becauſe the *Greeks* neglected or deſpiſed them, and did not own their authority? This is eaſily accounted for by any

* Vol. I. p. 90. † Ibid. p. 88.

one

one that conſiders the nature of the *Jewiſh* inſtitutions. It is not to be wondered at, that a people ſo exceſſively vain as the *Greeks*, and who looked upon the reſt of the world as *Barbarians*, ſhould conceive an averſion or contempt for a nation whoſe laws and religion were ſo different from their own, among whom all image-worſhip was moſt expreſly prohibited, and no adoration was paid to inferior deities, in which the religion of the *Greeks*, and of which they were extremely fond, principally conſiſted. If the *Jewiſh* ſacred books had contained ſtrange ſtories of the exploits of their gods, of their genealogies, battles, and amours, or traditions that tended to ſupport a ſyſtem of idolatry, the *Greeks* undoubtedly would have been ready enough to tranſcribe theſe things into their writings: theſe fables would have been ſuited to their taſte. But it cannot be ſuppoſed, that they ſhould pay any regard to the accounts given of extraordinary miraculous facts, that were deſigned to eſtabliſh and give ſanction to a conſtitution, the manifeſt tendency of which was to condemn and ſubvert that idolatrous worſhip, to which they were ſo exceſſively addicted.

Among all the heathen nations none expreſſed a greater enmity to the *Jews* than the *Egyptians*, who were themſelves of all people the moſt ſtupidly idolatrous. One of their writers, *Apion* of *Alexandria*, is particularly mentioned by our author as having——" ſpoken of the *Jews* in a " manner neither much to their honour; nor to

" that

all other facts which paſs for authentic, ought to be proved. 275. 277, 278

All the conditions requiſite to render the accounts of any paſt facts credible, concur in relation to the important facts on which Chriſtianity is founded. 279

Thoſe facts were done in the moſt open and public manner. 279, 280

The accounts of them were publiſhed in the age when the age when the facts were done. 280

And by perſons perfectly acquainted with thoſe facts, 281.—*and who were of great probity and ſimplicity, and diſcover an impartial regard to truth.* ibid.

They had no temptation to diſguiſe or falſify the facts— but bore witneſs to them in oppoſition to their worldly intereſts, and rooted prejudices; and though they were thereby expoſed to the moſt grievous ſufferings. 282, 283

The writings themſelves have all the characters af genuine purity and ſimplicity, and uncorrupted integrety;— and have been tranſmitted to us with an unqueſtionable evidence, greater than can be produced for any other writings in the world. 283

What farther confirms the truth of the facts, is the converſion of vaſt numbers of both Jews *and Gentiles, who were brought by the evidence of thoſe facts to embrace the religion of Jeſus.* 285

If thoſe facts had not been true, that religion muſt have ſunk in the beginning, conſidering the circumſtances under which it made its firſt appearance in the world, and the difficulties it had to encounter with. 286

What his Lordſhip offereth to ſhew, that there is no proof that the Goſpels were written in the firſt age of Chriſtianity, examined. 290

The apoſtolical fathers all along ſuppoſe the facts recorded in the Goſpels to be of undoubted truth, and have frequent references to paſſages found in the Goſpels. — This ſhewn particularly concerning Barnabas, Clement, Ignatius, *and* Polycarp. 291, 292

The Goſpels we have now in our hands were certainly extant in the apoſtolic age, and regarded as authentic — And in the beginning of the ſecond century were univerſally ſpread, and read in the public aſſemblies of Chriſtians. 294, 295

The four Goſpels, and theſe only, were generally received as of divine authority in the Chriſtian Church, in the ages neareſt the apoſtles, and have continued to be acknowleged ever ſince. 297

The enemies of Chriſtianity, whether Jews *or Heathens, who lived neareſt thoſe times, never pretended to deny that they were written by Chriſt's own diſciples and attendants.* 297. 299

The books themſelves have all the marks and characters of the apoſtolic age, and which plainly point to the time in which they were written, and not one mark of a later date. 299, et ſeq.

The pretence, that there had been hiſtorical evidence againſt Chriſtianity, but that it was afterwards ſuppreſſed, ſhewn to be vain and groundleſs. 304, et ſeq.

The objection, that the facts on which Chriſtianity is founded, are only atteſted by Chriſtians, examined. 307, &c.

We have the teſtimony of adverſaries concerning thoſe facts, as far as could be expected from adverſaries. 308, et ſeq.

The Chriſtians that atteſt the facts whereby the Goſpel was eſtabliſhed, were ſuch as were themſelves converted to Chriſtianity upon the evidence of thoſe facts,

" that of their hiſtories."——This ſeems to have recommended him to his lordſhip's favour; for he ſpeaks of him as a man——" of much eru-" dition, and as having paſſed for a curious, a " laborious, and learned antiquary"——though he owns, that he paſſed alſo——" for a vain and " noiſy pedant *."——But if we may judge of him by the fragments of his work, which *Joſephus* has given us, he was, with regard to the *Jews*, an ignorant and malicious writer, who does not appear to have been acquainted with their hiſtories and laws, though he pretended to write againſt them; and might ſo eaſily have procured information, if he had deſired it. And this appears to have been the caſe of ſeveral others of the heathen writers that mention the *Jews*. They ſeem not to have given themſelves the trouble to make any diligent inquiry into their hiſtory or laws, as delivered by themſelves, but took up with idle reports and traditions to their prejudice: and yet in the accounts given of the *Jews* by the heathen writers, imperfect as they are, there are ſome valuable hints and traces to be diſcerned, which ſhew the falſhood of other things they report concerning them †.

* Vol. I. p. 90, 91.

† There is an heathen writer of a very different character from *Apion*, who gives a much more candid account of the *Jewiſh* nation: I mean the judicious *Strabo*, of whom our author himſelf ſpeaks with the higheſt eſteem. He makes the cauſe of *Moſes*'s forſaking *Egypt* to be his being diſſatisfied with the falſe notions of God, and his worſhip, that had obtained among

It

It is therefore a little odd, that ſuch a ſtreſs ſhould be laid upon this, that——"the *Jewiſh* "hiſtory never obtained any credit in the world, "till Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed:"——*i. e.* it obtained no credit among the heathen nations; or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it——"we do not "find, that the authority of theſe books prevailed "among the pagan world*."—How could it be expected, that it ſhould? Since the heathens could not acknowlege it, and continue heathens; for it was abſolutely ſubverſive of the whole ſyſtem of paganiſm. The authority of thoſe books was believed and received among all thoſe, by whom it could be reaſonably expected that it ſhould be believed and received: that is, it was acknowleged and received by that nation among whom thoſe writings, and the memory of the laws and facts, had been conſtantly preſerved, and who regarded them with great veneration, as of a divine original; and alſo by thoſe among the heathens themſelves, who, upon the credit of the *Jewiſh* religion, laws, and records, quitted the heathen idolatry: and theſe were all

among the *Egyptians*; and ſuppoſes him to have entertained juſter and nobler notions of the Divinity than the *Egyptians*, or *Libyans*, or *Greeks*: that with him went from *Egypt many that honoured the Deity*, πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τὸ Θεῖον: that he *perſuaded many good men*, and brought them unto the country where *Jeruſalem* is built; and that there they continued *practiſing juſtice* or *righteouſneſs*, and being *truly religious*, or *ſincere worſhippers of God*, δικαιοπραγοῦντες καὶ εὐσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθως ὄντες, but that afterwards they degenerated.—See *Strabo*. lib. xvi.

* Vol. I. p. 87, 91.

that

that could be reaſonably expected to acknowlege the authority of the *Jewiſh* ſacred books, even ſuppoſing their authority to have been never ſo well founded.

But it is urged as a ground of ſuſpicion againſt the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, that——"they were com-"piled in their own country, and, as it were, out "of the ſight of the reſt of the world."——And it was certainly moſt proper, that the books in which their laws, and the moſt remarkable events relating to their nation, are recorded, ſhould be publiſhed in their own country, the ſcene where the chief actions were laid. This is no diminution of their credit, but the contrary. And if they had been compiled in any other country, or by foreigners, and perſons not of their own nation, it might have been ſaid, and not without ſome appearance of reaſon, that they might be miſtaken, and take up with wrong and imperfect accounts, both of laws and facts.

But what this author ſeems chiefly to inſiſt upon, to ſhew that little credit is to be given to theſe writings, is——"that they are hiſtories de-"livered to us on the faith of a ſuperſtitious "people; among whom the cuſtom and art of "pious lying prevailed remarkably *."

In order to form a proper judgment of this matter, let us take a brief view of the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, that we may ſee what likelihood there

* Vol. I. p, 87.

is of their having been feigned by a ſuperſtitious and lying people.

In general, it may be obſerved, that if we compare the ſacred books of the *Jews* with thoſe of any other the moſt admired nations, ſuch as *Greece* and *Rome*, we ſhall ſoon ſee a moſt ſtriking and amazing difference. Their whole conſtitution was of a peculiar nature; ſo vaſtly different from that of other countries, that it well deſerveth the attention and admiration of every impartial and conſidering obſerver. It was the only conſtitution in the world, where the acknowlegement and worſhip of the one true God, the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe, and of him alone, is made the fundametal maxim of their ſtate, and principle of their government, in which all their laws centre, and the main end to which they are all directed. All worſhip of inferior deities is forbidden; no deified heroes admitted; no images ſuffered. Many of their ſacred rites ſeem to have been inſtituted in a deſigned oppoſition to thoſe of the neighbouring nations, that they might not incorporate with them, or learn their idolatrous cuſtoms, to which the *Iſraelites*, for a long time, were very prone. Nor is there any likelihood that they would have embraced or ſubmitted to a conſtitution ſo different from the then generally prevailing idolatry, if it had not been for the manifeſt proofs that were given them of its divine original. The author of theſe letters indeed intimates, that many of their rites were

derived

facts, which gives force to their teſtimony. 313
St. Paul's *teſtimony particularly conſidered.*
313, 314
Lord Bolingbroke's *argument to prove that there is at preſent no ſtandard at all of Chriſtianity.* 316
The Romiſh writers, in endeavouring to ſhew that the Scripture is inſufficient to be a complete rule of faith and practice, have really ſerved the Infidel cauſe.
316, 317
The pretence, that the moſt extravagant and contradictory opinions may be founded upon the ſame text, and plauſibly defended by the ſame authority, examined. 317, &c.
The different interpretations which have been put upon Scripture, no proof that they are not ſufficiently clear, and determinate to be a rule of faith and practice.
318
Let a Revelation be never ſo clear, it would be abſurd to expect that all men ſhould agree in their ſenſe of it: but this does not hinder its being of geat uſe.
ib. et. ſeq.
After all the clamour that has been raiſed about differences among Chriſtians, there hath been a general agreement among them in all ages, about many matters of the higheſt importance. 320, et ſeq.
True Chriſtianity, inſtead of receiving a fatal blow, as his Lordſhip pretends, at the reſurrection of letters, had then a glorious revival. 323
The Concluſion. 342

RE-

E R R A T A.

In page 262. line 21. for *others observed*, read *others have observed*. P. 263. l. 20. for *crime*, r. *event*. P. 265. l. 28. for them, r. *Ham*.

derived from the *Egyptians*; but whatever conformity there might be in ſome particular inſtances, nothing is more certain and evident, than that the whole ſyſtem of the *Jewiſh* religion was moſt eſſentially oppoſite to that of the *Egyptians*, and other pagan nations; and tended to caſt contempt on their adored deities, and on that idolatrous worſhip to which the heathens were ſo much addicted, and which was eſtabliſhed by the laws of their reſpective countries.

As to the moral and devotional treatiſes, which make up another part of their ſacred writings, they are inconteſtably excellent. Their poetry is of a moſt divine ſtrain, far ſuperior to that of other antient nations, having an unexampled dignity, elevation, and ſublimity in it, filled with the nobleſt ſentiments of the Divinity, and of his glorious incomparable perfections, and governing providence.

The ſame obſervation may be made on the prophetical writings, in which we may diſcern many remarkable characters of genuine truth and purity. A fervent zeal for God, and for pure and undefiled religion, every-where appears: nor is there any thing in them that breathes the ſpirit of this world, or that ſavours of ambition, artifice, or impoſture. The whole intention of them is manifeſtly to reclaim the people from idolatry, vice, and wickedneſs, to engage them to the pure worſhip of God, and to the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs. With a noble freedom and impartiality do they reprove their kings,

princes,

princes, prieſts, people; denouncing the moſt awful threatnings againſt them, if they ſhould perſiſt in their evil and ſinful courſes; and encouraging them with the moſt gracious promiſes to repentance, and new obedience: and all this mixed with many remarkable and expreſs predictions of future events, which no human ſagacity could have foreſeen, and which derived ſuch an authority to them, that tho' they were often reproached and perſecuted when alive, their character and writings were afterwards regarded by the whole nation with the profoundeſt veneration. And it deſerveth to be particularly remarked, that whereas the *Jews*, as well as mankind, in all ages, have been prone to place religion chiefly in external forms, and ritual obſervances, as if theſe would compenſate for the neglect of the moral precepts, there are many paſſages in their ſacred books, eſpecially thoſe of the prophets, which in the ſtrongeſt terms repreſent the utter inſufficiency of all ritual obſervances without real holineſs of heart and life; and even ſpeak of them in a very diminutive manner, and with a ſeeming contempt, when oppoſed to, or abſtracted from, moral goodneſs and virtue; and ſuch writings certainly do not look like the inventions of a ſuperſtitious and lying people.

But as the ſacred hiſtory is what this writer ſetteth himſelf particularly to expoſe and invalidate, let us take a brief view of the hiſtorical parts of Scripture; and theſe are no leſs re-

markable, and worthy of our attention, than the laws, the prophecies, the moral and devotional writings.

As to a general idea of their hiſtory, it is of as different a complexion from that of other nations as their laws, and is of the ſame noble tendency with their other ſacred books. It everywhere breathes the profoundeſt veneration for the Deity. The chief deſign of it is not merely to anſwer civil or political views, or to preſerve the annals of their nation, or trace it up to its original, though this alſo is done, but for nobler purpoſes; to promote the true worſhip of God, and the practice of piety and virtue; to preſerve the remembrance of God's wonderful works of providence towards his profeſſing people; to ſhew the favours, the bleſſings, the deliverances, vouchſafed to them, the proſperity and happineſs they enjoyed, when they kept cloſe to the laws of God, and continued in the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs? and on the other hand, the great calamities which befel them when they broke the divine law and covenant, and lapſed into idolatry, vice, and wickedneſs. Such are the uſeful leſſons which their hiſtory is deſigned to teach, and to this excellent end is it directed.

To which it may be added, that there are obſervable in it remarkable characters of ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth. It is plain, from the whole tenor of their hiſtory, that it was not compiled to give falſe and flattering accounts of their nation, or partial and elegant

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encomiums of their great men. Their great actions indeed are recorded, but their faults are alſo related with a ſimplicity and impartiality that deſerves to be admired. Neither *Romans*, *Greeks*, *Egyptians*, nor any other people, have formed their hiſtories ſo much to the diſadvantage of their own nation, or charged them with ſuch repeated revolts from the religion and laws of their country. Let us ſuppoſe the *Jews* never ſo much poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of lying, it would never have put them upon forging a body of hiſtory ſo much to the prejudice of their own national character. It tendeth indeed to give an high idea of the great things God had done for them, of the privileges conferred upon them, and the excellency of their laws (and that their laws are excellent, no man can doubt that ſeriouſly reads and conſiders them), but at the ſame time it ſetteth the ingratitude, the diſobedience, the ſtupidity, of that people, their oppoſition to God's authority, and abuſe of his goodneſs, their manifold backſlidings and unſtedfaſtneſs in his covenant, in the ſtrongeſt light. Their diſgraces, defeats, captivities, are nowhere concealed; they are repreſented as frequently brought under the yoke of the neighbouring nations in a manner much to their diſhonour; and their deliverances are aſcribed, not to their own wiſdom, conduct, and bravery, but to the mercy of God, upon their repentance. In a word, their hiſtory is a continued account of God's goodneſs, patience, and juſtice, exerciſed

ciſed towards them; and of their own ſtrange, perverſe, and unaccountable conduct. This is ſo manifeſt, that it hath been often turned to their reproach, and hath given occaſion to the repreſenting them as an obſtinate, ungrateful, and rebellious race, and to ſuch a charge as St. *Stephen* advanceth againſt them from their own Scriptures; *Ye ſtiff-necked, and uncircumciſed in heart and ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt: as your fathers did, ſo do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers perſecuted?* Acts vii. 51. Theſe conſiderations naturally tend to derive a peculiar credit to the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, as containing true and faithful accounts, not forged by a ſuperſtitious lying people. Whatever opinion therefore we may have of the *Jews*, yet their Sacred Books deſerve great regard. Nor is there any ground to ſuppoſe, that theſe books or records were of their inventing. At leaſt, I believe, this will ſcarce be pretended with regard to the *Jews* in the latter times of their ſtate, however they might otherwiſe be addicted to fiction and embelliſhment. They received theſe books as ſacred from their anceſtors, and were themſelves ſo fully perſuaded of the divine original and authority of their laws, and the certainty and authenticity of theſe records, that they adhered to them with a zeal ſcarce to be paralleled in any other nation: ſo great was the veneration they had for them, that after the canon was completed, they were extremely ſcrupulous not to make any additions to their Sacred Books, or

receive any others into their number as of equal authority, though written by the greateſt and wiſeſt men of their nation. And if any perſons had endeavoured to alter or corrupt them, the fraud, the impoſture, muſt have been immediately detected. For theſe Sacred Books were not, like thoſe of other nations, confined to the prieſts only; they were in the hands of the people, conſtantly and publickly read in their ſynagogues; the laws, and the facts, were what they were all acquainted with, and inſtructed in, from their infancy.

If therefore there be any ground of ſuſpicion, it muſt fall, not upon the latter *Jews*, but upon EZRA, and thoſe by whom the ſacred canon was finiſhed. If their hiſtory and Sacred Books were forged or corrupted, the moſt likely time that can be fixed upon for it is upon their return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity. And this ſeems to be the æra fixed upon by the author of theſe Letters. He obſerves——that "the *Babyloniſh* "captivity laſted ſo long, and ſuch circum-"ſtances, whatever they were, accompanied it, "that the captives forgot their country, and "even their language, the *Hebrew* dialect, at "leaſt, and character *."——And afterwards, he intimates, that the Scriptures were——"loſt "during the captivity †."——And he obſerves, that——"*Ezra* began, and *Simon* the Juſt finiſhed, "the canon of the Scriptures ‡."——

* Vol. I. p. 84. † Ibid. p. 101. ‡ Ibid. p. 85.

Let

Let us grant, that in the *Babyloniſh* captivity, the *Jews* learned the *Chaldee* language, which thenceforth became more familiar to them than the *Hebrew*; and that the old *Hebrew* character was, as many learned men ſuppoſe, though it is far from being certain, changed for the *Chaldee*; the latter being fairer, eaſier, and more generally uſed among the people; yet this is far from proving, either that the *Hebrew* language was intirely forgotten by them, or that their Sacred Books were loſt in the captivity. There are many things that plainly ſhew the contrary. The prophet EZEKIEL, who propheſied during the captivity to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, writ and publiſhed his prophecies in *Hebrew*. So did the prophets HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, and MALACHI, who propheſied ſeveral years after the return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity: which ſhews, that the *Hebrew* language was ſtill in uſe, and was underſtood by many of the people. The ſame thing may be concluded from this; that all the Sacred Books that were written after the captivity were written in *Hebrew*, except a part of EZRA and DANIEL. NEHEMIAH, who had been a great man in the *Perſian* court, writ his own memoirs in *Hebrew*: which ſhews, that the *Jews* who continued in *Perſia*, their great men at leaſt, ſtill retained the knowlege of that language. And as the *Hebrew* language was not abſolutely forgotten among the *Jews* in their captivity, ſo neither were their Sacred Books intirely loſt. Indeed it were abſurd to ſuppoſe it. That cap-

tivity, though it laſted ſeventy years from the firſt beginning of it under *Jehoiakim*, yet from the time of the utter deſolation of *Jeruſalem*, and the temple, and the carrying away the laſt remainder of the people to *Babylon*, continued but about fifty years. And there were not a few of them that had been carried away from *Jeruſalem*, who ſurvived the whole time, and lived to come back. *Many of the prieſts and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were antient men, that had ſeen the firſt houſe, when the foundation of the ſecond houſe was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice*, Ezra iii. 12. All thoſe among them that lived to ſeventy or eighty years were twenty or thirty years old when *Jeruſalem* and the *Temple* were deſtroyed; and to ſuppoſe, that theſe ſhould intirely forget their language, or their religion, hiſtory, and laws, is very abſurd. Add to this, that the people were in expectation of a deliverance, and reſtitution to their own land, of which the prophets had aſſured them; and this would naturally make them more careful to preſerve their laws, and the antient authentic records and memorials of their nation. It appeareth from the accounts given of thoſe that returned, that many of the *Prieſts* the *Levites*, the *Singers*, the *Porters*, the *Nethinims*, &c. had preſerved their genealogies during the captivity, in proſpect of their return, and of their being again employed in the ſacred functions; and thoſe who could not clearly ſhew their genealogies, were put from the

the prieſthood, *Ezra* ii. 62. *Neh.* vii. 64. Great numbers of the people could alſo prove their genealogies: and where there were any that could not do this, it is particularly taken notice of, that *they could not ſhew their fathers houſe*, Ezra ii. 59. It is manifeſt therefore, that there were *regiſters* of genealogies preſerved in *Babylon*; and is it not reaſonable to conclude, that they would be no leſs careful to preſerve their Sacred Books, eſpecially thoſe of *Moſes*, in which were their original records, and the laws on which their whole conſtitution depended?

If the *Jews* had been for changing their own laws and cuſtoms, we may ſuppoſe it muſt have been in order to their adopting thoſe of their conquerors, and of the country to which they were tranſplanted, and in which they ſettled. But it is evident, that, in fact, they did not do this; ſince the whole ſyſtem of their worſhip and conſtitution was, upon their return, very different from that of the *Babylonians*. If therefore they learned their language, or uſed their letters and characters in writing; yet ſtill it is certain, that they worſhiped not their gods, nor adopted their religion, and ſacred rites. They ſtill preſerved their own; and the captivity and deſolation of their nation, which they looked upon as a puniſhment for their manifold revolts, idolatries, and deviations from their law, tended to increaſe, inſtead of extinguiſhing, their veneration for it.

By DANIEL's ſolemn ſupplication and faſting, when the time came that had been marked out in the prophecies for their return, it appeareth, that he had the book of JEREMIAH's Prophecies before him, *Dan.* ix. 2. And the confeſſion he there maketh is remarkable: *All Iſrael have tranſgreſſed thy law—therefore the curſe is come upon us; and the oath that is written in the law of Moſes the ſervant of God, becauſe we have ſinned againſt him—And he hath confirmed his words which he ſpake againſt us, and againſt our judges that judged us—As it is written in the law of Moſes, all this evil is come upon us*, ver. 11, 12, 13. Here it is plainly ſuppoſed, that there was a written law of *Moſes* extant in his time, known to him and to the people, and which was regarded as the law of God himſelf: that they had tranſgreſſed that law, and thereby had expoſed themſelves to the dreadful judgments denounced againſt them, and written in that law, as the juſt puniſhment of their revolt and diſobedience. Soon after this, when the people returned, under the conduct of ZERUBBABEL, JESHUA, and others, we find them gathered together to celebrate the Feaſt of Tabernacles, in the ſeventh month, and offering the *daily burnt-offerings*, and thoſe of the *new-moons*, and *ſet-feaſts*, beſides *free-will offerings*: and all this is ſaid to be done as *written in the law of Moſes*, Ezra iii. 1—6. and this plainly ſheweth, that they had the written law of *Moſes* with them. They alſo appointed the Prieſts and *Levites*, in their ſeveral courſes,

and

and the Singers, and ſervice of the temple, *according to the ordinances of David the man of God*, Ezra iii. 10, 11. The ſacred hymns or pſalms, therefore, that had been uſed in the temple worſhip, were not loſt in the captivity; and indeed the Pſalms of *David* carry evident characters of genuineneſs in them. They were many of them compoſed on ſpecial occaſions, and adapted to his peculiar circumſtances, in a manner which plainly ſheweth they were not forged in after-times. And the preſerving ſo many of the pſalms and hymns, ſome of which contain an abridgment of their ſacred hiſtory, is a manifeſt indication of the care they took; and that there was not a general deſtruction of their Sacred Books in the captivity. The ſame obſervation may be applied to the prophetical writings, and to their ſacred records. It is plain, that the hiſtory of their kings was preſerved; to which there is frequent reference in the books compiled after the *Babyloniſh* captivity.

The commiſſion afterwards given to EZRA by ARTAXERXES, plainly ſuppoſed the law of *Moſes* to be then in being, and in the higheſt authority; and only impowered him to regulate every thing according to that law. He is deſcribed in *Artaxerxes's* commiſſion as *a ready ſcribe in the law of Moſes*; as one greatly skilled in that law, and fit to inſtruct others in it; and is required to ſet magiſtrates and judges to judge the people, ſuch as *knew the law of God*, Ezra vii. 6, 10, 25. Soon after EZRA came

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NEHEMIAH, a great man in the *Perſian* court, and who was appointed governor of *Judea*; and every thing throughout his book diſcovereth, that he and the whole people profeſſed the higheſt veneration for the law of *Moſes*. Before he came to *Judea*, he was well acquainted with that law, and regarded it as of divine authority, *Neh.* i, 7, 8, 9. During his adminiſtration, we have an account of a ſolemn reading of the Law, by *Ezra*, in the hearing of all the people; who heard it with the utmoſt reverence and attention: in this he was aſſiſted by ſeveral *Levites*, who *read in the book, in the law of God, diſtinctly, and gave the ſenſe, and cauſed them to underſtand the reading*, Neh. viii. 1—9. Again, we are told of another ſolemn reading of the Law, before all the people, *Neh.* ix. 1, 2, 3. And in the admirable confeſſion made on that occaſion by the *Levites*, there is an excellent ſummary of the principal events recorded in the hiſtorical parts of the books of *Moſes*; ſuch as, the calling of *Abraham*; their bondage and oppreſſion in *Egypt*; their being brought out from thence with ſigns and wonders, and dreadful judgments executed upon *Pharaoh* and his people; the dividing of the ſea before them, ſo that they paſſed through it as on dry land, whilſt the *Egyptians* that purſued them were overwhelmed in the deep; the promulgation of the law at *Sinai*, with remarkable tokens of the divine preſence and glory; the miracles wrought in the Wilderneſs, the leading them by a cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire by night; the giving them manna-

bread

bread from heaven to eat, and cleaving the rock to give them water to drink; and finally, bringing them into poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan*. Theſe things, which are the moſt remarkable facts in the hiſtory of their nation, together with their frequent rebellions, diſobedience, and ingratitude, particularly their making and worſhiping the molten calf in the Wilderneſs, the ſtanding diſgrace of their nation, and their ſubſequent revolts, calamities, and deliverances, after they came into the land of *Canaan*, are there taken notice of in the public confeſſions and acknowlegements made to God in the name and preſence of all the people; and are mentioned as things commonly known and acknowleged among them, and as of undoubted truth and certainty.

Taking theſe things together, it ſeems to appear, with all the evidence which the nature of the thing is capable of, that the *Jewiſh* ſacred books and records were not loſt in the *Babyloniſh* captivity; that they were in poſſeſſion of them, and had them in great veneration, before *Ezra* came to *Jeruſalem*. And it would be a wild imagination to ſuppoſe, that he had it in his power, even if he had it in his inclination, ſo far to impoſe upon all the *Jews*, both thoſe in *Judea*, and thoſe that continued in *Babylon*, and other parts of the *Perſian* empire, as to make them all with one conſent receive thoſe for their antient laws, by which their nation had been always governed, which were not their antient laws; and thoſe for their antient authentic hiſtories, and ſacred

cred records, which were not the antient authentic records. All that his commiſſion from *Artaxerxes* extended to was, to order things according to the law of *Moſes*; and this he effected. When he came, he found ſeveral abuſes contrary to that law, countenanced by men of great power and intereſt, and in which ſeveral of the chief prieſts, as well as numbers of the people, were engaged; and he ſet himſelf to reform them according to that law: and theſe regulations would not have been tamely ſubmitted to, if it had not been well known, that the laws and conſtitutions he urged upon them, were the true original laws of *Moſes*.

As to the eſtabliſhing the ſacred canon, which is attributed to EZRA, and to thoſe whom the *Jews* call the men of the great ſynagogue; the laſt of whom was SIMON THE JUST; this is not to be underſtood as if theſe books were not accounted ſacred, or were regarded as of no anthority before. The books were already well known, and looked upon as ſacred; they had not their authority, becauſe EZRA acknowleged them; but he collected and publiſhed them, becauſe they were known to be authentic. It may indeed be well ſuppoſed, that faults and variations might have crept into the copies of thoſe books; and that they needed to be carefully reviſed. And this was a work for which EZRA was admirably fitted by his great skill in the law, and in the ſacred records of his nation, as well as his noted integrity. And if he accordingly reviſed the original

original Sacred Books, and publiſhed a more correct edition of them, or abridged ſome of their antient records, to render them of more general uſe among the people, and here and there inſerted ſome paſſages for explaining and illuſtrateing things that were grown obſcure; this was certainly a work of great uſe. And ſuppoſing him to have done this, and that this work continued to be afterwards carried on by ſome of the moſt knowing and excellent men of their nation, till it was with great care completed, I do not ſee how it in the leaſt affects the authority or credibility of thoſe books. The whole nation in general were ſo ſenſible of EZRA's great fidelity and diligence, that he was always afterwards had in the higheſt honour: and they were ſo convinced, that theſe were the original Sacred Books, that they received them with an extraordinary veneration. Nor did they ever pay the ſame regard to any other ſubſequent writings in their own nation. And though the SANHEDRIM continued to have great authority among them, they never pretended to put any other books upon them as divine, or as of equal authority with the Sacred Books. Now how comes it, that they put ſo great a difference between them, and that the authority of theſe books was univerſally acknowleged by the whole nation, and the other not? This ſheweth, that however credulous the *Jews* might be in other things, yet they were particularly exact and ſcrupulous in not receiving any books into the ſacred

canon, but what they judged they had good reaſon to look upon as authentic.

The moſt remarkable part of the *Jewiſh* hiſtory is, that which is contained in the books of *Moſes*. It is there we have an account of the firſt conſtitution of their ſacred polity; the promulgation of the ten commandments, with the moſt amazing demonſtrations of a divine power and majeſty; and the extraordinary miraculous facts done in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderneſs*, by which the authority of that law was eſtabliſhed. And whoſoever alloweth this part of the *Jewiſh* hiſtory to be authentic, will not much ſcruple the ſubſequent parts of their hiſtory. Now it is evident, that as it was not EZRA that gave authority to the law of *Moſes*, which was in the higheſt authority before, or who cauſed the people to receive it as divine; ſo neither were the *facts*, whereby the authority of that law was atteſted, *firſt* publiſhed by him. They had been all along believed, and the remembrance of them kept up, among the people. *The books of Moſes* exhibit a remarkable intermixture of *laws* and *facts:* and it appears to be ſo from the beginning, though our author inſinuates the contrary, but gives no reaſon for it*. And it was wiſely ordered, that the facts ſhould go along with the laws; ſeveral of which ſuppoſe thoſe facts, and have a manifeſt relation to them. And as the laws were received with great veneration, ſo the

* Vol. I. p. 100.

facts

facts were equally received and believed among the people, in all ages, from the time in which thoſe laws were given. And it deſerveth to be remarked, that the facts were of ſuch a kind, that they could not have been impoſed upon the people, however ſtupid we ſuppoſe them to have been, at the time the laws were given, if they had not been true. If MOSES had only told the *Iſraelites*, as MAHOMET did the *Arabians*, inſtead of working miracles before them, as they demanded, of a journey he made to heaven, where he received the law; or as *Numa* did the antient *Romans*, of conferences he had with the Goddeſs *Egeria* in a wood or grove, to which no other perſons were witneſſes, and which depended intirely upon his own word; this might have adminiſtred ground of ſuſpicion, that he only feigned a divine commiſſion, the more effectually to enforce his laws upon an ignorant and ſuperſtitious people. But he took a quite different method. The facts he relateth, and upon the credit of which the divine authority of his laws is reſted, were of a moſt public nature, done in open view before the people, of which they were all ſaid to be witneſſes, and in which therefore, if they had not been true, it would have been the eaſieſt thing in the world to have detected him. And indeed, conſidering the ſtubborn diſpoſition of the people, and their great proneneſs to idolatry, it can ſcarce be conceived, that they would have received or ſubmitted to ſuch a law and conſtitution, if they

themſelves had not been aſſured of the truth of thoſe facts whereby the divinity of it was confirmed. In the admirable recapitulation of the law, contain'd in the book of *Deuteronomy*, which carrieth as ſtrong evidences of genuine *antiquity*, *ſimplicity*, and *integrity*, as any writings can poſſibly have, and in which he delivereth himſelf with an inimitable gravity, dignity, and authority, mixed with the moſt affectionate tenderneſs and concern, as becometh the lawgiver and father of his people, and exhorteth them to the obſervation of the law in the moſt pathetical and engaging manner; there is a conſtant reference to the great and extraordinary facts wrought in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderneſs*; an appeal is made to the people, concerning them, as things which they themſelves had ſeen and known. And never was there greater care taken to preſerve a remembrance of any laws and facts than there was of theſe. He delivered the book of the law, containing an account both of laws and facts, not only to the *prieſts*, but to *the elders of Iſrael*, the heads of the ſeveral tribes, before his death. And the original of the law was depoſited in the ſides of the ark, in the moſt holy place. A moſt ſolemn charge was laid upon the people, in the name of God, as they valued his favour, and their own happineſs, frequently to conſider thoſe laws and facts themſelves, and to teach them diligently to their children. Sacred rites were inſtituted, and public feſtivals appointed, to preſerve the memorials of the principal

cipal facts, from the time in which thoſe facts were done. And accordingly the remembrance of them was conſtantly preſerved among them in all ages. In all the ſucceeding monuments of their nation, throughout their whole hiſtory, and in their devotional and prophetical writings, and in their public ſolemn forms of confeſſion and thankſgiving there was ſtill a conſtant reference to thoſe facts as of undoubted credit; and upon the credit of thoſe facts, thoſe laws were both at firſt received, and continued afterwards to be acknowleged and ſubmitted to: for notwithſtanding the frequent defections of the people to the idolatrous rites and cuſtoms of the neighbouring nations, yet they never totally and univerſally apoſtatized from the law of *Moſes*, but ſtill acknowleged its ſacredneſs and divine authority *.

The author of theſe letters taketh particular notice of the fables invented by the *Helleniſtic Jews*, to authorize the *Greek* verſion of the *Hebrew* Scriptures†. But I do not ſee how any argument can be fairly drawn from theſe fables to the prejudice of the Sacred Books themſelves, which were thus tranſlated, or to deſtroy their autho-

* That the law of *Moſes*, with the facts there recorded, may be traced, from the time in which that law was given, and the facts done, through all the ſucceeding ages of the *Jewiſh* nation; and that we have all the evidence of their having been tranſmitted without any material corruption or alteration, that can be reaſonably deſired; I have elſewhere more fully ſhewn in the *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. II. chap. 4.

† Vol. I. p. 85, 86.

rity or credibility. The ſtrong perſuaſion they had of the divine authority of the original Scriptures, might make the *Jews* at *Alexandria* more ready to entertain ſtories in favour of the tranſlation of theſe Scriptures into *Greek*, from which they found great benefit; this being the language they beſt underſtood, and which was then become of general uſe. But thoſe ſtories were not generally received by the *Jewiſh* nation, though they all univerſally agreed in acknowleging the authority of the originals; nor were they ever inſerted in the ſacred writings, or in any books, the authority of which was generally received among them.

The firſt thing that gave riſe to thoſe ſtories was, the hiſtory of *Ariſteas*; which ſeems to have been contrived on purpoſe to do honour to that verſion, and gives a pompous account of it. And yet even in that hiſtory there is nothing ſaid of thoſe miraculous circumſtances, which were afterwards invented to ſhew, that thoſe interpreters were under an extraordinary divine guidance. On the contrary, that book, though it be the foundation of all that is ſaid concerning the Septuagint, may be proved to be plainly inconſiſtent with thoſe ſubſequent fables and fictions; and is ſufficient to detect the falſity of them. There is therefore no parallel at all between theſe *Helleniſtical* fables, and the ſacred *Hebrew* records; except it could be proved, that one part of thoſe antient records is inconſiſtent with other ſubſequent parts of them, and furniſheth ma-

nifeſt proofs of their falſhood; which neither his lordſhip, nor any other, has been able to ſhew.

Another argument, on which he ſeems to lay a mighty ſtreſs, in order to ſet aſide the authority of the Scripture, is drawn from the accidents that have happened to the ſacred text. He will not allow the anſwer made by *Abbadie* and others, that—"ſuch accidents could not "have been prevented without a perpetual "ſtanding miracle, and that a perpetual ſtanding miracle is not in the order of Providence." On the contrary, it ſeems evident to him, that if the Scriptures had been originally given by divine inſpiration, ——"either ſuch accidents "would not have happened, or the Scriptures "would have been preſerved intirely in their "genuine purity, notwithſtanding theſe accidents."—He thinks the proof of this—"is obvious and eaſy, according to our cleareſt "and moſt diſtinct ideas of wiſdom, and moral "fitneſs*." But, beſides that the preſent queſtion, as he has managed it, relating to the ſacred hiſtory, is not about the divine inſpiration of it; but whether it be a true and faithful hiſtory, an honeſt and credible relation of facts, which he abſolutely denies; I ſee no conſequence at all in his way of reaſoning, even if the queſtion were, whether thoſe ſacred books were originally written by perſons divinely inſpired. For all that could be reaſonably concluded,

* Vol. I. p. 95.

ſuppoſing any books to have been originally given by divine inſpiration, is, that Providence would take care, that thoſe books ſhould be tranſmitted with a ſufficient degree of certainty and integrity, to anſwer the end for which they were originally intended. But it was no-way neceſſary to this purpoſe, that all the tranſcribers that ſhould ever copy thoſe writings in any age or nation, ſhould be under an infallible guidance, ſo as to be kept by an extraordinary interpoſition from ever committing any miſtake or blunder, or being guilty of any ſlips or negligencies; or that all thoſe that have ever reviſed and compared thoſe copies, ſhould, in every inſtance, be infallibly guided in their judgments concerning them. This is evidently abſurd. It would be a multiplying miracles without neceſſity; and would therefore be unworthy of the divine wiſdom, and not very conſiſtent with the methods of God's moral government of men, conſidered as reaſonable creatures, free agents. For, will any man, in good earneſt, undertake to prove, that ſuppoſeing an excellent revelation given of doctrines, laws, *&c.* together with authentic accounts of extraordinary facts, tending to confirm and eſtabliſh the divine authority of thoſe doctrines and laws, this revelation could not be of any uſe, nor could thoſe accounts of facts be at all fit to be depended on, if there were any variations, omiſſions, tranſpoſitions or miſtakes, in any copies that ſhould be taken of them in any age? If, notwithſtand-

withſtanding thoſe variations, the copies ſhould ſtill ſo far agree, that from thence a ſufficient notion might be formed of the doctrines and laws contained in that original revelation, and of the truth of the facts whereby it was atteſted and confirmed, this would be ſufficient to anſwer the end which we might ſuppoſe the divine wiſdom to have had in view in giving ſuch a revelation. And this is actually the caſe with regard to the holy Scriptures. Whatever *additions*, *interpolations*, or *tranſpoſitions*, may be ſuppoſed to have crept into any of the copies, yet all the main laws and facts are ſtill preſerved. Of this we have a remarkable proof, by comparing the *Hebrew* and *Samaritan* codes of the Pentateuch. There are differences between them: but the laws, the precepts, the hiſtory, the important facts, whereby the law was atteſted, are the ſame in both. And, in general, it may be juſtly affirmed, that notwithſtanding all the differences in the copies, about which ſuch a clamour hath been raiſed, yet there is a ſufficient agreement among them to ſatisfy us, that ſuch and ſuch laws were originally given, ſuch prophecies were delivered, and that ſuch facts were done. And the variations among the copies in ſmaller matters, the miſtakes that have crept into the genealogies, numbers, dates, catalogues of names, ages of ſome of the patriarchs, and the like (and it is in theſe things that the differences principally lie), do really confirm their harmony in the main; and therefore are far from deſtroying the autho-

rity of the Sacred Writings, or the credibility of the Scripture-hiſtory.

The learned *Capellus*, who had throughly conſidered this matter, and who, it is well known, allowed himſelf great liberties in judging concerning the variations in the copies of the *Hebrew* Scriptures, juſtly obſerveth, in his defence of his *Critica Sacra*, that all theſe variations are of little or no moment as to faith or manners; ſo that in that reſpect it is indifferent which reading we follow: *Sanè omnes illæ varietates, uti ſæpius in Critica Sacra repeto, nullius aut penè nullius ſunt quoad fidem et mores momenti, ut eo reſpectu perinde ſit hanc an illam ſequaris lectionem.* And I believe there are few competent and impartial judges of theſe things, but will be ready to own, with Mr. *Le Clerc*, the freedom of whoſe judgment in ſuch matters muſt be acknowleged, that, through the good providence of God, no books, from the earlieſt antiquity, have come to us equally correct with the Sacred Books of the *Hebrews*, particularly the *Maſoretical* copies. *Nullos libros ex ultima antiquitate ad nos Dei beneficio perveniſſe æquè emendatos ac ſacros Hebræorum codices, et quidem Maſoreticos.* See his *Diſſertatio de Lingua Hebræa*, prefixed to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch.*

What our author himſelf maketh a ſhew of granting is very true, that —— "amidſt all the "changes and chances to which the books, in "which they are recorded, have been expoſed, "neither

" neither original writer, nor later compilers,
" have been ſuffered to make any eſſential al-
" terations, ſuch as would have falſified the
" law of God, and the principles of the *Jewiſh*
" and Chriſtian religion, in any of thoſe divine
" fundamental points *."—And indeed the precepts, the doctrines of religion inculcated in the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, are ſo frequently repeated, and the principal facts there related are ſo often referred to, in different parts of thoſe Sacred Volumes, as to be abundantly ſufficient to anſwer the deſign for which they were originally intended; *viz.* to inſtruct men in the knowlege, adoration, and obedience of the one true God, and to engage them to the practice of righteouſneſs, and to prepare the way for a more perfect diſpenſation, which was to be introduced in the fulneſs of time, by THAT DIVINE PERSON, whoſe *coming*, *character*, *offices*, *ſufferings*, *glory*, and *kingdom*, were there prefigured and foretold. Accordingly our SAVIOUR ſpeaketh of the writings of *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, as of ſignal uſe to inſtruct and direct men in the knowlege and practice of religion, *Luke* xvi. 29, 30, 31. And though it be not true, which our author aſſerteth, that the *Jewiſh* Scriptures had no authority but what they derived from Chriſtianity (for they had an authority founded upon ſufficient credentials before Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed); yet their being acknowleged as divine, by Chriſt and his

* Vol. I. p. 97, 98.

Apoſtles, giveth them a farther confirmation: For when a ſubſequent revelation, which is itſelf founded on convincing proofs and evidences, giveth teſtimony to a prior revelation, and refer-reth to it as of divine authority, when both together concur to form one ſyſtem of religion, and to exhibit the hiſtory of God's various diſpenſations towards his church, the former being ſubſervient and preparatory to the latter, and the latter giving farther light, and a fuller completion, to the former; this confirmeth the authority of both, and ſheweth one great uniform deſign and plan carried on by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs from the beginning.

It is no juſt objection againſt the authority of the Sacred Books of the Old Teſtament, though the writer of theſe Letters ſeems to think it ſo, that——"though *Jews* and Chriſtians hold the "ſame books in great veneration, yet each con-"demns the other for not underſtanding, or for "abuſing them*." This is to be underſtood, not of the Sacred Hiſtory, which yet he would be thought to have particularly in view; for, as to this, the *Jews* and Chriſtians are generally agreed; but of ſome paſſages in the prophetical writings, in the interpretation of which they differ. And with reſpect to theſe, it may be obſerved, that if the *Jews*, at the time of our Saviour's appearing, had univerſally interpreted the prophetical writings as the Chriſtians do,

* Vol. I. p, 92.

and

and applied them to Jeſus Chriſt; and had accordingly turned Chriſtians, and embraced *Jeſus* as the MESSIAH promiſed to their fathers; it would undoubtedly have been alleged, that they forged or corrupted the prophecies in favour of the Chriſtian ſyſtem; whereas now there is no room for this pretence. Their vouching and acknowleging thoſe writings, as of divine authority, notwithſtanding the difficulty they have been put to, in anſwering the arguments brought from thence againſt their own favourite notions and prejudices, giveth their teſtimony to the prophetical books great force.

There is another remarkable paſſage in his third Letter, which it is proper to take ſome notice of. He obſerves*, that——"the *Jews* "and Chriſtians differ among themſelves, and "from one another, concerning almoſt every "point that is neceſſary to be known, and agreed "upon, in order to eſtabliſh the authority of "books which both have received as authentic "and ſacred. Who were the authors of theſe "Scriptures, when they were publiſhed, how "they were compoſed, and preſerved, or renewed; in fine, how they were loſt during the "captivity, and how they were retrieved after "it; are all matters of controverſy to this day." ——That the SACRED BOOKS were *not loſt* in the captivity, and that conſequently they were *not retrieved* after it by immediate inſpiration,

* Ibid. p. 100, 101.

hath

hath been clearly ſhewn. A fiction which ſeems to have had its riſe from the apocryphal ſecond book of *Eſdras*, the authority of which never was acknowleged either in the *Jewiſh* or Chriſtian Church. There are indeed differences, both among *Jews* and Chriſtians, concerning ſeveral points relating to thoſe Sacred Books; but theſe differences are, for the moſt part, about things that do not properly concern the divine authority or credibility of thoſe writings. There is a general agreement among them, that the prophetical books were written by perſons divinely inſpired; and that the PENTATEUCH was written by MOSES, the greateſt of all the prophets; and that the hiſtorical writings were either the very original authentic records, or faithfully compiled out of them; and were received and acknowleged by the whole nation, as containing true and juſt accounts of facts. And whereas he urgeth, that it is matter of controverſy, who were the authors of thoſe Scriptures, or when they were compoſed or publiſhed; it is certain, that, with reſpect to the much greater part of the Sacred Books, both *Jews* and Chriſtians are generally agreed who were the authors of them.

This is true concerning all the writings of the *Prophets*, the books of *Solomon*, moſt of the *Pſalms*, the *five books of Moſes*, which have been conſtantly received by the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian church, in all ages, as written by *Moſes*; though a few in theſe latter times have attempted

tempted to conteſt it. The books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, ſeem plainly to ſhew their authors. And concerning all theſe, there has been a general agreement. The books therefore, concerning the authors of which there is properly any ground of controverſy, are the hiſtorical books of *Joſhua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*. As to the firſt of theſe, *viz.* the book of *Joſhua*, the antient *Jews* in general, and the greater part of Chriſtian writers, with good reaſon look upon it to have been written by *Joſhua* himſelf; though there are ſome particular paſſages in it that were inſerted afterwards, by way of illuſtration. It is principally concerning the books of *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*, that there is any colourable pretence for ſaying with our author, that they were —— "abridgments of old records "made in later times*."—Some of them ſeem plainly to have been compiled after the return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, probably by *Ezra*, from antient authentic records, which are frequently quoted and referred to in them as books of acknowleged credit and authority; ſo that there is little room to doubt of the truth and certainty of the accounts there given. For that they were faithfully extracted from thoſe original records, to which they refer for a larger account of the things there related, there is the higheſt reaſon to believe. And it was wiſely

* Vol. I. p. 96.

ordered,

ordered, that theſe ſhorter accounts ſhould be inſerted in the ſacred canon, when it was to be brought, as it were, into one volume for the laſting inſtruction and edification of the church. For as the ſacred hiſtory was intended not merely to gratify curioſity, but to promote the purpoſes of religion, piety, and virtue, and to keep up the remembrance of the remarkable actings of Divine Providence towards them, both in a way of mercy and judgment according to their behaviour, it was proper that it ſhould be brought into as narrow a compaſs as was conſiſtent with that deſign. This would make it more generally known, and eaſily remembred; whereas larger and more particular accounts might have been too voluminous for a book deſigned for univerſal uſe.

The only thing that yet remaineth to be conſidered with regard to the Sacred Books of the Old Teſtament is what he ſaith concerning the *curſe* pronounced upon *Canaan* by *Noah*; of which we have an account, *Gen.* ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. This he ſeems to have fixed upon as one of the propereſt inſtances he could find to expoſe the authority of the Scripture. He treateth it as an invention of the writer to juſtify the *Iſraelites* in their invaſion of the *Canaanites*; and repreſenteth this curſe as *contradicting all our notions of order and juſtice.*——"One is "tempted to think, ſays he, that the patriarch "was ſtill drunk; and that no man in his ſenſes "could hold ſuch language, or paſs ſuch a ſen-

"tence.

" tence. Certain it is, that no writer but a " *Jew* could impute to the œconomy of Pro- " vidence the accompliſhment of ſuch a pre- " diction, nor make the Supreme Being the " executor of ſuch a curſe."

His Lordſhip obſerves, that " *Ham* alone of- " fended: *Canaan* was innocent——*Canaan* " was however alone curſed: and became ac- " cording to his grand father's prophecy a *ſer- " vant of ſervants*, *i. e.* the vileſt and mean- " eſt of ſlaves——to *Sem*, not to *Japhet*, when " the *Iſraelites* conquered *Paleſtine*; to one of " his uncles, not to his brethren. Will it be " ſaid——it has been ſaid——that where we read " *Canaan*, we are to underſtand *Ham*, whoſe " brethren *Sem* and *Japhet* were? At this rate, " we ſhall never know what we read: as theſe " Critics never care what they ſay. Will it be " ſaid——this has been ſaid too——that *Ham* " was puniſhed in his poſterity, when *Canaan* " was curſed, and his deſcendants were exter- " minated? But who does not ſee, that the " curſe and puniſhment in this caſe fell on " *Canaan* and his poſterity, excluſive of the " reſt of the poſterity of *Ham*; and were there- " fore the curſe and puniſhment of the ſon, " not of the father properly? The deſcendants " of *Miſraim* another of his ſons were the " *Egyptians*: and they were ſo far from being " ſervants of ſervants to their couſins the *Sem- " ites*, that theſe were ſervants of ſervants unto " them, during more than fourſcore years.

" Why

" Why the poſterity of *Canaan* was to be " deemed an accurſed race, it is eaſy to account; " and I have mentioned it juſt now: But it is " not ſo eaſy to account why the poſterity of " the righteous *Sem*, that great example of filial " reverence, became ſlaves to another branch " of the family of *Ham**."

Before I proceed to a diſtinct conſideration of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered, it will be proper to lay before the reader the ſacred text, as it is in our tranſlation. *Gen.* ix. 21—27. *Noah—was uncovered within his tent: and* Ham *the father of* Canaan *ſaw the nakedneſs of his father, and told his two brethren without. And* Shem *and* Japhet *took a garment, and laid it upon both their ſhoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedneſs of their father; and their faces were backward, and they ſaw not their fathers nakedneſs. And* Noah *awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger ſon had done unto him. And he ſaid, curſed be* Canaan; *a ſervant of ſervants ſhall he be unto his brethren. And he ſaid, bleſſed be the Lord God of* Shem, *and* Canaan *ſhall be his ſervant. God ſhall enlarge* Japheth, *and he ſhall dwell in the tents of* Shem: *and* Canaan *ſhall be his ſervant.*

It is acknowleged, that there is a conſiderable difficulty in this paſſage. And it we were not able to account for it at all at this diſtance, it

* Vol. I. p. 110, 111, 112,

would

would be much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſome circumſtances have been paſſed by in this ſhort narrative, which if known would help to clear it; or that there may have been ſome defects in the copies not now to be remedied; than upon the account of one difficult and obſcure paſſage, to throw off all regard to writings which have the moſt juſt pretenſions, both to the greateſt antiquity, and moſt venerable authority.

But that the difficulties which his Lordſhip hath urged are far from being unanſwerable, will appear from the following obſervations.

Firſt, The foundation of the whole charge, and that upon which the greateſt ſtreſs is laid is this, That "*Ham* alone offended: *Canaan* was "innocent.——*Canaan* however was alone "curſed: and he became, according to his "grandfather's prophecy, a ſervant of ſervants, "*i. e.* the vileſt and worſt of ſlaves." Some learned perſons have ſuppoſed, that where the curſe is pronounced upon *Canaan* ver. 25. the word *abi father*, is to be underſtood, which is expreſly mentioned *ver.* 22. and that inſtead of *curſed be Canaan* it ſhould be read *curſed be* Ham *the father of* Canaan. And though Lord *Bolingbroke* ſpeaks of this with great contempt, there are inſtances of ſuch ellipſes or omiſſions to be found in ſome other paſſages of Scripture. A remarkable one of this kind is in 2 *Sam.* xxi. 19. where our tranſlation has it, that *Elhanan——ſlew the brother of* Goliath *the* Gittite, *the ſtaff of whoſe ſpear was like a weaver's*

weaver's beam. Which is certainly right, as appears from the nature of the thing, and from a parallel paſſage 1 *Chron.* xx. 5. where he is expreſly called *the brother of* Goliath *the* Gittite *&c.* But the word *brother* is not in our preſent copies of the original in 2 *Sam.* xxi. 19. where it runs thus, *Elhanan——ſlew* Goliath *the* Gittite *&c.* inſtead of *the brother of* Goliath *the* Gittite. In like manner the word *father* may be ſupplied here, as well as the word *brother* in the place now mentioned; ſo that for *curſed be Canaan*, it may be read, *curſed be* Ham *the father of* Canaan. So the *Arabic* reads it, and ſo *Vatablus* renders it. And it is followed by other learned writers, particularly by the preſent biſhop of *Clogher* in his *Vindication of the Hiſtories of the Old and New Teſtament.* But if that be not admitted, as not only the *Hebrew*, but the *Samaritan*, the *Septuagint*, and all the antient verſions, except the *Arabic* which is of no great authority, read as we do, this will not prove, either that *Canaan* was entirely innocent, or that he alone was curſed. The *Jews* are generally of opinion, in which they follow a very antient tradition, that *Canaan* was the firſt that ſaw *Noah*'s nakedneſs, and made a jeſt of it to his father *Ham*, who, inſtead of reproving him went himſelf to ſee it, and in a mocking way told it to his brothers *Shem* and *Japheth.* Lord *Bolingbroke* makes mention of this, and endeavoureth to obviate it by obſerving, that "the *Hebrew* and other doctors, who would

" make the ſon an accomplice with his father, " affirm not only without, but againſt the ex- " preſs authority of the text." This is confidently ſaid. But if the text doth not expreſly mention *Canaan* as an accomplice, neither can it be ſaid, that the authority of the text is expreſly againſt that notion. On the contrary, whoſoever impartially examineth the ſtory as there related, will be naturally led to believe, that *Canaan* was in ſome degree acceſſary to his father's crime. *Ham* is in this ſtory particularly charactarized as the *father of Canaan*, and *Canaan*'s being ſo often mentioned affordeth a plain intimation, that he was ſome way or other concerned, and might either be the firſt that ſaw his grandfather's nakedneſs, and acquainted his father with it, or might be with his father when he ſaw it, and joined with him in making a mock of it. But as *Ham* was *Canaan*'s father, from whom better might have been expected, conſidering his age, and the dutiful regard he owed to his father *Noah*, with whom he had been ſaved from the deluge, he alone is expreſly mentioned in this ſhort narration; though the curſe pronounced upon *Canaan* leads us to think, that he was ſome way partaker of his father's crime. And ſuppoſing this to be ſo, and that he was *Ham*'s favourite ſon, and like him in his diſpoſitions, the curſe pronounced upon him was really intended againſt both. If we met with the ſame account in any wiſe and credible hiſtorian, this is the

conſtruction we ſhould have been apt to put upon it, that both *Canaan* and his father were concerned in the affair. And it is no very unuſual thing in Scripture, and in other hiſtories too, to omit ſome circumſtances in a ſhort narration, which are plainly implied, and which the reader is left to collect. Indeed, if what ſome expoſitors ſuppoſe be admitted, it is not only implied in the text that *Canaan* was an accomplice, but is expreſly ſignified in thoſe words *ver.* 24. that *Noah knew what his younger ſon had done unto him.* Where by *younger ſon* they underſtand his grandſon; for a grandſon according to the *Hebrew* idiom may be properly called a ſon; and they think *Ham* was not the youngeſt of *Noah's* ſons, but the middlemoſt, according to the order in which he is always placed, *Shem, Ham,* and *Japheth*: So *Theodoret*, and *Druſius* after ſome of the *Hebrew* writers, with whom agrees biſhop *Patrick.* But whatever becomes of this conjecture, and though we ſhould ſuppoſe *Ham* to be here intended by *the younger ſon*, which he might really be though mentioned between *Shem* and *Japheth*, ſince the order of their birth and age is not deſigned to be ſignified by it; for *Japheth* was the eldeſt, *Gen.* x. 21. Yet ſtill the ſtrain of the ſtory ſeems to imply, that *Canaan* had a guilty part in it, who alone of all *Ham's* ſons is expreſly mentioned upon this occaſion.

But *Secondly*, Let us ſuppoſe that *Canaan* was innocent, and no way acceſſary to this particu-

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lar inſtance of *Ham*'s impiety and wickedneſs, the prophetic curſe and prediction may notwithſtanding this be fairly accounted for. It muſt be ſaid in that caſe, that the curſe was not properly pronounced upon *Canaan* for *Ham*'s crime, but that upon occaſion of *Ham*'s wickedneſs *Noah* foretold the miſeries and calamities, that ſhould befall his poſterity, and particularly his deſcendants by *Canaan*. And ſuppoſing *Noah* to have been then enabled by a prophetic ſpirit to foreſee that from *Ham* would proceed a profligate and impious race, like him in wickedneſs, and whoſe crimes would at length bring down the vengeance of heaven upon them, and ſubject them to the baſeſt ſervitude, and puniſhment, his mentioning it on this occaſion, and pointing to that branch of his poſterity on whom this curſe ſhould particularly fall, had a manifeſt propriety in it. This could not but greatly humble *Ham*, and had a tendency to cauſe him to reflect on his own wickedneſs, and affect him with ſorrow and remorſe on the account of it, if any thing could do it. For who that has the bowels of the human nature, would not be greatly affected at the thought, that his poſterity ſhould be infamous and abandoned, and among the moſt wretched of the human race? And though *Canaan* alone be mentioned in this ſhort account, it doth not follow that no other of *Ham*'s poſterity fell under the curſe. *Noah* might have named others of *Ham*'s ſons or deſcendants, though *Moſes* only takes notice of what related

to *Canaan*, becauſe this was what more eſpecially concerned the people of *Iſrael* to know.

This leads me to obſerve,

Thirdly, That as to the inſinuation, that this prophecy or prediction was feigned *to juſtify the cruelties exerciſed by* Joſhua *upon the* Canaanites *, it is the author's own groundleſs ſuſpicion without producing any proof of it. Suppoſing it to have been a real prophecy originally delivered by *Noah*, the tradition of which had been preſerved in the family of *Shem*, and which was tranſmitted by *Abraham*, who might have had it from *Shem* himſelf, to his deſcendants, it is eaſily accounted for that *Moſes* ſhould take care to commit it to writing. Nor will it be denied, that one end he might have in view in recording it was to encourage and animate the *Iſraelites*, as he knew the time was at hand for the accompliſhment of that prediction, and that the *Iſraelites* were to be the inſtruments of it. Such a true prophecy known to have proceeded originally from *Noah*, was much more likely to anſwer *Moſes*'s end, than if it had been a mere fiction of his own, which had never been heard of before. And that *Moſes* did not feign this prophecy may be juſtly concluded, becauſe if it had been invented by himſelf purely to bring an odium upon *Canaan* and his deſcend-

* Lord *Bolingbroke* in other parts of his works frequently inſiſts upon theſe *cruelties*, as a demonſtration that the *Moſaic* conſtitution could not be of divine original. See this fully examined, *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, Vol. II.

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ants, the ſtory would probably have been contrived otherwiſe than it is. It would have been pretended, not that *Ham*, but that *Canaan* had been guilty of that impiety and irreverence towards *Noah* the ſecond father of mankind, and repairer of the world, and who was had in great veneration. Thus would *Moſes* have laid it, if the whole had been his own fiction. He would not have contented himſelf with leaving the reader to collect from the ſtory that *Canaan* was ſome way faulty, but would have taken care to have made it more directly anſwer his purpoſe by expreſly charging the crime upon *Canaan* himſelf. But as it was a real prophecy of *Noah*, *Moſes* gave it as he had received it, without altering the original ſtory, or adding new circumſtances.

This leads me to a fourth obſervation upon this remarkable paſſage, *viz.*

That if rightly underſtood, inſtead of furniſhing a juſt objection againſt the authority of Scripture, it rather confirmeth it, and ſhould increaſe our veneration for it. For we have here a moſt remarkable prophecy, which extended to events at the diſtance of many ages, and hath been wonderfully fulfilled in all it's parts. It is manifeſt, that what is here foretold concerning *Canaan*, *Shem*, and *Japheth* relateth to them not merely conſidered in their own perſons, but to their offspring, in whom it was chiefly to receive it's accompliſhment: as the bleſſings pronounced by *Iſaac* upon *Jacob* and *Eſau*, and

afterwards by *Jacob* upon his twelve ſons, though applied to them by name were principally to be underſtood of their deſcendants. Taking it in this view the prophecy here pronounced by *Noah* is of a great extent. The bleſſing which ſhould attend *Shem* is foretold, and it is intimated that God would be in a ſpecial manner his God, and would pour forth ſo many bleſſings upon his poſterity, as would lay a foundation for praiſes and thankſgivings; ſo that whoſoever obſerved it ſhould have reaſon to ſay, *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Shem.* And this was ſignally fulfilled; ſince among his poſterity the knowlege and worſhip of the true God was preſerved, when the reſt of the world was deeply immerſed in idolatry; and from his ſeed the great Meſſiah ſprung. It was alſo foretold, that *God ſhould enlarge Japheth.* And accordingly his poſterity wonderfully increaſed, and ſpread through a great part of the world. *Bochart* and others obſerved, that not only all *Europe*, but the leſſer *Aſia*, *Iberia*, *Albania*, part of *Armenia*, *Media*, and the vaſt regions in the northen parts of *Aſia*, and probably *America*, were peopled by his deſcendants. It is alſo foretold that he ſhould *dwell in the tents of Shem*, which was accompliſhed both by his poſterity's poſſeſſing part of the countries in which the *Shemites* inhabited, and eſpecially by their being admitted to a participation of the ſame ſpiritual privileges, and received into the true church. So that this may be regarded as

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an illuſtrious prophecy of the converſion of the *Gentiles*, many ages before it happened. As to that part of *Noah*'s prophecy which relateth to *Canaan*, this hath alſo received a remarkable completion. *Noah* was enabled to foretel the curſe and puniſhment which a long time after befel the *Canaanites* for their execrable wickedneſs and impurity. For that the true and proper ground of the puniſhment which was inflicted upon them was their own wickedneſs, is evident from many expreſs declarations of Scripture; particularly *Levit.* xviii. 24, 25, 27, 28. *Deut.* ix. 5. This wickedneſs of their's God perfectly foreſaw, and determined on the account of it to inflict exemplary puniſhment upon them; though he would not ſuffer the threatned puniſhment and curſe to take place, till their *iniquities were full*, *i. e.* till they were arrived at the height. And when this was the caſe, it tended to render the crime more remarkable, that it had been foretold ſo long before. And it was wiſely ordered, that this prophecy ſhould be recorded by *Moſes*, that when it came to be viſibly accompliſhed in *Canaan*'s poſterity, the hand of providence in it might be more diſtinctly obſerved. It is far therefore from being true, that *Noah* pronounced this in a *paſſion or drunken fit*, as his Lordſhip ſeems willing to repreſent it. It was not properly an imprecation, but a prophecy, and might be fitly rendered, *curſed ſhall Canaan be.* It was a prediction of what ſhould befal *Ham*'s deſcendants by *Canaan*, who re-

ſembled *Ham*, their anceſtor, in wickedneſs and impurity.

Lord *Bolingbroke* hath ſeveral little cavils, which are deſigned to invalidate the credit of this prophecy. One is, that *Canaan* was a ſervant of ſervants not to his *brethren*, as is foretold ver. 25. but to his *uncles*, viz. *Shem* and *Japheth*. But this objection ſeems to betray an utter ignorance of the *Hebrew* idiom, according to which the word *brethren* is of a large extent, and taketh in not only brothers ſtrictly ſo called, but even diſtant relations, of which many inſtances might be given. And it muſt be farther conſidered, that the prophecy was not properly deſigned to ſignify that *Canaan*, in perſon, ſhould be ſervant of ſervants to his uncles *Shem* and *Japheth*, but that his poſterity ſhould be ſervants to theirs, who might, by reaſon of the original relation between them, be called their *brethren*.

It is farther urged, that *Canaan* became a *ſervant of ſervants* unto *Shem* indeed, but not to *Japheth*, though this is foretold ver. 27. But this cavil is no better founded than the former. For the *Canaanites* became ſervants to the poſterity of *Japheth* as well as of *Shem*. The moſt powerful and famous of *Canaan*'s deſcendants, the *Tyrians* and *Carthaginians*, after having made a great figure in the world, were deſtroyed, or reduced to the moſt miſerable ſervitude; the former by the *Greeks* under *Alexander* the Great, the latter by the *Romans*.

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Another objection, which he inſinuates, is, that *Shem*'s poſterity were *ſervants of ſervants for above fourſcore years* to the *Egyptians*, who were the deſcendants of *Mizraim*, another of *Ham*'s ſons. But there is no pretence for urging this as a breach of the prediction, ſince no expreſs mention is made there of any of *Ham*'s ſons, but *Canaan*, concerning whom it is foretold, that he ſhould be ſervant of ſervants unto *Shem* and *Japheth*, which was remarkably fulfilled. Or, if we ſuppoſe, as many great divines have done, that the curſe was deſigned to extend to others of *Ham*'s poſterity, as well as the *Canaanites*, though not particularly mentioned in this ſhort account, becauſe *Moſes*'s deſign led him only to take expreſs notice of that part of the curſe which related to the *Canaanites*, who were more than ordinarily corrupt, and upon whom the curſe took place in the fulleſt manner; even on this view of it the prophecy may be fully juſtified. *Ham*'s deſcendants have had a brand upon them, and been generally among the moſt abject and wretched of the human race. It is true, that the *Iſraelites*, who were a branch of *Shem*'s poſterity, were for a time held in the bittereſt bondage by the *Egyptians*, who proceeded from them. This was permitted for very valuable ends, and ended in a glorious deliverance of the latter from the tyranny and oppreſſion of the former. To which it may be added, that notwithſtanding the *Egyptians* were for a long time

time a flouriſhing people, and had great power and dominion, yet they alſo became remarkably ſubjected to the poſterity of *Shem* and *Japheth*, and ſo have continued for a great number of ages. They have been ſubjected ſucceſſively to the *Perſians*, *Grecians*, *Romans*, *Saracens*, *Mamalukes*, *Turks*, ſo as to verify that remarkable prophecy of *Ezekiel*, that Egypt ſhould be *the baſeſt of kingdoms*, neither ſhould it *exalt itſelf any more among the nations*. Ezek. xxix. 15.

Thus it appears, that this boaſted objection, upon which ſo mighty a ſtreſs has been laid, as if it were alone ſufficient to overthrow the authority of Holy Writ, turneth out rather to the confirmation of it.

SECTION

SECTION II.

His Lordſhip's attempt againſt the Goſpel Hiſtory, and the Divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion conſidered.

HAVING examined what the late Lord *Bolingbroke* hath urged againſt the authority and credibility of the Scriptures of the *Old* Teſtament, let us next conſider the attempt he makes againſt the authority of the *New*. He had indeed, whilſt he expreſſed a great contempt of the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, affected to ſpeak with a favourable regard to Chriſtianity. But he afterwards throws off the diſguiſe, and makes it plainly appear, that he hath as little veneration and eſteem for the one as for the other. It is no great ſign of his reſpect for Chriſtianity, that at the ſame time that he does all he can to deſtroy the credit of the *Jewiſh* hiſtory, and to ſhew, that it is not at all to be depended upon, he declares——"that the foundation of the Chriſtian "ſyſtem is laid partly in thoſe hiſtories, and in "the prophecies joined to them, or inſerted in "them *"——But, not content with this general inſinuation, he afterwards proceedeth, in his fifth Letter, to a more direct attack upon the Chriſtian revelation †. He inſiſteth upon it, that the

* Vol. I. p. 91, 92. † Ibid. from p, 174. to 185.

facts,

facts, upon which the authority of the Chriſtian religion is founded, have not been proved as all hiſtorical facts, to which credit ſhould be given, ought to be proved. He declares to the noble Lord to whom he writes, that —— " this is a " matter of great moment; and that therefore " he makes no excuſe for the zeal which obliges " him to dwell a little on it *." —— And after having endeavoured to ſhew, that —— " there re- " mains at this time no ſtandard at all of Chri- " ſtianity," —— either in the text of Scripture, or in tradition, he argues, that —— " by conſe- " quence either this religion was not originally " of divine inſtitution; or elſe God has not pro- " vided effectually for preſerving the genuine " purity of it, and the gates of hell have " actually prevailed, in contradiction to his " promiſe, againſt the church. He muſt be " worſe than an Atheiſt that affirms the laſt; " and therefore the beſt effect of this reaſoning " that can be hoped for is, that men ſhould fall " into Theiſm, and ſubſcribe to the firſt." —— And accordingly he roundly declares, that —— " Chriſtianity may lean on the civil and eccleſi- " aſtical power, and be ſupported by the forcible " influence of education: but the proper force " of religion, that force which ſubdues the " mind, and awes the conſcience by conviction, " will be wanting *. —— He adds, —— " Since I " have ſaid ſo much on the ſubject in my zeal

* Vol. I. p. 176. † Ib. p. 180, 181, 182.

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" for Chriſtianity, I will add this further. The " reſurrection of letters was a fatal period: the " Chriſtian ſyſtem has been attacked, and wound- " ed too, very ſeverely ſince that time *." —— And again, ſpeaking of thoſe of the clergy who act for ſpiritual, not temporal ends, and are deſirous that men ſhould believe and practiſe the doctrines of Chriſtianity, he ſaith, that —— " they " will feel and own the weight of the con- " ſiderations he offers; and will agree, that " however the people have been, or may be, " amuſed, yet Chriſtianity has been in decay " ever ſince the reſurrection of letters †." —— This is an odd proof of his pretended *zeal for Chriſtianity*, to inſinuate, that all good and honeſt divines will agree with him, that Chriſtianity has been loſing ground ever ſince the revival of learning and knowlege; as if it could not bear the light, and only ſubſiſted by darkneſs and ignorance. It will help farther to ſhew his deſign in this, if we compare it with what he ſaith in his ſixth Letter ‡; where he mentions the reſurrection of letters, after the art of printing had been invented, as one of the principal cauſes that contributed to the diminution of the papal authority and uſurpations. And he obſerves, that —— " as ſoon as the means of ac- " quiring and ſpreading information grew com- " mon, it is no wonder that a ſyſtem was un- " ravelled, which could not have been woven

* Vol. I. p. 182. † Ib. p. 185. ‡ Ib. p. 206, 207.

" with ſucceſs in any age, but thoſe of groſs " ignorance, and credulous ſuperſtition."—We may ſee by this what a compliment he deſigns to Chriſtianity, when he repreſents it as having received a fatal blow at the reſurrection of letters, and as having been in decay ever ſince. He plainly puts it on a level with the papal authority and uſurpation, and ſuppoſes the ſame of Chriſtianity that he does of popery, that it was a ſyſtem which could only have been woven in the ages of ignorance and ſuperſtition, which owed its reception and prevalency to times of darkneſs, and has been decaying ever ſince the means of acquiring and ſpreading information grew common.

This may ſuffice to ſhew the reſpect that the writer of theſe Letters bears to Chriſtianity. Before I enter on a diſtinct examination of what he hath offered, I would obſerve, that he endeavoureth to prepare his way by declaiming, for ſeveral pages together, againſt the prieſts, divines, and eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, on the account of that ſpirit of lying that hath prevailed among them in all ages*. But he himſelf well obſerves and proves, in oppoſition to an hiſtorical Pyrrhoniſm, that though there have been abundance of lyes and falſe hiſtory put upon the world, this ought not to diminiſh the credit of the true. And therefore the frauds and falſhoods of many that have profeſſed a zeal for Chriſti-

* Vol. I. p. 123. et ſeq.

anity, ought to be no prejudice againſt the authority of the New Teſtament, or the credibility of the facts on which it is ſupported, provided it can be ſhewn, that theſe facts come to us with a ſufficient degree of evidence to make it reaſonable for us to receive them as true.

If, as he aſſerts—"numberleſs fables have "been invented to ſupport Judaiſm and Chri-"ſtianity; and for this purpoſe falſe hiſtory as "well as falſe miracles have been employed;"—it is certain, that no perſons have taken greater pains, or been more ſucceſsful in their attempts to detect and expoſe ſuch frauds, and falſe hiſtory, than Chriſtian divines and critics; many of whom have exerciſed themſelves this way with great judgment and impartiality, as being ſenſible, that Chriſtianity needeth no ſuch ſupports; and that ſuch frauds diſhonour the cauſe they are intended to ſerve. If we examine the New Teſtament, we ſhall find no encouragement there given to ſuch methods. A remarkable ſimplicity, and impartial regard to truth, every-where appear. And to lye for the glory of God, or to *do evil that good may come* of it, is there moſt expreſly condemned. It was when men began to fall from the true original ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and, not content with the ſimplicity of religion as Chriſt and his Apoſtles left it, attempted to bring in innovations, additions, alterations in the Chriſtian doctrine and worſhip; it was then that fraud and impoſture, or a fooliſh credulity, began to prevail, and grew more and more, the

farther

farther they removed from the firſt and pureſt ages. And it is capable of a clear proof, that it was principally in favour of thoſe corrupt additions, and abuſes of Chriſtianity, that falſe hiſtory and falſe miracles have been artfully contrived, and zealouſly propagated. And why ſhould it be turned to the diſadvantage of the goſpel hiſtory or miracles, that hiſtory has been corrupted and falſified in favour of doctrines or practices, *e.g.* the *invocation of ſaints, purgatory*, the *worſhip of images, relics*, &c. which Chriſtianity has not countenanced or authorized? To which it may be added, that it is plainly foretold in the New Teſtament, that there ſhould be a great APOSTASY from the purity of religion, and that the corruption ſhould be introduced, and carried on, by *ſigns, and lying wonders*. And if this hath actually been the caſe, inſtead of furniſhing a proper objection againſt true original Chriſtianity, it affordeth a manifeſt proof of the perfect foreknowlege of its divine Author.

He ſeems to lay a great ſtreſs upon it, that—"the church has had this advantage over her "adverſaries——that the works of thoſe who "have written againſt her have been deſtroyed; "and whatever ſhe advanced to juſtify herſelf, "and to defame her adverſaries, is preſerved in "her annals, and the writings of her doctors *. "——And he takes particular notice of *Gregory* "the Great's proclaiming war to all heathen

* Vol. I. p. 127, 128.

"learning,

" learning, in order to promote Chriſtian ve-
" rity*." But it is certain, that the humour of deſtroying the heathen writings never generally obtained in the Chriſtian church. On the contrary, it was principally owing to Chriſtians, that ſo many of thoſe writings have been tranſmitted to us. The *Mahometans*, and ſome of the barbarous nations, deſtroyed *libraries*, and monuments of learning, where-ever they came. But it is a matter of fact not to be conteſted, that great numbers of heathen writings and monuments have been preſerved; by Chriſtians they have been preſerved; and from thence the learned have been able to give an ample account of their *religion*, *rites*, *laws*, and *hiſtory*. And this is ſo far from being a diſadvantage to Chriſtianity, that great uſe hath been made of the heathen learning to ſerve and promote the Chriſtian cauſe. The emperor JULIAN was ſo ſenſible of this, that he formed a deſign of modelling the ſchools ſo, that the Chriſtians ſhould not be acquainted with the heathen writers. As to the books that have been written againſt Chriſtianity †, it is poſſible that the ill-judged zeal

* Vol. I. p. 131.

† The heathen writings againſt Chriſtianity ſeem not to have been much eſteemed among the pagans themſelves; and this may be one reaſon why they were not very carefully preſerved. There is a remarkable paſſage of *Chryſoſtom*, to this purpoſe, who in a diſcourſe addreſſed to the heathens obſerves, That the philoſophers, and famous rhetoricians, who wrote againſt Chriſtianity, had only rendered themſelves ridiculous: that they had not been able to perſuade any one among ſo many people, either wiſe or

zeal of ſome Chriſtians may have occaſioned the loſs of ſome of them: but I am apt to think it was owing, in moſt inſtances, to the ſame cauſes and accidents, to which we muſt attribute the loſs of ſo many antient monuments, and admired writings, not only of the heathens, but of eminent fathers, and antient writers of the Chriſtian church. Many celebrated apologies for Chriſtianity, and books in defence of religion, have been loſt; when, on the contrary, the works even of *Lucretius*, a ſyſtem of *Epicuriſm*, the life of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and others of the like ſort, have come down to our times.

Theſe inſinuations do not properly come up to the main point. But in his fifth Letter, under pretence of giving advice to divines, and ſhewing, that it is incumbent upon them to apply themſelves to the ſtudy of hiſtory, he ſets himſelf more directly to attack the authority of the Chriſtian religion, and to ſubvert, as far as in him lieth, the foundations on which the proof of its divine original depends. And the courſe of his reaſoning is plainly this: that Chriſtianity is wholly founded upon facts; and that thoſe facts do not come to us with a ſufficient degree of evidence to be relied on: they have not been

ſimple, man or woman, that the books written by them were had in ſuch contempt, that they diſappeared almoſt as ſoon as they were publiſhed; and that if any of them were preſerved, it was among Chriſtians that one might find them. *Chryſ.* Tom. II. p. 539. *Edit. Bened.*

proved as matters of fact ought to be proved. He declares, that——" it has been long matter " of aſtoniſhment to him, that Chriſtian divines, " thoſe of them that can be called ſo without " a ſneer, could take ſo much ſilly pains to " eſtabliſh myſtery on metaphyſics, revelation " on philoſophy, and matters of fact on abſtract " reaſoning. A religion founded on the authority " of a divine miſſion, confirmed by prophecies " and miracles, appeals to facts: and the facts " muſt be proved, as all other facts that paſs " for authentic, are proved. If they are thus " proved, the religion will prevail without the " aſſiſtance of ſo much profound reaſoning: if " they are not thus proved, the authority of it " will ſink in the world, even with this aſſiſt- " ance *."——He therefore blames the divines for uſing improper proofs in their diſputes with Theiſts. He asks——" What do they mean to " din improper proofs in ears that are open " to proper proofs?——Thus it is that he cha- racterizes the Deiſts; and afterwards he de- ſcribes them as perſons——" of minds candid, " but not implicit; willing to be informed, but " curious to examine *." But how different is the account he giveth even of the moſt learned Chriſtians! He affirms, that——" they have not " been hitherto impartial enough, or ſagacious " enough, to take an accurate examination of " the Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſyſtem, or have not

* Vol. I. p. 175. † Ibid. p. 179.

" been honeſt enough to communicate it*."— This is a very ſevere and confident cenſure. There have been many perſons, not only among divines, but among the laity, of diſtinguiſhed eminence for probity and virtue, as well as for learning and judgment, and who, to ſpeak modeſtly, were in theſe reſpects no way inferior to the late Lord *Bolingbroke*, that have profeſſed to examine, with all the attention they were capable of, and with an earneſt deſire of knowing the truth, the evidences of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſyſtem: but becauſe, as the reſult of their inquiries, they were confirmed in the belief of the divine original of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelation, therefore, in his judgment, not one of them was honeſt or ſagacious enough to make an accurate examination: and I apprehend they have no other way of obtaining the character of ſagacity or impartiality from writers of this caſt, but by renouncing Chriſtianity. If they do this, they ſhall be allowed to be ſagacious and impartial inquirers; but otherwiſe, they muſt be content to have their judgment or honeſty called in queſtion. But if we may judge, by the writings of the Deiſts that have hitherto appeared, not excepting thoſe of his lordſhip, they have not given very favourable indications, either of an uncommon ſagacity, or of a candid and impartial inquiry.

He tells the noble lord to whom he writes,— " You will find reaſon perhaps to think as I do,

* Vol. I. p. 181.

" that it is high time the clergy in all Chriſtian " communions ſhould join their forces, and " eſtabliſh thoſe hiſtorical facts, which are the " foundations of the whole ſyſtem, on clear " and unqueſtionable hiſtorical authority, ſuch " as they require in all caſes of moment from " others, and reject candidly what cannot be " thus eſtabliſhed *."——

Chriſtian divines have frequently done what his lordſhip blames them for not doing. The facts on which the Chriſtian ſyſtem is founded, relate principally to what is recorded in the writings of the New Teſtament concerning the *holy life*, and excellent *character*, of our bleſſed *Saviour*, his admirable *diſcourſes*, the many illuſtrious *miracles* he performed during the courſe of his perſonal miniſtry in proof of his divine miſſion, his *reſurrection* from the dead, and conſequent *exaltation*, the extraordinary *effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt* upon his diſciples, and the miraculous atteſtations that were given to his Apoſtles, and the firſt publiſhers of the Chriſtian revelation. The queſtion is, what reaſon have we to think that thoſe facts were really done? His lordſhip requires, that theſe facts ſhould be proved, as all other facts that paſs for authentic are proved; and that divines ſhould eſtabliſh the credit of thoſe facts on clear and unqueſtionable hiſtorical authority, ſuch as they require in all caſes of moment from others. The Chriſtian

* Vol. I. p. 183.

divines are willing to join iſſue on this point. The beſt, the propereſt way of proving the truth of antient facts is undoubtedly by authentic accounts publiſhed in the age in which the facts were done, and tranſmitted with ſufficient marks of credibility to our own times. And ſeveral things are to be conſidered, in order to our judging whether, and how far, thoſe accounts may be depended on.——If the facts there related were of a public nature, done for the moſt part in *open* view, and for which an appeal is made to numbers of witneſſes:—if the accounts of thoſe facts were given by perſons that were perfectly well acquainted with the facts, and who, having had full opportunity to know them, were themſelves abſolutely perſuaded of the truth and reality of thoſe facts:— if they appear from their whole character to have been perſons of great probity, and undeſigning ſimplicity, and who could have no wordly intereſt to ſerve by feigning or diſguiſing thoſe facts; and if their prejudices had not any tendency to bias them in favour of thoſe facts, but the contrary:—if the writings themſelves have all the characters of genuine ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, that can be reaſonably deſired:—and if they can be clearly traced from the age in which they were written, and the facts were ſaid to be done, through the ſucceeding ages, to our own times:—and finally, if it is undeniably evident, that there were ſurpriſing effects produced in the very age in which the facts were ſaid to be done,

done, and which cannot otherwiſe be accounted for, than by allowing the truth of thoſe facts, and the effects of which continue to this day:—where theſe ſeveral circumſtances concur, they lay a juſt foundation for receiving the accounts given of facts as true.——According to the juſteſt rules of criticiſm, ſuch accounts of facts may be depended on: and many facts are generally received and believed, that fall greatly ſhort of this evidence.

Now it is capable of being proved, it has been often proved with great clearneſs and ſtrength, that all theſe circumſtances concur in relation to the important facts on which the Chriſtian ſyſtem is founded. The facts themſelves were, for the moſt part, done in open view, and of which there were many witneſſes. Chriſt's whole perſonal miniſtry was a very public thing. The ſcene of it was not laid in a dark obſcure corner, nor was it carried on merely in a private way. His admirable diſcourſes were, for the moſt part, delivered, and his miracles wrought, in places of the moſt public concourſe, before great multitudes of people, and even before his enemies themſelves, and thoſe who were moſt ſtrongly prejudiced againſt him. Many of his wonderful works are repreſented as having been done at *Jeruſalem*, at the time of their ſolemn feſtivals, when there was a vaſt concourſe of people from all parts. The ſame may be ſaid of the remarkable circumſtances which attended his crucifixion, the earthquake, the ſplitting of the

rock, the extraordinary preternatural darkneſs that covered the whole land for the ſpace of three hours, *&c.* which things happened at the time of the Jewiſh paſſover; and could not have been impoſed upon the people of that age, if they had not been known to be inconteſtably true. And the relating ſuch things was, in effect, appealing to thouſands of witneſſes. And though Jeſus did not appear publicly after his reſurrection to all the people; yet, beſides that he ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion by many infallible proofs, to his Apoſtles and others, who beſt knew him, and were therefore moſt capable of judging that it was he himſelf, and not another; and was ſeen even by five hundred at once, who all concurred in their teſtimony; beſides this, the extraordinary effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon his diſciples on the day of *Penteçoſt*, which was the moſt illuſtrious confirmation of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, is repreſented to have been of the moſt public nature, in the preſence of vaſt multitudes then gathered together at *Jeruſalem* from all parts of the world. To which it may be added, that many of the miracles that were wrought in the name, and by the power, of a riſen Jeſus, and which were ſo many additional proofs of his reſurrection, were alſo done in open view, before great numbers of people. The accounts of theſe facts were written and publiſhed in the very age in which the facts were done, and the laws and doctrines delivered which are there recorded, and by perſons who

appear

appear to have been perfectly acquainted with the things they relate, and fully perſuaded of the truth of them. And many of the facts were of ſuch a nature, and ſo circumſtanced, that they could not be deceived in them, allowing them to have had their ſenſes, which I think it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe.

The writers of theſe accounts appear to have been perſons of plain ſenſe, and of great probity and ſimplicity, and to have had a ſincere regard to truth. They write without art, without paſſion, or any of that heat which enthuſiaſm is wont to inſpire. They take no pains to prepoſſeſs or captivate the reader; but content themſelves with a plain ſimple narration of facts, without ornament, amplification, or diſguiſe. They relate, with a calm ſimplicity, and in a manner that hath not the leaſt ſign of an overheated imagination, Chriſt's wonderful actions, and excellent diſcourſes, without interpoſing any reflections of their own. With the ſame coolneſs they relate the bitter cenſures, the ſcoffs and reproaches, that were caſt upon him by his adverſaries, and the grievous and ignominious ſufferings he endured, without expreſſing their indignation againſt the authors of them. And it is obſervable, that they do not repreſent him, as one might be apt to expect they would have done, as triumphing over thoſe ſufferings with an exulting bravery, but rather as manifeſting great tenderneſs of heart and ſenſibility under them,

them, though mixed with a remarkable conſtancy and reſignation.

It is a farther proof of that impartial regard to truth, which is obſervable in the writers of thoſe accounts, that, though ſome of them were Apoſtles themſelves, and others their ſpecial friends and intimates, yet they relate, without diſguiſe, things which ſeem to bear hard upon their characters. They relate not only the lowneſs and meanneſs of their condition and circumſtances, but their ignorance, their dulneſs of apprehenſion, the weakneſs of their faith, the power of their prejudices, their vain ambition, and contentions among themſelves who ſhould be the greateſt, the reproofs they received from their Lord, their cowardly forſaking him in his laſt ſufferings, and particularly the ſhameful fall of *Peter*, one of the chief of them, and his denial of his Lord and maſter, with the aggravating circumſtances that attended it. They have not attempted to conceal any of theſe things, which they might eaſily have done, or to excuſe or diſguiſe them; than which nothing could better ſhew their impartiality, and love of truth.

It farther ſtrengthens the credit of their relations, when it is conſidered, that they had no temptation to diſguiſe or falſify the great facts recorded in the Goſpels, in order to ſerve any worldly intereſt, or to humour and confirm any darling prejudices. On the contrary, it appeareth, that they were themſelves brought, by the irreſiſtible evidence of the facts they relate, to em-

brace

brace a religion, which was not only contrary to their worldly intereſts, and expoſed them to all manner of reproaches, perſecutions, and ſufferings, but which was alſo contrary to their former moſt favourite notions, and rooted prejudices. For what could be more contrary to the notions and prejudices, which then univerſally poſſeſſed the minds of the Jews, both of the learned and of the vulgar, than the doctrine of a crucified Meſſiah, who was to erect a kingdom, not of this world, but of a ſpiritual nature, in the benefits and privileges of which the Gentiles were to be joint ſharers with the Jews? And, finally, they gave the higheſt proof of their being themſelves perſuaded of the truth of thoſe facts, by their perſiſting in their teſtimony with an unſhaken conſtancy, in oppoſition to all the powers and terrors of this world. To this it may be added, that the writings themſelves have all the characters of genuine purity, ſimplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, that any writings can have; nor is there any thing in them that gives the leaſt ground of ſuſpicion of their having been written in any later age, or that ſavours of the ſpirit of this world, of ambition, avarice, or ſenſuality. And theſe writings have been tranſmitted to us with an unqueſtionable evidence, greater than can be produced for any other writings in the world. We can clearly trace them through all the intermediate ages up to that immediately ſucceeding the Apoſtles, and have the moſt convincing proof of their having been

been ſtill extant, and ſtill received and acknowleged among Chriſtians. There are great numbers of books, now in our hands, that were written and publiſhed in the ſeveral ages between that time and this, in which there are continual references to the Goſpels, and other ſacred books of the New Teſtament. And by the numerous quotations from them, and large portions tranſcribed out of them in every age, it is inconteſtably manifeſt, that the accounts of the facts, diſcourſes, doctrines, *&c.* which now appear in them, are the ſame that were to be found in them in the firſt ages. Innumerable copies of them were ſoon ſpread abroad in different nations: they have been tranſlated into various languages: many commentaries have been written upon them by different authors, who have inſerted the ſacred text in their writings: they have been conſtantly applied to on many occaſions, by perſons of different ſects, parties, inclinations, and intereſts. Theſe are things which no man can be ſo hardy as to deny. And by this kind of evidence, the greateſt and the moſt convincing which the nature of the thing can poſſibly admit of, we are aſſured, that the evangelical records, which are now in our hands, have been tranſmitted ſafe to us, and are the ſame that were originally publiſhed in the apoſtolical age; and that a general corruption of them, or a ſubſtitution of other accounts inſtead of them, if any had attempted it, would have been an impoſſible thing.

Taking

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, it appeareth, that never were there any accounts of facts that better deſerved to be depended on. And what mightily confirmeth the credit of thoſe writings, and of the facts there related, is, that it cannot be conteſted, that great numbers, both of Jews and heathens, upon the credit of thoſe facts, forſaking the religion of their anceſtors, were brought to receive the religion of Jeſus in the firſt age, when they had the beſt opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of thoſe facts: and this in oppoſition to their moſt inveterate prejudices, and when, by embracing it, they expoſed themſelves to all manner of evils and ſufferings. The ſpreading of the Chriſtian religion, as the caſe was circumſtanced, furniſheth a very ſtrong proof of the truth of the facts on which it was founded, and cannot otherwiſe be accounted for.

Our author aſſerts,—that, "if the facts can "be proved, the Chriſtian religion will prevail, "without the aſſiſtance of profound reaſoning: "but, if the facts cannot be proved, the autho- "rity of it will ſink in the world, even with "this aſſiſtance *"—I think it may be fairly argued from this, that if the extraordinary facts had not been true, on the evidence of which alone Chriſtianity is founded, it muſt have ſunk at the very beginning, and could never have been eſtabliſhed in the world at all; conſidering the

* Vol. I. p. 175.

nature

nature of this religion, and the difficulties and oppoſitions it had to encounter with. It was manifeſtly contrary to the prevailing prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles: it tended entirely to ſubvert the whole ſyſtem of the pagan ſuperſtition and idolatry, which was wrought into their civil conſtitution, and upon which the proſperity of the *Roman* empire, and the eſtabliſhment of their ſtate, were thought to depend. It alſo tended to ſet aſide the peculiar polity of the Jews, upon which they ſo highly valued themſelves, and to ſubvert all the pleaſing hopes and expectations of the temporal kingdom of the Meſſiah, with which they were ſo infinitely delighted. It obliged men to receive one that had been ignominiouſly condemned and crucified, as their Redeemer and their Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. It propoſed no temporal advantages to its votaries, to bribe men to embrace it; gave no indulgence to their corrupt luſts, nor had any thing in it to ſooth and gratify their vicious appetites and inclinations. At the ſame time it had all the powers of the world engaged againſt it: yet it ſoon triumphed over all oppoſition, though propagated by the ſeemingly meaneſt inſtruments; and made an aſtoniſhing progreſs through a great part of the *Roman* empire, then the moſt knowing and civilized part of the earth. This is a ſtrong additional confirmation of the truth of thoſe accounts which are contained in the Goſpel records; ſince there could not be, as the caſe

was

was circumſtanced, any poſſible inducement to Jews or Gentiles to embrace Chriſtianity, but a thorough conviction of its divine original, and of the truth of thoſe extraordinary facts by which it was atteſted.

And if the firſt propagators of this religion had offered no other proof but their own words in ſupport of it, and in confirmation of the divine authority of a crucified Jeſus, it cannot, with any conſiſtency, be ſuppoſed, that a ſcheme of religion, ſo deſtitute of all worldly advantages, and ſo oppoſite to mens prejudices, as well as vices, and which ſubjected thoſe that made profeſſion of it to ſuch bitter reproaches and perſecutions, could poſſibly have prevailed in the world.

If, at the time when Chriſtianity made its firſt appearance in the world, it had been embraced by the *Roman* emperor, as it afterwards was by *Conſtantine the Great*, if it had been countenanced by the higher powers, there might have been ſome pretence for aſcribing the progreſs it made to the encouragement it met with from the great and powerful. The author of theſe Letters, ſpeaking of the miracles ſaid to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *Paris*, obſerves,——

" That, if the firſt miniſter had been a Janſeniſt,
" all *France* had kept his feſtival, and thoſe
" ſilly impoſtures would have been tranſmitted,
" in all the ſolemn pomp of hiſtory, from the
" knaves of this age to the fools of the next*."—

* Vol. I. p. 125, 126.

But

But this very inſtance, in which the Deiſts have triumphed ſo much, may be turned againſt them, ſince it affordeth a plain proof, how difficult it is to maintain the credit of miraculous facts, when they are diſcountenanced by the civil power. The miracles ſuppoſed to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *Paris* were quaſhed, and a ſtop put to the courſe of the miraculous operations, and the falſhood of ſome of them plainly detected, notwithſtanding there was a numerous, a powerful, and artful body of men engaged in reputation and intereſt to ſupport the credit of them. It may therefore be juſtly concluded, that if the extraordinary facts, on which Chriſtianity was founded, had been falſe, the credit of them muſt ſoon have ſunk, and that religion with it, when all the reigning powers of the world, Jewiſh and Heathen joined their force and influence to ſuppreſs it*.

In what hath been ſaid above, to ſhew the credit that is due to the accounts given of the facts by which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, it is ſuppoſed, that theſe accounts were written by Chriſt's own diſciples, or their moſt intimate companions, and in the firſt age, the age in which the facts were done, *i. e.* by perſons perfectly well acquainted with thoſe facts. But this is what our author ſeems unwilling to allow. In his fifth Letter, after having obſerved, that—

* The difficulties Chriſtianity had to encounter with, are elegantly repreſented by Mr. *Weſt*, in his admirable treatiſe on the Reſurrection.

" falſe

" falſe hiſtory has been employed to propagate " Chriſtianity formerly, and that the ſame abuſe " of hiſtory is ſtill continued"——He inſtances in Mr. *Abbadie*'s ſaying, that—" the Goſpel " of St. *Matthew* is cited by *Clemens* biſhop of " *Rome*, a diſciple of the Apoſtles; that *Bar-* " *nabas* cites it in his Epiſtle; that *Ignatius* and " *Polycarp* receive it; and that the ſame fathers " give teſtimony for St. *Mark*—He adds, that —" the biſhop of *London*, in his third Paſtoral " Letter, ſpeaks to the ſame effect."——And then he proceeds——" I preſume the fact ad- " vanced by the miniſter and the biſhop, is a " miſtake. If the fathers of the firſt century do " mention ſome paſſages that are agreeable to " what we read in our Evangeliſts, will it fol- " low, that theſe fathers had the ſame Goſpels " before them? To ſay ſo, is a manifeſt abuſe " of hiſtory, and quite inexcuſable in writers " that knew, or might have known, that theſe " fathers made uſe of other Goſpels, wherein " ſuch paſſages might be contained, or they " might be preſerved in unwritten tradition. " Beſides which, I would almoſt venture to af- " firm, that the fathers of the firſt century do " not expreſly name the Goſpels we have of " *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John**"——His deſign is plainly to ſignify, that there is no proof, that the Goſpels, the books of the Evangeliſts which we now have in our hands, were written in the firſt age of Chriſtianity.

* Vol. I. p. 177, 178.

As this is a matter of importance, I ſhall offer ſome obſervations upon it.

And, firſt, It is to be obſerved, that though but few of the writings of the fathers of the firſt century are come down to us, and thoſe generally very ſhort; yet it cannot be denied, that in all theſe writings the facts recorded in the Goſpels, eſpecially relating to our Lord's paſſion and reſurrection, and the ſcheme of religion there taught, are all along ſuppoſed, and referred to, as of undoubted truth and certainty, and of divine original: ſo that thoſe writings of the apoſtolical fathers bear teſtimony materially to the Goſpels, and to the facts there related, and come in aid of thoſe accounts. It is alſo manifeſt, that there are ſeveral particular paſſages quoted in theſe writings, which ſeem plainly to refer to paſſages that are now found in the Evangeliſts; and theſe paſſages are mentioned in a manner which ſhews, that they regarded them as of divine authority. Nor is it a valid objection againſt this, that they do not cite the Goſpels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, by name: for it is not their cuſtom, in mentioning paſſages of Scripture, to name the particular books out of which theſe paſſages are extracted; they content themſelves with producing the paſſages, or giving the ſenſe of them. Thus they generally do with regard to teſtimonies produced from the ſacred books of the Old Teſtament: and yet no one will deny, that they had thoſe books in their hands, and acknowleged their divine authority.

Barnabas,

Barnabas, in his Epiſtle, has ſome plain references to paſſages that are to be found in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel. And, with regard to one of them, he introduceth it with ſaying, *It is written*; which was a form of quotation uſual among the Jews in citing their Sacred Books; and ſeems plainly to ſhew, that he referred to written accounts of the actions and diſcourſes of our Saviour.

Clement, in his Epiſtle, mentions ſeveral remarkable paſſages in our Lord's diſcourſes, recorded by the Evangeliſts, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; he calls them, *the words of the Lord Jeſus, which he ſpake*; and repreſents them as of the higheſt authority, and deſerving the greateſt regard.

Ignatius hath ſeveral paſſages, which either are plain references, or manifeſt alluſions, to paſſages that are to be found in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, and to ſeveral other books of the New Teſtament. He tells thoſe to whom he writes, that they—"ought to hearken to the Prophets, "but eſpecially to the Goſpel, in which the paſ-"ſion has been manifeſted to us, and the reſur-"rection perfected *."—Where, as by *the Prophets* are undoubtedly to be underſtood the prophetical writings, ſo by *the Goſpel* ſeem plainly to be underſtood the writings of the Evangeliſts, collected into one book called the Goſpel. And in other paſſages he ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe †,

* Ep. ad Smyrn. S. 7. † Ep. ad Philadelph. S. 5, and 9.

and in a manner which ſhews, that this book of the Goſpel was of the moſt ſacred authority among Chriſtians.

Polycarp, in his Epiſtle, though very ſhort, hath many paſſages that plainly refer or allude to texts of the New Teſtament. And, quoting ſome paſſages which are expreſly found in the Evangeliſts, he introduces them thus, *The Lord hath ſaid*. He expreſſes his confidence, that the *Philippians*, to whom he writes, were *well exerciſed in the Holy Scriptures*. And it is manifeſt from what he there adds, that by the Holy Scriptures he particularly intends the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament: which ſhews, that they were had in the greateſt veneration by the Chriſtians of that age.

He that would ſee a more diſtinct account of theſe things, may conſult the learned Dr. *Lardner*'s accurate collection of paſſages from the apoſtolical fathers, in his *Credibility of the Goſpel-hiſtory*, Part II. Vol. I.

It appeareth from this brief account, that the apoſtolical fathers have taken as much notice of the evangelical writings, as could be reaſonably expected, or as they had occaſion to do. And therefore I ſee not why Mr. *Abbadie* ſhould be charged with an abuſe of hiſtory, for repreſenting the fathers of the firſt century, as having cited the books of the Evangeliſts; ſince though they do not expreſly quote them by name, yet they quote paſſages as of ſacred authority, which are to be found in theſe books: and therefore it

may

may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that they refer to thoſe books, which, as I ſhall preſently ſhew, were then extant, and the authority of which was then acknowleged.

But it is urged, that if the fathers of the firſt century do mention ſome paſſages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangeliſts, it does not follow, that they had the ſame Goſpels before them; becauſe—"thoſe fathers made uſe "of other Goſpels, wherein ſuch paſſages might "be contained, or they might be preſerved in "unwritten tradition."—But this way of ſtating the caſe does not afford the leaſt preſumption, that the books of our Evangeliſts were not then extant. It is only ſuppoſed, that there might be other accounts in that age, in which the ſame things might be contained; and that the actions and diſcourſes of our Lord were well known among the Chriſtians of the firſt age, both by written accounts, and by tradition received from the preaching of the Apoſtles. And this certainly confirmeth, inſtead of invalidating, the accounts given in the Goſpels; and ſuppoſeth the facts there recorded to have been of well-known credit and authority. But he ought not to mention it as a thing that is and muſt be acknowleged by all the learned, that thoſe fathers of the firſt century made uſe of other Goſpels beſides thoſe of the Evangeliſts. It cannot be proved, that they ever refer to any other Goſpels. The only paſſage in all the apoſtolical fathers, which ſeems to look that way, is one in *Ignatius*,

which ſome ſuppoſe was taken out of the Goſpel of the *Hebrews*, which itſelf was really St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, with ſome interpolations and additions; and yet that paſſage may be fairly interpreted, as referring to the words of our Saviour, recorded by St. *Luke*, Ch. xxiv. 39 *.

It may be gathered indeed from the introduction to St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, that many, in that firſt age, had undertaken to write an account of the hiſtory of our Saviour's life, miracles, diſcourſes, *&c.* but it does not appear, that thoſe writings were generally received among Chriſtians as authentic; probably becauſe they were not done with ſufficient exactneſs, and had a mixture of things falſe or uncertain. And therefore it is not likely, that the paſſages, referred to by the fathers of the firſt century, were taken from thoſe writings: it is far more probable, that they were taken from the books of the Evangeliſts, where we ſtill find them, and which were then extant, and their authority acknowleged among Chriſtians.

That the Goſpels which we have now in our hands were undoubtedly extant in the apoſtolical age, and regarded as authentic, admitteth of a clear proof, if it be conſidered, that in the age immediately ſucceeding we find them univerſally received and acknowleged in the Chriſtian church. There are ſeveral books come down to our times, which were written by authors who unqueſtionably lived in the ſecond

* See *Lardner*'s Credibility, *&c.* Part II. Vol. I. p. 184, 185, 186.

century,

century, in which theſe Goſpels are frequently, and by name, referred to as of divine authority; and many expreſs quotations drawn from them, by which it is manifeſt, that they were then received with great veneration in the Chriſtian churches. And it appeareth, from the firſt Apology of *Juſtin Martyr*, publiſhed about an hundred years after the death of our Saviour, that it was then the ordinary practice to read the *memoirs of the Apoſtles*, and the *writings of the Prophets*, in the religious aſſemblies of Chriſtians. And that, by the *memoirs of the Apoſtles*, he means the books of the Evangeliſts, is evident from ſeveral paſſages in his writings; and particularly from a paſſage in this very Apology, where, having mentioned the *memoirs compoſed by the Apoſtles*, he adds, *which are called Goſpels:* and there are frequent citations from all of them in his writings; which plainly ſhew, that he looked upon thoſe books as authentic hiſtories of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſame may be obſerved concerning other writers in that century. And ſince it is manifeſt, that the four Goſpels were generally received, and had in the higheſt eſteem and veneration, among Chriſtians in the ſecond century, even in the former part of it (for that Apology was written about the year 139 or 140.); this plainly ſheweth, that the Goſpels muſt have been written and publiſhed in the apoſtolical age itſelf. And it was, becauſe they were known to have been written by the Apoſtles, or their companions and intimates; and that the accounts

there given were authentic, and abſolutely to be depended upon; that theſe writings were ſo early and generally received. *Euſebius*, ſpeaking of *Quadratus*, and other eminent perſons, who—"held the firſt rank in the ſucceſſion of "the Apoſtles,"—informs us,—"that they, tra-"velling abroad, performed the work of Evan-"geliſts, being ambitious to preach Chriſt, and "deliver the Scripture of the divine Goſpels*."—The perſons he ſpeaketh of flouriſhed in the reign of *Trajan*, in the beginning of the ſecond century, and had undoubtedly lived a good part of their time in the firſt; and their carrying the books of the Goſpels with them where they preached, and delivering them to their converts, ſheweth, that thoſe Goſpels were then well known to be genuine, and had in great eſteem. And indeed if they had not been written in the apoſtolical age, and then known to be genuine, it cannot be conceived, that ſo ſoon after, even in the next age, they could have been ſo generally diſperſed, and ſtatedly read in the Chriſtian aſſemblies, and regarded as of equal authority with the writings of the antient prophets, which had been for ſome ages read in the ſynagogues on the Sabbath-days. And though a great clamour hath been raiſed concerning ſome ſpurious Goſpels, which appeared in the primitive times, there is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that the four Goſpels, and thoſe only, were ge-

* *Euſeb.* Eccleſ. hiſt. lib. iii. cap. 37.

nerally

nerally received as of divine authority in the Chriſtian church, in the ages neareſt the Apoſtles; and have continued ſo ever ſince, and have been all along regarded with the profoundeſt veneration.

To this it ought to be added, that the heathen writers, who lived neareſt thoſe times, never pretended to deny, that the books of the Evangeliſts received among Chriſtians were written by Chriſt's own diſciples. *Celſus* lived in the ſecond century. He ſpeaks of Jeſus the author of the Chriſtian religion, as having lived πρὸ πάνυ ὀλίγων ἐτῶν, *a very few years before.* He mentions many things recorded in our Evangeliſts, relating to the *birth*, *life*, *miracles*, *ſufferings*, and *reſurrection*, of Jeſus Chriſt; and tells the Chriſtians—"Theſe things we have "produced out of your own writings."—He all along ſuppoſeth them to have been written by Chriſt's own diſciples, that lived and converſed with him, though he does all he can to ridicule and expoſe them*. To this it may be added, that the emperor *Julian*, who flouriſhed about the middle of the fourth century, and who was both of great acuteneſs, and very well diſpoſed to take all advantages againſt Chriſtianity, and had, no doubt, an opportunity of reading whatſoever books had been written againſt the Chriſtians before his time, never pretends to conteſt the Goſpels being written by

* *Orig.* contra *Celſ.* lib. ii. p. 67, 69, 70.

Chriſt's

Chriſt's own diſciples, and thoſe whoſe names they bear, *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*; whom he expreſly mentions as the writers of thoſe books*; though, no doubt, he would have been very well pleaſed, if he could have met with any proof or preſumption that could make it probable, that the books of the Evangeliſts, ſo generally received among Chriſtians, were written, not by Chriſt's own immediate diſciples, or their companions, or in the apoſtolical age, but were compiled afterwards, and falſly aſcribed to the Apoſtles. To which it may be added, that none of the *Jews*, in any of their writings againſt Chriſtianity, though they often mention the books of the Evangeliſts, have ever pretended, that thoſe books were not written by thoſe to whom they are attributed; but by others, in after-times, under their names: nor do they ever mention any charge or ſuſpicion of this kind, as having been brought againſt thoſe books by their anceſtors.

Thus we find, by the acknowlegement of friends and enemies, who lived neareſt to thoſe times, that the accounts contained in the books of the Evangeliſts were written in the apoſtolical age; the age in which thoſe facts are ſaid to have been done, which are there recorded. There are plain references to them, and paſſages produced out of them, in the few writings that remain of the firſt century. And in the age

* *Cyril. Alex.* contra *Julian.* lib. x. p. 327. *Edit. Spanheim.*

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immediately ſucceeding, we have full proof, that they were univerſally received in the Chriſtian church, as of divine authority; and read as ſuch in the Chriſtian aſſemblies; and were aſcribed to Chriſt's own immediate attendants, or their intimate companions, *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, by name. This hath been univerſally admitted ever ſince in all ages: and theſe books have been tranſmitted down to our times with ſuch an uninterrupted and continued evidence, as cannot be produced for any other books whatſoever. He would be accounted a very unreaſonable man, that ſhould deny, or even queſtion it, whether the books of *Livy*, *Salluſt*, *Tacitus*, were written by thoſe whoſe names they bear. But the Deiſts, and his lordſhip, among the reſt, moſt unreaſonably reject that hiſtorical teſtimony and evidence in behalf of the Scriptures, which they would account to be ſufficient with regard to any other books in the world.

It gives a mighty force to all this, that, upon a careful examining and conſidering the books themſelves, they bear the plain marks and characters of the firſt, the apoſtolical age; and not one mark of a later date. Though three of the Evangeliſts make particular mention of our Saviour's predictions concerning the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the temple; yet there is not any intimation given in any one book of the New Teſtament, of that deſtruction as having been actually accompliſhed, which yet was in forty

years

years after our Lord's crucifixion. And it could ſcarce have been avoided, but that ſome or other of them muſt have taken notice of it, conſidering the many occaſions there were for mentioning it, if theſe books had been generally written after that event. It appeareth, from the beginning of St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, compared with the introduction to the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, that he wrote his Goſpel before he wrote the *Acts*. And yet this latter was evidently written in the apoſtolical age, and ſome time before the death of St. *Paul*. For it is plain, from the accounts given in that book, that the writer of it was a companion of St. *Paul* in his labours and travels, and particularly was with him in his voyage to *Rome*; with an account of which, and of his preaching there two years in his own hired houſe, the book ends. It taketh no notice of his after-labours and travels, and of his martyrdom at Rome; which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as of the martyrdom of St *James*, if it had been written after thoſe events happened. And it is a great proof of the high veneration the firſt Chriſtians had for thoſe writings, and how careful they were not to inſert any accounts into them, which were not originally there, that none of them ever pretended to make ſupplemental additions to that book, either with regard to St. *Paul* himſelf, or any other of the Apoſtles. And as we may juſtly conclude, that St. *Luke*'s Goſpel was publiſhed in the apoſtolical age itſelf, whilſt many of the

Apoſtles

Apoſtles were yet living; ſo it hath been generally agreed, that St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel was publiſhed before that of St. *Luke*; and that the Goſpel of St. *John* was written laſt of all. And yet this laſt, as is manifeſt from the book itſelf, was written by one of Chriſt's own diſciples, *the diſciple whom Jeſus loved.* And it appeareth to have been principally deſigned to record ſeveral things, which were not diſtinctly taken notice of by the other evangelical writers. Accordingly we find, that though the facts are there plainly ſuppoſed, which are related by the other Evangeliſts; yet thoſe miracles and diſcourſes of our Lord are chiefly inſiſted upon, which either were omitted by them, or but ſlightly mentioned. Indeed whoſoever impartially conſidereth the writings of the New Teſtament, will eaſily obſerve in them many peculiar characters, which plainly point to the time in which they were written. And there is all the reaſon in the world to think, that if theſe books had been written in any ſucceeding age, they would have been in ſeveral reſpects different from what they now are. The Chriſtian religion here appeareth in its primitive ſimplicity, without any of the mixtures of following ages. The idea that is given of the Chriſtian church, in the writings of the New Teſtament, is ſuch as is proper to the firſt age; and from which there were ſome variations, even from that which immediately followed. The diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, are of ſuch a nature, ſo full

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of divine wiſdom, and admirable ſentiments, as would manifeſtly appear, if there were room in this place to enter on a particular conſideration of them. They are delivered with ſo much gravity and authority, and yet, for the moſt part, in ſuch a particular way, that they carry the evident proofs of their own genuineneſs. The character given of our Saviour, in the books of the Evangeliſts, ſeems plainly to have been drawn from the life. And it may be juſtly affirmed, that it was not in the power of ſuch writers, deſtitute, as they appear to be, of all art and ornament, to have feigned ſuch a character: a character, in which is wonderfully united a divine dignity becoming the Son of God, and an amiable humility and condeſcenſion becoming the Saviour of men; an admirable wiſdom in conjunction with the greateſt candor and ſimplicity of heart; an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the moſt extenſive charity and benevolence towards mankind; an impartial freedom and ſeverity in reproving faults, and great tenderneſs in bearing with mens weakneſſes and infirmities; an unparalleled purity and ſanctity of manners, without any thing ſour or unſociable, or a ſupercilious contempt of others; the moſt exemplary patience and fortitude under the greateſt ſufferings, joined with a remarkable tenderneſs and ſenſibility of ſpirit. To this may be added the beauty of his maxims, the ſolidity of his reflections, the juſt and ſublime notions of religion, which he every-where inculcateth, far

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ſuperior to any thing that was taught by the moſt celebrated doctors of the *Jewiſh* nation. The morals he is repreſented as having taught are the moſt pure and refined, and yet without running into any ſuperſtitious extremes, ſuch as were the affected ſtrictneſſes of the *Phariſees* and *Eſſenes*, or the falſe refinements of ſome Chriſtians in the following ages. The motives there propoſed are the moſt powerful and efficacious that can be preſented to the human mind, drawn from all the charms of the divine love and goodneſs; from the engaging offers of grace and mercy made to the truly penitent, which yet are ſo ordered as not to give the leaſt encouragement to the obſtinately wicked and diſobedient; from the promiſes of divine aids to aſſiſt our ſincere endeavours in the performance of our duty; from the important ſolemnities of the future judgment, and the eternal retributions of the world to come, the inexpreſſible glory and felicity prepared for good men, and the dreadful puniſhments that ſhall be inflicted upon the wicked. In a word, ſo perfect is the idea of religion contained in thoſe writings, that all attempts to add to it in ſucceeding ages, or raiſe it to an higher degree of perfection, have really fallen ſhort of its original excellence, and tended to tarniſh its primitive beauty and glory.

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, they form a very ſtrong and convincing proof of the truth and authenticity of the Goſpel-records; and that, whether we conſider the method of

conveyance, whereby they have been tranſmitted to us, and which we can trace up with a continued evidence to the firſt age, or the internal characters of original truth and purity, and genuine integrity, which appear in the writings themſelves.

To take off the force of the evidence, brought for the facts on which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, it hath been urged, that theſe facts are only atteſted by Chriſtians. The author of theſe Letters obſerves, that the church has the advantage over her adverſaries; that the books that were written againſt her have been deſtroyed, whilſt whatever tends to juſtify her has been preſerved in her annals——And that——"he muſt be very "implicit indeed, who receives for true the hi- "ſtory of any nation or religion, and much more "that of any ſect or party, without having the "means of confronting it with ſome other hi- "ſtory*." He here ſeems to ſuppoſe it as a thing certain, that there had been hiſtorical evidence againſt Chriſtianity; but that the church had ſuppreſſed it †. But this is a precarious ſup-

* Vol. I. p. 128. 132.

† Lord *Bolingbroke* ſeems to have laid a great ſtreſs upon this thought, for he elſewhere obſerves, that "if time had brought "to us all the proof for Chriſtianity and againſt it, we ſhould "have been puzzled by contradictory proofs." See his Works, Vol. IV. p. 270. where he preſumes upon it as a thing certain, though he does not attempt to produce the leaſt evidence for it, that there was formerly proof againſt Chriſtianity, which, if it had come down to us, would have deſtroyed the evidence brought for it, or, at leaſt, have very much weakened the force of that evidence, and kept the mind in ſuſpence.

poſition, without any thing to ſupport it. The account of the facts on which Chriſtianity is founded, were publiſhed, as hath been ſhewn, by perſons who pretended to be perfectly well acquainted with thoſe facts, and in the age in which they were done, and who ſpeak of them as things publicly known, and of undoubted certainty. The proper way therefore for the enemies of Chriſtianity to have taken, would have been, to have publiſhed, if they were able, contrary authentic accounts, in that very age, for diſproving thoſe facts; which it would have been eaſy to have done, if they had been falſe: for, in that caſe, thouſands muſt have known them to be ſo; ſince many of the facts are repreſented as having been done in public view, and in the preſence of great multitudes. But that no ſuch contrary hiſtorical evidence was then produced or publiſhed, we may confidently affirm; not only becauſe there is no account of any ſuch evidence, but becauſe, if the facts on which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, had been authentically diſproved, even in the age in which they were ſaid to have been done; and if there had been good hiſtorical evidence produced on the other ſide, by which it appeared, that thoſe facts were falſe; the Chriſtian religion, conſidering the other diſadvantages that attended it, and that it was principally ſupported by thoſe facts, muſt have ſunk at once. How is it conceivable, that in that caſe it would have flouriſhed more and more; and that vaſt numbers, and many of them perſons of

conſiderable ſenſe and learning, would have continued to embrace it, in the face of the greateſt difficulties and diſcouragements? How comes it, that none of the *Apologies for Chriſtianity* that were publiſhed very early, and preſented to the *Roman Emperors*, ſome of which are ſtill extant, take any notice of ſuch contrary hiſtorical evidence, or endeavour to confute it, but ſtill ſpeak of thoſe facts as inconteſtably true and certain? The firſt heathen author that appears to have written a formal book againſt the Chriſtian religion, is *Celſus*. And what he advanced to this purpoſe we learn from his own words, preſerved by *Origen*, in his excellent anſwer to him. He endeavoureth, as far as he can, to turn the Goſpel-accounts to ridicule; but he never referreth to any authentic hiſtory, or book of credit and authority, which had been publiſhed, to ſhew that the facts, recorded by the Evangeliſts, and believed by the Chriſtians, were falſe. He pretendeth indeed, that—— "he could tell many "other things, relating to Jeſus, truer than thoſe "things that were written of him by his own "diſciples; but that he willingly paſſed them "by *." —— And we may be ſure, that if he had been able to produce any contrary hiſtorical evidence, which he thought was of weight ſufficient to invalidate the evangelical records, a man of his virulence and acuteneſs would not have failed to produce it; and his not having

* *Orig.* contra *Celſ.* lib. ii. p. 67. Edit. *Spencer.*

done

done ſo, plainly ſheweth, that he knew of none ſuch; though, if there had been any ſuch, he muſt have known it. Nor do I find, that *Julian*, when he wrote againſt Chriſtianity, pretended to produce any contrary hiſtorical evidence for diſproving the facts recorded in the Goſpels: if he had, ſomething of it would have appeared in *Cyril*'s anſwer, in which there are many fragments of his book preſerved. I think therefore the pretence of there having been contrary evidence to diſprove the facts recorded in the Goſpel, which evidence was afterwards ſuppreſſed by the Chriſtians, is abſolutely vain and groundleſs. And to refuſe our aſſent to the Goſpel-hiſtory, for want of having an opportunity to confront it with contrary hiſtorical evidence, when we have no reaſon to think there ever was ſuch evidence, would be the moſt unreaſonable conduct in the world.

But ſtill it is urged, that the accounts of thoſe facts, in order to their obtaining full credit from any impartial perſon, ought to be confirmed by the teſtimony of thoſe who were not themſelves Chriſtians; ſince Chriſtians may be excepted againſt as prejudiced perſons; and that, if there be no ſuch teſtimony, it adminiſters juſt ground of ſuſpicion. As a great ſtreſs has been frequently laid upon this, I ſhall conſider it diſtinctly.

To expect, that profeſſed enemies, who reviled and perſecuted the Chriſtians, ſhould acknowlege the truth of the main facts on which

Chriſtianity is founded, is an abſurdity and contradiction. And if any teſtimonies to this purpoſe were now to be found in their writings, it would undoubtedly be alleged by thoſe gentlemen, who now complain of the want of ſuch teſtimonies, that thoſe paſſages were foiſted in by Chriſtians, and ought to be rejected as ſuppoſititious. But yet we have the teſtimony of adverſaries concerning many facts relating to Chriſtianity, as far as can be expected from adverſaries. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* or Heathens, continuing ſuch, ſhould acknowlege Chriſt's divine miſſion; that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: but none of them ever pretended to deny, that there was ſuch a perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was the author of the Chriſtian religion, and appeared in *Judea* in the reign of *Tiberius*. *Tacitus*'s teſtimony, as well as that of *Celſus*, is very expreſs to this purpoſe*. And ſome of the heathens went ſo far as to ſpeak very honourably of him. So did the emperor *Alexander Severus*, who would have built a temple to him, if ſome of the pagans about him had not made ſtrong remonſtrances againſt it, as *Lampridius* informs us in his life†. And even *Porphyry* himſelf, whoſe words *Euſebius* hath preſerved, ſpeaks of him as a pious man, whoſe ſoul was taken into heaven‡. It would be unreaſonable to expect,

* *Tacit.* Annal. lib. xv. *Auguſt.* tom. I. Edit. *Var.* lib. iii. p. 134.

† Cap. xxix. xliii. Hiſt. *Aug.*

‡ *Euſeb.* Demonſtrat. Evangel.

that

that the enemies of Chriſtianity ſhould acknowlege the accounts given of Chriſt by the Evangeliſts to be true and authentic, and abſolutely to be depended upon; for then they muſt have turned Chriſtians. But yet they never denied, what ſome of our modern unbelievers ſeem unwilling to acknowlege, that Chriſt's own diſciples, who had lived and converſed with him, had written accounts of his life, and actions, and diſcourſes, which were received by Chriſtians as true and authentic. The teſtimony of *Celſus*, as was obſerved before, is very full to this purpoſe. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* and heathens ſhould acknowlege Chriſt's miracles to have been really wrought by a divine power. But they do not deny, that he did, or ſeemed to do, wonderful works. And the way they take to account for them amounteth to an acknowlegement of the facts. Some aſcribed them to magical arts, as *Celſus*, who ſaith, that on the account of the ſtrange things he performed, *Jeſus* claimed to be regarded as a God *. Others, as *Hierocles*, oppoſed to them the wonders pretended to have been wrought by *Apollonius Tyaneus*. The *Jews* aſcribed the works he performed to the virtue of the ineffable Name, which he ſtole out of the temple. And the emperor *Julian* expreſly acknowlegeth ſome of his miraculous works, particularly his healing the lame and the blind, and caſting out devils, at the ſame time

* *Orig.* contra *Celſ.* lib. i. p. 7. 22. 30.

that he affects to ſpeak of them in a very ſlight and diminiſhing manner*. As to Chriſt's having ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate*, the heathens and *Jews* were ſo far from denying it, that they endeavoured to turn it to the reproach of Chriſtians, that they believed in, and worſhiped, one that had been crucified. It cannot be expected indeed, that they ſhould own, that he really roſe again from the dead on the third day, as he himſelf had foretold; but they acknowlege, that his diſciples declared, that he did ſo; and profeſſed to have ſeen him, and converſed with him, after his reſurrection. This appeareth from the teſtimony of *Celſus*, at the ſame time that he endeavours to ridicule the account given, by the Evangeliſts, of Chriſt's Reſurrection †. The *Jews*, by pretending that the diſciples ſtole away the body of Jeſus, whilſt the ſoldiers that were appointed to guard it ſlept, plainly acknowleged, that the body did not remain in the ſepulchre where it had been laid after his crucifixion; and that therefore he might have riſen from the dead, for any thing they could prove to the contrary. The early and remarkable diffuſion of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding all the difficulties it had to encounter with, and the perſecutions to which the profeſſors of it were expoſed, is a very important fact, and which, as the caſe was circumſtanced, tends very much to confirm the truth

* See his words in *Cyril* contra *Julian*. lib. vi. p. 121, Edit. *Spanheim*.

† *Orig.* contra *Celſ.* lib. ii. p. 94, 96, 97. lib. vii. p. 355.

of

of the Goſpel-accounts. And this is very fully atteſted by heathen writers, though it cannot be expected, that they would aſcribe this propagation of Chriſtianity to its proper cauſes, the force of truth, and a divine power accompanying it.

Tacitus, in a paſſage where he expreſſeth himſelf in a manner that ſhews he was ſtrongly prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity, informs us, that there was a *great multitude* of Chriſtians at *Rome* in *Nero*'s time, which was in little more than thirty yearts after the death of our Saviour; and gives an account of the terrible torments and ſufferings to which they were expoſed *. *Julian*, ſpeaking of the Evangeliſt *John*, whom he repreſents as one of Chriſt's own diſciples, ſaith, that in his time a great multitude, in moſt of the cities of *Greece* and *Italy*, were ſeized with that diſeaſe; for ſo he calls Chriſtianity; and that *John*, obſerving this, was encouraged to aſſert, that Chriſt was God, which none of the other Apoſtles had done †. And we learn from the younger *Pliny*, that in the reign of *Trajan*, i. e. about ſeventy years after our Lord's crucifixion, the Chriſtian faith had made ſuch a progreſs in ſeveral parts of the *Roman* empire, that the temples of the gods were almoſt deſolate; their ſolemn ſacred rites long neglected; and that there were very few that would buy the ſacrifices ‡. It cannot be expected, that

* *Tacit.* Annal. lib. xv. † See the paſſage in *Cyril.* lib. x. p. 327. ‡ *Plin.* lib. x. Ep. 97. ad *Trajan.*

heathens, continuing ſuch, ſhould acknowlege, that the Chriſtians were right in their notions of religion; but the laſt-mentioned celebrated heathen gives a noble teſtimony to the innocency of their lives and manners, and that they bound themſelves by the moſt ſacred engagements to the practice of righteouſneſs and virtue, and not to allow themſelves in vice and wickedneſs, falſhood and impurity. Even *Celſus*, than whom Chriſtianity never had a bitterer enemy, owns, that there were among Chriſtians *many temperate, modeſt*, and *underſtanding* perſons*: and *Julian* recommends to his heathen pontiff *Arſacius* the example of the Chriſtians, for their kindneſs and humanity to ſtrangers; and not only to thoſe of their own religion, but to the heathens; and for their appearing ſanctity of life; and this he ſuppoſes to be the chief cauſe why Chriſtianity had made ſuch a progreſs†. If none but Chriſtian writers had celebrated the conſtancy of the antient martyrs, ſome would have been ready to have ſuſpected, that they feigned this to do them honour, or, at leaſt, greatly heightened it: but it appeareth from the undoubted teſtimonies of the above-mentioned *Pliny*, of *Arrian*, who flouriſhed under the reign of *Hadrian*, and of the emperor *Marcus Antoninus*, that the antient Chriſtians were very remarkable for their fortitude, and contempt of torments and death, and for their inflexible firm-

* *Orig.* contra *Celſ.* lib. i. p. 22. † *Julian.* ep. xlix. ad Arſac.

neſs

neſs and conſtancy to their religion under the greateſt ſufferings *.

Though therefore it were abſurd to expect, that the enemies of Chriſtianity, continuing ſuch, ſhould directly atteſt the truth and certainty of the main facts on which the Chriſtian religion is founded; yet we have ſeveral teſtimonies from them, that contribute not a little to the confirmation of thoſe facts. Beſides which, what ought to have great weight with us, we have the teſtimony of perſons who were once *Jews* or heathens, and ſtrongly prejudiced againſt the Chriſtian ſyſtem, who yet, upon the convincing evidence they had of thoſe facts, were themſelves brought over to the religion of Jeſus †. Of ſuch perſons there were great numbers even in the firſt age, the age in which the facts were done, and in which they had the beſt opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of them. But there could not be a more remarkable inſtance of this kind than the Apoſtle *Paul*. Never was there any man more ſtrongly prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity than he: which had carried him ſo far, that he was very active in perſecuting the profeſſors of it, and thought that in doing ſo he had done God good ſervice. He was at the ſame time a perſon of great parts and acuteneſs, and who had a learned education; yet he was brought over to the Chriſtian faith

* *Plin.* ubi ſupra. *Arrian. Epict.* lib. iv. cap. 7. *Marcus Anton.* lib. xi. 3.

† See *Addiſon*'s treatiſe of the Chriſtian religion. Sect. iii. iv.

by

by a divine power and evidence, which he was not able to reſiſt; and thenceforth did more than any other of the Apoſtles to propagate the religion of Jeſus; though thereby he not only forfeited all his hopes of worldly intereſt and advancement, but expoſed himſelf to a ſucceſſion of the moſt grievous reproaches, perſecutions, and ſufferings; all which he bore with an invincible conſtancy, and even with a divine exultation and joy. In his admirable Epiſtles, which were undeniably written in the firſt age of Chriſtianity, and than which no writings can bear more uncontеſted marks of genuine purity and integrity, there are continual references to the principal facts recorded in the Goſpels, as of undoubted truth and certainty. And it manifeſtly appeareth, that great miracles were then wrought in the name of Jeſus; and that extraordinary gifts were poured forth upon the diſciples. And why ſhould not his teſtimony in favour of Chriſtianity be of the greateſt force? Muſt it be diſregarded, becauſe of his turning Chriſtian; *i. e.* becauſe he was ſo convinced of thoſe facts by the ſtrongeſt evidence, that it over-ruled all his prejudices, and brought him over to Chriſtianity, in oppoſition to all his former notions, inclinations, and intereſts? Whereas it is this very thing that giveth his teſtimony a peculiar force *. And if he had not turned Chriſtian, his teſtimony in favour of Chriſtianity, if he had given any, would not

* See this clearly and ſolidly argued in Sir *George Littleton*'s excellent Obſervations on the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St. *Paul*.

have

have had ſo great weight, as being inſufficient for his own conviction; or it would have been rejected as a forgery, under pretence that he could not ſay and believe ſuch things without embracing the Chriſtian faith.

This very pretence has been made uſe of to ſet aſide the remarkable teſtimony of *Joſephus*. And indeed, if that teſtimony be genuine (and a great deal has been ſtrongly urged to prove it ſo, at leaſt for the ſubſtance of it), it muſt be acknowleged, that he was far from being an enemy to Chriſtianity, though he was perhaps too much a courtier openly to profeſs it.

There is another argument, which the ingenious author of theſe Letters propoſeth, and upon which he layeth no ſmall ſtreſs, as if it were a demonſtration againſt the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion. He obſerves, that—

" The writers of the *Romiſh* religion have at-
" tempted to ſhew, that the text of the holy
" writ is on many accounts inſufficient to be the
" ſole criterion of orthodoxy; and he appre-
" hends they have ſhewn it: and the writers
" of the reformed religion have erected their
" batteries againſt tradition: and that they
" have jointly laid their axes to the root of
" Chriſtianity: that men will be apt to reaſon
" upon what they have advanced, that there
" remains at this time no ſtandard at all of Chri-
" ſtianity: and that, by conſequence, either this
" religion was not originally of divine inſtitu-
" tion, or elſe God has not provided effectually

for

" for preſerving the genuine purity of it; and the " gates of hell have actually prevailed, in con- " tradiction to his promiſe, againſt the church. " He muſt be worſe than an Atheiſt that affirms " the laſt: and therefore the beſt effect of this " reaſoning that can be hoped for is, that men " ſhould fall into Theiſm, and ſubſcribe to the " firſt;"——*viz.* that the Chriſtian religion was not originally of divine inſtitution *. He ſeems to think this dilemma unanſwerable; and, in order to this, he pronounceth on the ſide of the *Romiſh* church, that their writers have ſhewn, that the ſacred text is——" inſufficient to be the " ſole criterion of orthodoxy;"——or, as he afterwards expreſſeth it, that—" it hath not that " authenticity, clearneſs, and preciſion, which " are neceſſary to eſtabliſh it as a divine and a " certain rule of faith and practice."——Why his lordſhip giveth the preference to the *Romiſh* divines in this controverſy, is very evident. It is becauſe it beſt anſwereth the deſign he hath in view; which manifeſtly is, to ſubvert the credit and authority of the Chriſtian religion, and leave it nothing to depend upon but the *force of education*, and *the civil and eccleſiaſtical power*.

It cannot be denied, that ſome writers of the *Romiſh* church, whilſt they have endeavoured to ſhew, that the Scripture is inſufficient to be a complete rule of faith and practice, have ſaid as much to expoſe the ſacred text, as if they were

* Vol. I. p. 179, 180, 181.

in

in league with the infidels againſt it, though they, as well as we, profeſs to own its divine original. The enemies of Chriſtianity have not failed to take advantage of this. And indeed there cannot be a greater abſurdity than to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould inſpire men to reveal his will to mankind, and to inſtruct them in the way of ſalvation, and order it ſo, that they ſhould commit that revelation to writing, for the uſe and benefit of his church; and yet that it ſhould be inſufficient to anſwer the end, or to guide thoſe that in the ſincerity of their hearts, and with the attention which becometh them in an affair of ſuch infinite importance, apply themſelves to the underſtanding and practiſing of it.

What his lordſhip here offers, and it contains the ſum of what has been advanced by the *Romiſh* writers on this ſubject, is this——"I "am ſure, that experience, from the firſt pro- "mulgation of Chriſtianity to this hour, ſhews "abundantly with how much eaſe and ſucceſs, "the moſt oppoſite, the moſt extravagant, nay, "the moſt impious opinions, and the moſt con- "tradictory faiths, may be founded on the ſame "text, and plauſibly defended by the ſame au- "thority*."—This way of arguing beareth a near affinity to that which lieth at the foundation of all ſcepticiſm; *viz.* that there is no certain criterion of truth, or right reaſon, becauſe reaſon is pretended for the moſt contradictory opinions: and

* Vol. I. p. 179.

that

that it is impoſſible to be certain of any thing, becauſe of the differences among mankind about every thing: that there are no certain principles at all, even in natural religion or morality; ſince there are none, not even thoſe relating to the exiſtence and perfections of God, a Providence, a future ſtate, the natural differences of good and evil, but what have been controverted, and that by perſons who have pretended to learning, to wiſdom and philoſophy. But the abſurdity of this way of arguing is very evident. The principle is fallacious, that whatever hath been controverted is uncertain. As well might it be ſaid, that whatever is capable of being abuſed is not good or uſeful. It doth not follow, that the Scriptures are not ſufficiently clear and determinate to be a rule of faith and practice in all that is eſſential or neceſſary to ſalvation, becauſe there have been men in every age that have interpreted them in different ſenſes. The plaineſt paſſages in any writings whatſoever may be perverted; nor is mens differing about the meaning of the ſacred text any argument againſt its certainty or perſpicuity. Laws may be of great uſe, though they do not abſolutely exclude chicanery and evaſion. That can never be a good argument to prove, that the Scriptures are not a rule to be depended upon, which would equally prove, that no revelation that God could give could poſſibly be a rule of faith and practice, or of any uſe to guide men to truth and happineſs. If God ſhould make a revelation of his will for

inſtructing

inſtructing mankind in what it moſt nearly concerneth them to know, and for directing them in the way of ſalvation; the poſſibility of which cannot be denied by any Theiſt; and ſhould for this purpoſe appoint a code to be publiſhed, containing doctrines and laws; it may be juſtly queſtioned, whether it could poſſibly be made ſo clear and explicit, as that all men in all ages ſhould agree in their ſenſe of it. This could hardly be expected, except God ſhould miraculouſly interpoſe with an irreſiſtible influence to cauſe them all to think the ſame way, and give them all the ſame preciſe ideas of things, the ſame meaſures of natural abilities, and exactly the ſame means and opportunities for acquired improvement, the ſame ſagacity, the ſame leiſure, the ſame diligence; and except he ſhould exert his divine power in an extraordinary manner for ſubduing or removing all their prejudices, and over-ruling their different paſſions, humours, inclinations, and intereſts; and ſhould place them all exactly in the ſame ſituation and circumſtances. And this would be by no means conſiſtent with the wiſdom of the divine government, or with the nature of man, and his freedom as a moral agent, and with the methods and orders of Providence. Nor is there any neceſſity for ſo extraordinary a procedure. For it would be abſurd to the laſt degree to pretend, that the Scripture can be of no uſe to any man, except all men were to agree about it; or that it

it is not ſufficiently clear to anſwer the end, if there be any perſons that pervert or abuſe it.

Yet, after all the clamour that has been raiſed about differences among Chriſtians as to the ſenſe of Scripture, there are many things of great importance, about which there hath been in all ages a very general agreement among profeſſed Chriſtians: They are agreed, that there is one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things which are therein: that he preſerveth all things by the word of his Power, and governeth all things by his Providence: that he is infinitely powerful, wiſe, and good, and is to be loved, feared, adored, obeyed, above all: that as there is one God, ſo there is one Mediator between God and man, *Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*, whom he in his infinite love and mercy ſent into the world to ſave and to redeem us: that he came to inſtruct us by his doctrine, and bring a clear revelation of the divine will, and to ſet before us a bright and moſt perfect example for our imitation: that he ſubmitted to the moſt grievous ſufferings, and to death itſelf, for our ſakes, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us: that he roſe again from the dead, and aſcended into heaven, and is now crowned with glory and honour, and ever liveth to make interceſſion for us: that through him, and in his name, we are to offer up our prayers, and hope for the acceptance of our perſons and ſervices: that in him there is a new covenant eſtabliſhed, and publiſhed to the world, in which there is a free and uni-

verſal offer of pardon and mercy to all the truly penitent, and a moſt expreſs promiſe of eternal life, as the reward of our ſincere, though imperfect, obedience: that it is not enough to have a bare ſpeculative faith, but we muſt be formed into an holy and godlike temper; and, in order to be prepared for that future happineſs, muſt live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world: that there ſhall be a reſurrection both of the juſt and the unjuſt, and a future judgment, when Chriſt ſhall judge the world in the Father's name, and give to every man according to his deeds; that the wicked ſhall be doomed to the moſt grievous puniſhments, and the righteous ſhall be unſpeakably happy to all eternity. Theſe are things of great conſequence, and which have been generally acknowleged by Chriſtians in all ages. And if there have been ſeveral things advanced by thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians, which are not well conſiſtent with theſe generally acknowleged principles; if there have been controverſies among them about points of conſiderable importance, as well as many contentions about things of little or no moment, this is no argument againſt the divine authority or uſefulneſs of the ſacred writings. Thoſe that *wreſt the Scriptures* muſt be accountable to him that gave them, for that perverſion and abuſe; as men muſt be accountable for the abuſe of their reaſon: but this is far from proving that therefore the Scriptures anſwer no

valuable purpoſe, and could not be of a divine original. Still it is true, that whoſoever will, with a teachable and attentive mind, and an upright intention to know and do the will of God, apply himſelf to read and conſider the holy Scriptures, in an humble dependence on God's gracious aſſiſtances, will find vaſt advantage for inſtructing him in the knowlege of religion, and engaging him to the practice of it, and for guiding him in the way of ſalvation.

It appears then, that the foundation, on which this formidable dilemma is built, will not bear. There is at this time a *ſtandard for Chriſtianity*; even the doctrines and laws of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, as contained in the holy Scriptures. It muſt be and is acknowleged by all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, that whatever is revealed in thoſe ſacred books is true and certain, and whatever can be ſhewn to be contrary to what is there revealed is falſe. The *Romaniſts* as well as Proteſtants own the divinity and authenticity of the ſacred text, though for particular views they would join unwritten traditions with it; and are for giving the church alone the authority to interpret the Scriptures. The reaſon of their conduct is evident. It is not becauſe they look upon the ſacred text to be ſo obſcure and ambiguous, that it cannot be underſtood by the people; but becauſe they think the people, if left to themſelves, will underſtand it ſo far as to ſee the inconſiſtency there is between true primitive

mitive Chriſtianity as laid down in the New Teſtament, and the Papal ſyſtem, and becauſe their corrupt additions to Chriſtianity cannot be proved by Scripture-authority.

I have already taken notice of what he ſaith concerning the fatal blow that Chriſtianity received by the reſurrection of letters. I ſuppoſe we are to take his word as a deciſive proof of this; for no other proof of it is offered. But it may be affirmed on the contrary, that true primitive Chriſtianity, that is, Chriſtianity as laid down in the New Teſtament, had then a glorious revival. Many corrupt additions that had been made to it were thrown off. It hath never been better underſtood, nor its evidences ſet in a clearer light, than ſince that time. Some of the moſt admired names in the republic of letters have thought themſelves worthily employed in endeavouring to illuſtrate the beauties of Scripture, and to clear its difficulties. It were eaſy to ſhew, if it were not a thing ſo well known as to render it needleſs, that thoſe who have done moſt for the revival and ſpreading of learning and knowlege in all its branches, and who were moſt celebrated for their genius, judgment, various reading, and probity, have been perſons that expreſſed a great admiration for the holy Scriptures, and an hearty zeal for Chriſtianity.

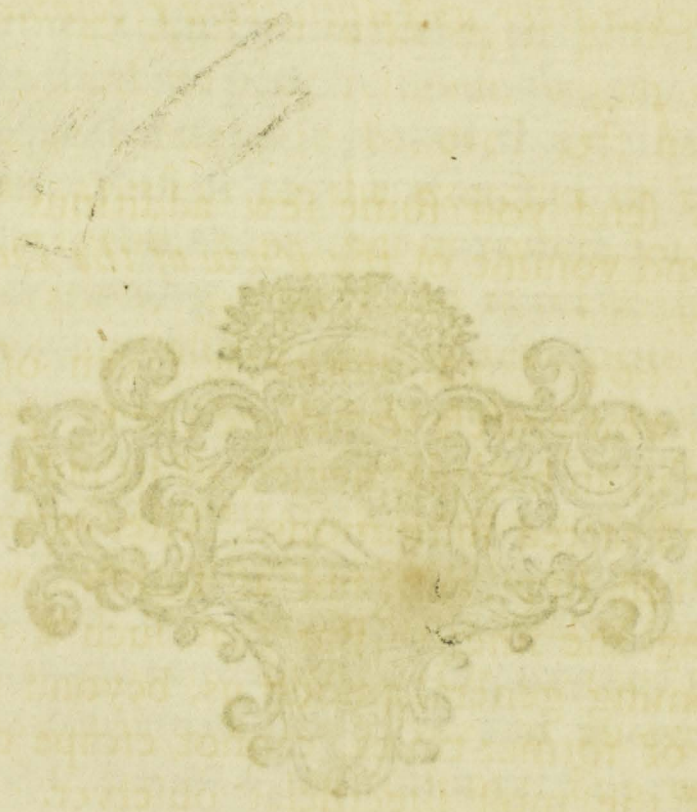
Thus I have conſidered what the late Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered in theſe Letters againſt

the authority of the holy Scripture, and the Chriſtian religion, as far as may be neceſſary to take off the force of the objections he hath raiſed againſt it, and which ſeem to have nothing in them proportioned to the unuſual confidence with which they are advanced. It is hard to ſee what good end could be propoſed by ſuch an attempt. But perhaps it may be thought an advantage, that by——"diſcovering error in "firſt principles founded upon facts, and break- "ing the charm, the inchanted caſtle, the "ſteepy rock, the burning lake, will diſappear*." ——And there are perſons, no doubt, that would be well-pleaſed to ſee it proved, that Chriſtianity is no better than deluſion and inchantment; and particularly that the wicked have nothing to fear from *the burning lake*, ſome apprehenſions of which may probably tend to make them uneaſy in their vicious courſes. But I ſhould think, that a true lover of virtue, and of mankind, who impartially conſiders the purity of the Goſpel-morals, the excellent tendency of its doctrines and precepts, and the power of its motives for engaging men to the practice of piety and virtue, and deterring them from vice and wickedneſs, will be apt to look upon it as a very ill employment to endeavour to expoſe this religion to contempt, and to ſet bad men free from the wholſome terrors it inſpires, and deprive good men

* See his Letter on the Uſe of Study and Retirement, Vol. II. p. 221.

of

of the ſublime hopes and ſacred joys it yields. But Chriſtianity hath withſtood much more formidable attacks; and will, I doubt not, continue to approve itſelf to thoſe that examine it, and the evidences by which it is eſtabliſhed, with minds free from vicious prejudices, and with that ſincerity and ſimplicity of heart, that ſerioufneſs and attention, which becomes them in an affair of ſuch vaſt importance.



LETTER VII.

Thoſe profeſſed Chriſtians are inexcuſable, who ſlight public worſhip and the inſtitutions of religion. The great importance of a careful education of children, and the bad effects of neglecting it. The example of a perſonage of high character and diſtinction recommended.

SIR,

I Now ſend you ſome few additions to the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers.*

In p. 661. l. 12. notice is taken of ſome perſons who profeſs to believe the Goſpel, and yet live in an habitual neglect of its public worſhip, and ſacred inſtitutions. After *inſtitutions* put a full ſtop, and add as follows without breaking the line.——But that ſuch a neglect is becoming general among us, beyond the example of former times, cannot eſcape the notice of the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. There ſcarce ever was an inſtitution more wiſely and beneficially calculated for preſerving and promoting the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world, than that of ſetting apart one day in a week from worldly buſineſſes and cares, for the ſolemnities of public worſhip, and for in-

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ſtructing the Chriſtian people in the knowlege of religion, and exhorting them to the practice of it; and yet, many there are that would take it ill not to be accounted Chriſtians, who ſeem to affect an open neglect, or even contempt of it. But it is not eaſy to conceive, what reaſonable excuſe or pretence can be alleged for ſuch a conduct. Will they, in good earneſt, aver, that they look upon it to be a reflection upon their ſenſe, or unworthy of their quality, to pay their public homage to their Maker and Redeemer? And to make open profeſſions of their regard to that religion, which yet they would be thought to believe? Or, have they ſuch an averſion to the exerciſes of religion, that the ſpending an hour or two in ſolemn acts of adoration, in prayer and thankſgiving, and in receiving inſtructions and admonitions from his holy word, is a wearineſs which they cannot bear? But what is this, but to avow the great degeneracy of their own minds, and their want of a proper temper and diſpoſition for the nobleſt exerciſes, which beſt deſerve the attention of reaſonable beings? Or, do they pretend a high regard to moral virtue, as an excuſe for neglecting poſitive inſtitutions? But will any man, of the leaſt reflection, who knoweth the true ſtate of things among us, take upon him to declare, that the growing neglect of the ordinances of religion hath contributed to the promoting the practice of virtue? Or, that mens morals are generally mended, ſince they became

came more indifferent to thoſe ſacred ſolemnities? Nothing is more evident to any one, who impartially conſiders the nature of thoſe divine inſtitutions and ordinances, which are appointed in the Goſpel, than that a due obſervance of them according to their original inſtitution, beſides its being a public avowal of our religious homage, and of our faith in God, and in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, hath a manifeſt tendency to promote our moral improvement, and to exerciſe and ſtrengthen thoſe good affections and diſpoſitions which naturally lead to a holy and virtuous practice.

And as there are too many profeſſed Chriſtians, who openly neglect the inſtitutions of religion, there are others who ſeem to flatter themſelves that a mere outward attendance on divine ordinances, and the keeping up a form of religion, will be alone ſufficient, though they at the ſame time indulge themſelves in a practice contrary to the rules of virtue and morality. But all expedients for reconciling the practice of vice, of diſſoluteneſs, or diſhoneſty, with the faith and hope of the Goſpel, are viſibly abſurd and vain. The moſt inconſiſtent of all characters is a wicked and vicious Chriſtian.

In p. 668. l. 13. from the bottom, after *impure* add as follows, without breaking the line: —— The general neglect of the education of children, and of family order and religion, is one of the moſt unhappy ſymptoms of the great degeneracy of the preſent age, and which gives

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us melancholy proſpects of the ſucceeding one. For what can be expected from thoſe who are bred up under parents, that take no care to inſtil worthy principles into their minds, and in families where they ſee no ſigns of religion, or the fear of God? Unnatural parents! who ſeem to make the real welfare and happineſs of their children the leaſt of their concern; or, if they take ſome care to adorn their bodies, and form their outward behaviour, neglect the culture of their better parts, their minds, or at leaſt take no care to train them up to a juſt ſenſe of religion and morals, or to a taſte for what is truly laudable and excellent! Unhappy children! in whom, for want of proper early inſtruction and diſcipline, irregular paſſions and appetites, and evil habits are daily gathering ſtrength, till at length they are turned out, unfurniſhed with good principles, or worthy ſentiments of things, into a world full of temptations and ſnares. Is it to be wondered at, if ſuch perſons become an eaſy prey to wicked and impious ſeducers, and are ſoon drawn into prophaneneſs and infidelity, into diſſoluteneſs and debauchery, which, where it prevails, tends to corrupt or to extinguiſh true probity and public ſpirit, and every noble and generous affection and ſentiment? And in that caſe, the higher their condition is, and the greater their affluence of fortune, the more pernicious is the contagion of their example; and thoſe who otherwiſe might have been the ornament

ment and ſupport, become the diſgrace and peſt of the community. LETTER VII.

On the contrary, how agreeable is it to behold well-regulated families, children bred up in the fear of God, their minds early principled with juſt notions of things, and good affections, and worthy habits, carefully cheriſhed and improved! Thoſe of the one ſex, formed under the influence of religion to a juſt and delicate ſenſe of purity and virtue, and to that modeſty and gentleneſs of manners and behaviour, which hath been always eſteemed one of their loveliest ornaments: Thoſe of the other, trained up by a proper inſtitution and diſcipline to a rational piety, and the government of their appetites and paſſions, and to a juſt and manly ſenſe of what is truly honourable, virtuous, and praiſeworthy. And here again the ſame great example preſenteth itſelf of a moſt *eminent* PERSONAGE of the higheſt DIGNITY, who amidſt all the *pomps* and *ſplendors* of a court, hath eſteemed it one of her moſt pleaſing employments, to inſpect the education of her illuſtrious offspring, and to this hath applied her princely cares, and perſonal attendance. And ſurely it muſt be the earneſt wiſh of every good mind, that ſhe may have the ſincere and noble ſatisfaction of ſeeing them grow up under her tender and watchful eye, in every virtue and excellence, which may render them *publis ornaments* and *bleſſings*, and diffuſe a beneficial and extenſive influence, of great uſe in the preſent age, and the effects of

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of which may be tranſmitted to ſucceeding generations.

How happy would it be for theſe nations, if, in conformity to an example ſo juſtly admired, the GREAT and NOBLE would look upon the care of their children and families, to be one of the worthieſt objects of their attention and concern! This could ſcarce fail to have a good effect upon thoſe of a lower rank. Then might we hope to ſee religion and virtue flouriſh, and a new and hopeful generation ſpringing up among us, the ſureſt earneſt of national glory and happineſs. For it is a maxim of undoubted truth, as well as of great importance, That a careful education of children will lay the beſt foundation for well-ordered families, as theſe will contribute the moſt of any thing to the peace and good order of the community.

I ſhall conclude this Addreſs with the admirable words of St. *Paul: Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.*

I HAVE now ſent you all the additional obſervations I propoſed, with regard to the firſt and ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, and which, I hope, may be of ſome uſe to render that work more complete.

I have

I have no intention of making any farther additions to it, which is already enlarged far beyond what I originally deſigned. God grant that what hath been offered, both in the former volume, and in this, may anſwer the end for which it was intended, the ſerving the cauſe of important truth, piety, and virtue, in the world, and eſpecially in theſe nations, in which ſuch open inſults have been offered to religion, and particularly to the holy Goſpel of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. LETTER VII.

There are, I doubt not, great numbers in theſe lands, who far from being aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt, eſteem it their privilege and glory to be among thoſe who make profeſſion of believing and embracing it. But then it is a thing which cannot be too much inculcated, that a mere notional and ſpeculative belief of Chriſtianity will be of ſmall avail; and that the principal care of thoſe who profeſs it, ſhould be to get their ſouls brought under the power and influence of its heavenly doctrines, and important motives: that it may not be merely an outward form, but a living principle within them. Among the many unhappy conſequences, which have ariſen from the diſputes that have, with ſo much indecency and eagerneſs, been carried on againſt our holy religion, this is not the leaſt, that it has contributed to carry men's minds too much off from the vital part of religion, and has led them to regard it as a matter of ſpeculation and *diſpute*, rather than of *practice*. But this is to forget

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forget the very nature and deſign of it. Chriſtianity is eſſentially a ſpiritual and heavenly diſcipline, full of life and power, all whoſe *doctrines, precepts, ordinances, motives*, are manifeſtly intended to form us to a godlike temper, to a holy and virtuous practice. The more firmly it is believed, and ſeriouſly conſidered, and the more deeply it is wrought into the very frame and temper of the ſoul, the more glorious effects will it produce to the honour of God, to the welfare of mankind, to the peace and good order of ſociety, and to the preſent and eternal happineſs of individuals.

I thought to have here ſubjoined ſome reflections, which have occurred to me, in relation to the preſent ſtate of things among us in theſe lands, but I chuſe to refer them to my next.

I am Yours, &c.

POST-

POSTCRIPT. LETTER VII.

AFTER great part of this Supplement was finiſhed, and ſent to the preſs, I met with a book which I have read with great pleaſure, intitled, *The Criterion; or Miracles examined, with a view to expoſe the pretenſions of Pagans and Papiſts; to compare the miraculous Powers recorded in the* New Teſtament, *with thoſe ſaid to ſubſiſt in latter times, and to ſhew the great and material difference between them in point of evidence: From whence it will appear, that the former muſt be true, and the latter may be falſe.* The ſubject is evidently both curious and important, and is treated by the author, who, I hear, is the Rev. Mr. *Douglaſs*, in a judicious and maſterly way. It was publiſhed at *London* in 1754, and therefore before the publication of the ſecond volume of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*. And if I had then ſeen it, I ſhould certainly have thought myſelf obliged to take particular notice of it. The worthy author has made judicious obſervations upon Mr. *Hume's Eſſay on Miracles*, eſpecially that part of it which relateth to the miracles

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racles aſcribed to the *Abbè de Paris*, which he has inſiſted on for an hundred pages together. And it is no ſmall ſatisfaction to me, that there is a perfect harmony between what this learned author hath written on this ſubject, and what I have publiſhed in the ſecond volume of the *View*, though neither of us knew of the other's work. He ſhews, as I have endeavoured to do, that fraud and impoſture were plainly detected in ſeveral inſtances: and that where the facts were true, natural cauſes ſufficient to produce the effect may be aſſigned, without ſuppoſing any thing miraculous in the caſe. This he has particularly ſhewn, with regard to each of the miracles inſiſted on by Mr. *de Montgeron*, which he accounts for much in the ſame way that Mr. *des Voeux* hath more largely done, though he had not ſeen that gentleman's valuable writings, to which I have frequently referred for a fuller account of thoſe things which I could do little more than hint at. The reader will find in Mr. *Douglaſs*'s work a full proof of the wonderful force of the imagination, and the mighty influence that ſtrong impreſſions made upon the mind, and vehement paſſions raiſed there, may have in producing ſurpriſing changes on the body, and particularly in removing diſeaſes: of which he hath produced ſeveral well atteſted inſtances, no leſs extraordinary than thoſe attributed to the *Abbè de Paris*, and which yet cannot reaſonably be pretended to be properly miraculous.

As I have thought myſelf obliged to take notice of that part of this gentleman's book, which hath ſo near a connection with the work in which I have been engaged; ſo it is but juſt to obſerve, that it is alſo, with regard to every other part of it, a learned and accurate performance.

What he propoſes to ſhew is, that the evidence for the Goſpel facts is as extraordinary as the facts themſelves; and that no juſt ſuſpicion of fraud or falſhood appeareth in the accounts; while every thing is the reverſe, with regard to the evidence brought for the Pagan or Popiſh miracles.

He obſerves, That the extraordinary facts aſcribed to a miraculous interpoſition among the Pagans of old, or the Chriſtians of latter times, are all reducible to theſe two claſſes. The accounts are either ſuch as, from the circumſtances thereof, appear to be falſe; or, the facts are ſuch as, by the nature thereof, they do not appear to be miraculous. —— As to the firſt, the general rules he lays down, by which we may try the pretended miracles amongſt Pagans and Papiſts, and which may ſet forth the grounds on which we ſuppoſe them to be falſe, are theſe three:— That either they were not publiſhed to the world till long after the time when they were ſaid to be performed. —— Or, they were not publiſhed in the places, where it is pretended the facts were wrought, but were propagated

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only at a great diſtance from the ſcene of action. —— Or, they were ſuffered to paſs without due examination, becauſe they coincided with the favourite opinions and prejudices of thoſe to whom they were reported; or, becauſe the accounts were encouraged and ſupported by thoſe who alone had the power of detecting the fraud, and could prevent any examination, which might tend to undeceive the world. Theſe obſervations he applies to the Pagan and Popiſh miracles; ſome of the moſt remarkable of which he diſtinctly mentions, and ſhews, that there are none of them that do not labour under one or other of theſe defects.

After conſidering thoſe pretended miracles, which, from the circumſtances of the accounts given of them, appear to be falſe, he next proceedeth to thoſe works, which, though they may be true, and aſcribed by ignorance, art, or credulity, to ſupernatural cauſes, yet are really natural, and may be accounted for, without ſuppoſing any miraculous interpoſition. And here he enters on a large and particular diſcuſſion of the miracles attributed to the *Abbè de Paris*, and of ſome other miracles that have been much boaſted of in the Romiſh Church.

Having fully examined and expoſed the Pagan and Popiſh miracles, he next proceeds to ſhew, That the objections made againſt them, and which adminiſter juſt grounds of ſuſpicion, cannot

cannot be urged againſt the Goſpel miracles. And here he diſtinctly ſhews, *Firſt*, That the facts were ſuch that, from the nature of them, they muſt needs be miraculous, and cannot be accounted for in a natural way, or by any power of imagination, or ſtrong impreſſions made upon the mind, And, *Secondly*, That thoſe facts are ſuch as, from the circumſtances of them, they cannot be falſe. And to this purpoſe, he makes it appear, that they were publiſhed and appealed to at the time when they were performed; and were coeval with the preaching of Chriſtianity, which was manifeſtly founded upon them.——They were alſo publiſhed and atteſted at the places where the ſcene of them was laid, and on the ſpot on which they were wrought. —— And the circumſtances, under which they were firſt publiſhed, give us an aſſurance, that they underwent a ſtrict examination, and conſequently, that they could not have eſcaped detection, had they been impoſtures. LETTER VII.

Mr. *Douglaſs* thinks it not ſufficient barely to prove, that the teſtimony for the Goſpel-miracles is ſtronger than that which ſupporteth any other pretended miracles; he farther ſhews, by a variety of conſiderations, that it is the ſtrongeſt that can be ſuppoſed, or that, from the nature of the thing, could be had. And then he proceeds to obſerve, that beſides the unexceptionable proof from teſtimony, the

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credibility of the Goſpel-miracles is confirmed to us, by collateral evidences of the moſt ſtriking nature, and which no ſpurious miracles can boaſt of: —— Such as —— the great change that was thereby introduced into the ſtate of religion. —— The proofs that God was with the firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity, in other inſtances beſides thoſe of miracles, particularly in aſſiſting them ſupernaturally in the knowlege of the ſcheme of religion which they taught, and of which they were not capable of being the authors or inventors, and enabling them to give clear predictions of future events. ——And particularly he inſiſteth upon that moſt expreſs and circumſtantial prediction of the deſtruction of the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*, and the diſperſion of the *Jewiſh* nation, as a demonſtration that *Jeſus* acted under a ſupernatural influence. —— The laſt thing he urgeth as a collateral evidence is, That the miracles recorded in Scripture were performed by thoſe who aſſumed the character of prophets, or teachers ſent from God, and their miracles were intended as credentials to eſtabliſh their claim, to add authority to the meſſages they delivered, and the laws they taught. ——A character which, he ſhews, both the Pagan and Popiſh miracles are entirely deſtitute of.

THIS

THIS is a brief account of the plan of Mr. *Douglaſs's* work, which fully anſwereth the title: and it is with great pleaſure I take this opportunity to acknowlege the merit of the learned author, and the ſervice he hath done to the Chriſtian and Proteſtant cauſe.

I am, Sir, &c.

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A general repreſentation of the ſtate of things among us. There is a great and growing corruption in theſe lands, notwithſtanding the ſignal advantages we enjoy. This corruption not juſtly chargeable upon our religion as Chriſtians and Proteſtants, but on the neglect or contempt of it. The unaccountable eagerneſs that has been ſhewn in ſpreading the principles of Infidelity, of very ill conſequence to the public. The tendency of irreligion and vice to bring miſery and ruin upon a people, both in the natural courſe of things, and by the juſt judgments of God. Many things in the late and preſent courſe of God's diſpenſations have an alarming appearance. Repentance and reformation, and a ſtrict adherence to the knowlege and practice of Chriſtianity, the propereſt way of averting the tokens of the divine diſpleaſure, and promoting the national proſperity. The happy ſtate of things which this would introduce.

SIR,

HAVING finiſhed the additions and illuſtrations I propoſed, with regard to the firſt and ſecond volume of *the View of the Deiſtical*

cal Writers, I ſhall now ſubjoin ſome reflections, which, though not directly and immediately relating to the ſubject of thoſe volumes, will, I hope, not be thought altogether unſuitable to the general nature and deſign of the preceding work.

It was with great ſatisfaction that I read the order for a *General* and *Public Faſt*, to be religiouſly obſerved by all his majeſty's ſubjects in theſe kingdoms, and which is drawn up with great ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity. It is there acknowleged, that *the manifold ſins and wickedneſs of theſe kingdoms have moſt juſtly deſerved heavy and ſevere puniſhments from the hand of heaven.* We are called upon to *humble ourſelves before almighty God, and in a moſt devout and ſolemn manner, to ſend up our prayers and ſupplications to the divine Majeſty, to avert all thoſe judgments, which we moſt juſtly have deſerved, to continue his mercies, and perpetuate the enjoyment of the Proteſtant religion among us, and ſafety and proſperity to his majeſty's kingdoms and Dominions.*

Having ſo great an authority to bear me out, I ſhall add ſome reflections, which have made a deep impreſſion upon my mind, with reference to the preſent ſtate of things among us.

We have been eminently diſtinguiſhed above moſt other nations by happy privileges and advantages. Providence hath bleſſed us with an abundance of thoſe things, which are uſually thought to contribute to the public proſperity

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and happineſs. Never had any people a fuller enjoyment of liberty: a profuſion of wealth has flowed in upon us by our wide extended commerce. We have had great advantages for improvement in the arts and ſciences, and every branch of uſeful knowlege: eſpecially that which is the moſt valuable and important of all others, the knowlege of religion in its truth and purity. The light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, freed from the abſurdities, the ſuperſtitions, and idolatries, with which it hath been incumbered in many other countries profeſſing the Chriſtian Faith, hath long ſhone among us. The holy Scriptures are not locked up in an unknown tongue, nor confined to the ſtudies of the learned, but are put into the hands of the people: ſo that all men may have acceſs to that ſacred rule of faith and practice, the original ſtandard of the Chriſtian religion. The treaſures of knowlege are opened, and the public inſtructions ſo frequently and freely diſpenſed, that it may be ſaid, that *wiſdom crieth without, ſhe uttereth her voice in the ſtreets.*

It might be expected that a people ſo diſtinguiſhed by advantages for religious and moral improvement, ſhould alſo be remarkably diſtinguiſhed by the knowlege and practice of piety, wiſdom, and virtue, and by a zeal for our holy religion.—But though it is to be hoped there are many among us, who are unfeignedly thankful for our ineſtimable privileges, and careful to make a right improvement of them; yet it cannot be denied,

denied, that a great corruption hath ſpread itſelf, and ſeems to be growing among all orders and degrees of men. This is a very diſagreeable ſubject: but the firſt ſtep to a proper remedy is to be duly ſenſible of the true ſtate of our own caſe. Our wealth and plenty hath been abuſed to an amazing luxury, and our liberty to a boundleſs licentiouſneſs. Many act as if they had no other way of ſhewing that they are free, but by caſting off all reſtraints, and ſetting themſelves looſe from all the ties of religion and virtue. Atheiſm hath appeared almoſt without diſguiſe, or, which in effect comes to the ſame thing, the disbelief of a *Providence*, *of God's moral attributes* and *government*, and of a *future ſtate*.—The moſt virulent reproach and contempt hath been caſt upon the adorable JESUS, and the methods of our *redemption* and *ſalvation* by him. All that part of our duty, which more immediately relateth to the ſupreme Being, ſeemeth to be regarded by many as a matter of indifferency. And the ſlighteſt obſervation may convince us, that there is a growing neglect of *public worſhip*, as if the propereſt way of ſhewing our gratitude to God for the glorious privilege we have of worſhipping him according to the dictates of our own conſciences, were not to render him any public homage, or religious worſhip at all. That *holy day*, which is by divine appointment, and by that of our own laws, ſet apart from worldly buſineſſes and cares, for

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the purpoſes of religion, for receiving public inſtructions, and for attending on divine worſhip, hath been treated with great contempt.— And in this too many of thoſe who, by their authority and influence, ſhould ſet a good example to others, have unhappily led the way. Can there be a greater contempt caſt upon it, than to hold GAMING ASSEMBLIES on that day? And when this is done by perſons of *rank*, can it be wondered at, that by the lower kind of people it is often the worſt employed of any day in the week, and devoted to idleneſs and vice? And it cannot but give concern to every good mind, that an *Inſtitution*, ſo admirably calculated for the advancement of religious knowlege, piety, and virtue, and for promoting good order in the community, ſhould be ſo ſtrangely perverted and abuſed.

Having mentioned the practice of GAMING; I cannot help obſerving, that among other unfavourable ſymptoms of the growing corruption among us, this is not the leaſt, that that practice is of late years become more general, and carried to a greater exceſs, than has been known before in theſe kingdoms. The wiſeſt men of all nations have been ſo ſenſible both of the pernicious effects of this vice to particular perſons and families, and its ill influence on the community, that it would fill a large volume barely to recite the laws which have been made againſt it, both in former and later ages. Our own laws have fixed a brand upon it, and in effect

effect declared the gain made by it to be diſhonourable and infamous: yet is the being inſtructed in the myſteries of it, become a neceſſary part of education, whilſt the ſeaſoning the tender minds of young perſons with principles of religion and juſt ſentiments of things, and forming them to the worthieſt practices, is, it is to be feared, in a great meaſure neglected.

But what affordeth the moſt melancholy apprehenſions is the great corruption and depravity of manners, which is ſo generally and juſtly complained of.—The moſt blaſphemous abuſe of the name of God, by ſhocking *oaths* and *imprecations*, and the moſt corrupt and wilful *perjuries*, *drunkenneſs* and exceſſes of riot, but eſpecially by the exceſſive drinking of *diſtilled ſpirituous liquors*, the *health*, *morals*, and *religion* of the laborious and uſeful part of theſe kingdoms are well-nigh deſtroyed;— fired with this infernal poiſon, they are ſpirited to perpetrate and execute the moſt bold, daring and miſchievous enterpriſes, and ſhaking off all *fear* and *ſhame* become audaciouſly impudent in all manner of *vice*, *lewdneſs*, *immorality* and *prophaneneſs*, in defiance of all laws human and divine.—— But it does not ſtop here, its malignant influence reaches to the children yet unborn, who come half burnt-up and ſhrivelled into the world, and who as ſoon as born, ſuck in this deadly poiſon with their mothers or nurſes milk, ſo if this worſt of all plagues be ſuffered to go on, it will make a general havock, eſpecially amongſt the

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the *ſoldiers*, *ſailors*, and *laborious* part of the nation, who are manifeſtly degenerated from the more manly conſtitutions of preceding generations*. Beſides an amazing diſſoluteneſs, and impurities of all kinds, even thoſe that are moſt *unnatural*, and which are not fit to be

* See Diſtilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation, 8vo. 2d edit. 1736 London. Dr. *Stephen Hales*'s friendly admonition to the drinkers of Gin, Brandy, and other ſpirituous liquors, which are ſo deſtructive of the *induſtry*, *morals*, *health*, and *lives* of the people. A new edition with additions, and an appendix.——And is in the catalogue of the books diſtributed by the ſociety for promoting Chriſtian knowlege, *London.*——This worthy *divine* and excellent *philoſopher*, (whoſe whole life has been uſefully imployed in promoting the honour of God and the welfare of mankind), in a treatiſe upon the diſtilling of ſea-water, and the uſe of ventilators, *&c.* juſt publiſhed, ſpeaking of *diſtilled ſpirituous liquors* ſays--"How "much therefore does it behove all, who have any concern for "the honour and dignity of their own kindred ſpecies, any indig- "nation at its being thus debaſed and diſgraced, any bowels of pity "for the vaſt multitudes, not leſs perhaps than a MILLION, that "are yearly deſtroyed all over the world, by the moral as well as "*natural*, and therefore worſt of all evils, that ever befel "unhappy man; to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to deliver man- "kind from this PEST?——But notwithſtanding this aſtoniſhing "ravage and deſtruction of the human ſpecies, yet the unhappy "unrelenting nations of the world, ſeem as unconcerned about it "as if only ſo many *thouſand*, nay *millions* of *Caterpillars* or *Locuſts* "were deſtroyed thereby. Was there ever a more important "occaſion to rouſe the indignation of mankind? Can we be "calm and undiſturbed, when this MIGHTY DESTROYER rears "up its invenomed head?——The moſt zealous advocates for "*Drams*, even the unhappy beſotted *Dramiſts* themſelves, the "prolonging of whoſe lives, and whoſe real welfare both *here* "and *hereafter*, is hereby ſincerely intended, cannot find fault "with this well-meant remonſtrance, in defence of them and of "all mankind, againſt this univerſal deſtroyer, from *one* who has "long been labouring, and that not without ſucceſs, in finding "means to preſerve multitudes of lives, by various means."

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named amongſt Chriſtians.——To which may be added, the horrid crime of SELF-MURDER, not only frequently practiſed, but pleaded for, a practice deſervedly rendered infamous by our laws, as being a murder committed by a man upon his own perſon, in oppoſition not only to the moſt ſacred obligations of religion, and the rights of the community, but to the ſtrongeſt inſtincts of the human nature, wiſely implanted in us by the great Author of our Beings, as a bar to ſuch monſtrous practices.—— To all which may be added, that barbarous practice of men's murdering one another upon a pretended *point of honour*, as it is called, for the moſt ſlight and trivial offences, below the cognizance of our laws: —— A crime inexcuſable in a civilized country, and which yet generally paſſes unpuniſhed, and thus leaves the guilt of blood upon the land, crying aloud for vengeance.— It is impoſſible for a thinking man that has a true zeal for the honour of God and the intereſts of religion and virtue, and who hath the welfare and happineſs of his country really at heart, not to be deeply affected with ſuch a view of things, and ſollicitous what the conſequence may prove.

And now, it is a natural enquiry, what can this be owing to? Whence can it be, that nations ſo happily privileged, and favoured with ſo many advantages for the knowlege and practice of religion, ſhould have ſunk into ſuch an amazing corruption and degeneracy? Can this

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be conſiſtently charged on religion itſelf, either the Chriſtian religion or the Proteſtant, which is the religion of Jeſus, as taught in the holy Scriptures, and freed from the abuſes and corruptions that have been brought into it? The Deiſts have pretended the firſt, the enemies to the reformation the laſt. The anſwer to both is in effect the ſame. Can that be the cauſe of corruptions among Chriſtians, which if ſteadily adhered to is the beſt remedy againſt thoſe corruptions? Can that occaſion an abounding in vice and wickedneſs, which, if really believed and ſeriouſly conſidered, exhibiteth the moſt powerful diſſuaſives from it, that can enter into the human mind? Can the furniſhing the people with the means of knowlege, and bringing them to an acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us *wiſe unto ſalvation*, and are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*, can this have any tendency to encourage them in vice and diſſoluteneſs? Such a ſuppoſition is contrary to the plaineſt dictates of common ſenſe. The corruption therefore complained of can never be the natural effect or product of our advantages, and eſpecially of the religion we profeſs. On the contrary, the beſt and ſureſt preſervative againſt this growing corruption, and the moſt effectual way of recovering from it, would be to have a high eſteem for thoſe divine oracles, to read and conſider them with attention, and lay to heart the excellent

inſtructions and directions which are there ſet before us.

There is a far more natural account to be given of that corruption of manners, that vice and wickedneſs which ſo much aboundeth among us. It is owing not to the knowlege or belief of religion, but to the neglect or contempt of it; to a ſtrange indifferency towards it in ſome, whilſt others uſe their utmoſt endeavours to traduce and expoſe it under the vilifying characters of ſuperſtition, prieſtcraft, or enthuſiaſm. Great numbers of impious books have ſwarmed among us, both formerly and of late: ſome of which are not only levelled againſt Chriſtianity, but ſtrike at the foundations of all religion, the attributes and providence of God, and a future ſtate of retributions. The manifeſt tendency of them has been—to baniſh the fear of the Deity,—to confound the moral differences of things,—to degrade the human nature to a level with the brutes, and thereby extinguiſh every noble and generous ſentiment,—to deprive good men of the bleſſed hope of immortality, and to free bad men from the fears of future puniſhments, and the apprehenſions of a ſupreme Governor and Judge.—Theſe principles, and the books that contain them, have been propagated with great eagerneſs and induſtry, both in theſe kingdoms, and in our plantations abroad, and ſometimes at a conſiderable expence. This prepoſterous kind of zeal for infidelity may, to a conſiderate obſerver, ſeem to be

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be an odd phænomenon, of which no rational account can be given. One may, in ſome degree, account for a man's being hurried away by the violence of his appetites and paſſions, to do what his own mind diſapproves and condemns. But that any man ſhould coolly take pains to ſet other men looſe from all the reſtraints of religion and conſcience, and thereby, as far as in him lies, attempt to diſſolve the bands of ſociety and public order, and encourage men to gratify and fulfil their appetites and paſſions without controul, the natural conſequence of which would be to introduce univerſal confuſion, in which he himſelf may be a great ſufferer, is abſolutely unaccountable on any principles of good ſenſe or ſound policy; ſo that if we did not ſee frequent inſtances of it, we ſhould be apt to think it ſcarce poſſible, that any men in their ſenſes ſhould act ſo ſtrange a part.

One very pernicious conſequence of ſuch open attempts againſt religion is, the ſpreading prophaneneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners among the *lower* kind of people, who eaſily catch the contagion, when once men of *higher degree*, or at leaſt that pretend to a ſuperior ſagacity, have ſet the example. And who can, without deep concern, obſerve, that this is very much become the caſe among us at preſent? Great numbers of thoſe, who belong to what ought to be the moſt induſtrious body of the people, are ſunk into irreligion and vice. And, in proportion, as theſe prevail, they become averſe to all honeſt

honeſt labour and induſtry, and prone to the most flagitious crimes, which have the worſt effect imaginable on the peace and good order of the community. And it is eaſy to ſee what miſchief and confuſion muſt thence enſue. A ſober and induſtrious populace is the ſtrength, the riches, the glory of a nation: but when thoſe, that ſhould be the labouring hands, become vicious and diſſolute, they are prepared for every kind of wickedneſs and diſorder. As, from their rank and education, they have, for the moſt part, little regard to the appearances of honour and decency, if, at the ſame time, they have caſt off the ties of religion, and the fear of God, and a regard to the powers of the world to come, and are abandoned to their appetites and paſſions, what are they not capable of? It is an obſervation which hath generally held, and is verified by the experience of all ages, that *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin*, i. e. abounding vice and wickedneſs, *is a reproach unto any people*, i. e. it bringeth diſgrace and miſery upon them. *Prov.* xiii. 10. When once a neglect of religion and a corruption of manners becometh general, it hath a natural tendency to diſſolve and enervate a nation, and to extinguiſh true public ſpirit and a manly fortitude. Nor have any people long maintained their liberties, after having loſt their probity and virtue.

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Thus it is in the natural courſe of things, and thus it alſo is by the juſt judgment of God, and

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according to the ſtated rules of the divine procedure towards nations or large communities. God may indeed, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, long bear with a degenerate people, and may even continue to pour forth many bleſſings upon them when they are in a corrupt ſtate, eſpecially if there be a conſiderable remnant of good men ſtill to be found among them. But when their iniquities are grown up to ſuch a height, and have continued ſo long, that he doth not ſee fit to bear with them any longer, the meaſure of their iniquities is ſaid to be full; the time is come for executing a ſevere vengeance upon them, and the puniſhment falls heavier for being ſo long delayed.

Whoſoever duly conſidereth theſe things will be apt to think, that, according to the ordinary method of God's providential dealings towards backſliding nations and churches, we have too much reaſon to apprehend his righteous judgments. The preſent ſituation of things hath an alarming appearance, and, if we be not utterly ſtupid, muſt tend to awaken us out of our ſecurity. Scarce ever was there a time in which it might be more juſtly ſaid, that *God's judgments are abroad in the earth.* I need not enter into particulars. They are very well known, and freſh in our remembrance. There have been, to uſe our Saviour's emphatical expreſſions, *commotions and great earthquakes in divers places,——diſtreſs of nations with perplexity, the ſea and the waves roaring: men's hearts*

heart's failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things that ſhall come upon the earth. Luke xxi. 9, 11, 25. Of ſo vaſt an extent have the amazing concuſſions been reaching to many parts of *Europe*, *Africa*, and *America*, at a great diſtance from one another, and in divers places have produced ſuch dreadful effects, even to the ſubverſion of great and populous cities, that it looketh as if God were about ſome great and remarkable work of judgment, *to puniſh the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquities*, as the prophet expreſſeth it, *Iſ.* xiii. 11. Surely every man, who believeth that there is a Providence which extendeth its care to mankind, muſt believe that it hath a ſpecial concernment in events of ſuch a nature, which ſo nearly affect nations and large communities, and on which the lives and fortunes of ſo many thouſands depend. Though ſecond cauſes are admitted, ſtill it muſt be conſidered, that they are all under the direction and ſuperintendency of God's ſovereign providence, which ſo ordereth and overruleth the circumſtances of things, and the courſe of natural cauſes, as to ſubſerve the ends of his moral adminiſtration with regard to his reaſonable creatures, and to execute his purpoſes towards them, whether in a way of judgment or of mercy. And, in every ſuch caſe, we ſhould fix our views not merely or principally on ſecond cauſes, but ſhould look above them to the ſupreme Diſpoſer, and endeavour to comport with the deſigns of his infinite

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wiſdom and righteouſneſs. Calamitous events of a public nature are not to be conſidered as concerning only the particular perſons or people that immediately ſuffer by them. They have a more extenſive view, and are deſigned and fitted to give inſtructive leſſons to all mankind that hear of them. The natural tendency of all ſuch diſpenſations is to awaken in the minds of men a holy fear of the divine Majeſty, and to give them a moſt affecting conviction of the vanity and inſtability of all worldly hopes and dependencies. The prophet *Iſaiah*, after having deſcribed in a very lively manner the ſtriking impreſſions that ſhould be made upon the hearts of men becauſe of *the fear of the Lord, and the glory of his Majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth*, very properly adds, *Ceaſe ye from man whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Iſ. xi. 20, 21. Of what avail in ſuch a time of awful viſitation, are the arts of human policy, the pomp of courts, or the power of mighty armies, or the riches and grandeur of the moſt populous and magnificent cities? The plain voice of ſuch diſpenſations, a voice intelligible to all mankind, is this: *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world ſtand in awe of him.* Pſ. xxxiii. 8. *The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlaſting king: at his wrath the earth ſhall tremble; and the nations ſhall not be able to abide his indignation.* Jer. x. 10. Surely we ſhould be ready to cry

cry out on ſuch occaſions, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints. Who would not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy. For all nations ſhall come and worſhip before thee: for thy judgments are made manifeſt.* Rev. xv. 3, 4. The great uſe, which is to be made of ſuch awful diſpenſations, is well expreſſed by the prophet Iſ. xxvi. 9. *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs*; i. e. they ought to do ſo; and it is the natural tendency of ſuch judgments to engage them to do ſo. The calamities inflicted upon others ſhould be regarded by us as ſolemn warnings and admonitions, which it highly concerneth us to improve. The language of ſuch diſpenſations to all that hear of them, is the ſame with that of our Saviour to the Jews, when ſpeaking of thoſe perſons on whom the tower of *Siloam* fell, and of thoſe whoſe blood *Pilate* mingled with their ſacrifices, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* Luke xiii. 3, 5. How inexcuſable ſhall we therefore be, if, inſtead of laying theſe things ſeriouſly to heart, we continue careleſs and unaffected ſtill, and go on in a thoughtleſs round of gaieties and pleaſures, like thoſe the prophet mentions, Iſ. v. 12. *The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe are in their feaſts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither conſider the operation of his hands.* Againſt ſuch perſons a ſolemn woe is there denounced.

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And elſewhere, ſpeaking of ſome who continued to indulge themſelves in luxury and riot, and all kinds of ſenſual mirth, at a time when the circumſtances of things called for deep humiliation and repentance, he ſaith, *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hoſts, ſurely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die, ſaith the Lord God of hoſts.* Iſ. xxii. 12, 13, 14.

Whoſoever carefully obſerveth the courſe of the divine diſpenſations towards us for ſome time paſt, will be ſenſible that we have had many warnings given us. A peſtilence amongſt the cattle in *England* for many years paſt, and, though abated, ſtill continues in ſome parts of this country. But a few years ago the ſword of war raged in one part of the united kingdom of *Great Britain*, and was near penetrating to the center of it, and threatned the ſubverſion of that conſtitution, on which the preſervation of our religion, laws, and liberties, in a great meaſure, dependeth: but, through the great goodneſs of God, our fears were, after ſome time, happily diſpelled. More lately encroachments have been made upon our poſſeſſions and plantations abroad, in which our national ſafety and proſperity is very nearly intereſted. And now it is not many weeks ſince a moſt dreadful calamity hath befallen a kingdom, ſo very nearly connected with us in intereſt and alliance, that the calamity may be regarded as, in a conſiderable degree, our own. And in fact, we have been,

been, and are great ſufferers by it. Many lives have been loſt of his majeſty's ſubjects belonging to *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, and many more there are, who, by the ſudden ſubverſion, have been either totally, or, in a conſiderable degree, deprived of their worldy ſubſtance, and reduced to circumſtances of diſtreſs. A preſent ſtop is put to the courſe of a moſt advantageous commerce. The ſprings of our wealth are obſtructed; a great blow is ſtruck at our trade, in which we are ſo apt to place our confidence: and this at the very time when we ſeem to be entering upon a war with a mighty nation, a war that threatens to be very hazardous, and which muſt needs put us to a vaſt expence, which we are not very well able to bear. That particular judgment, under which ſome of the neighbouring nations have ſo ſeverely ſuffered, and which is one of the moſt dreadful of all others, hath greatly threatened us. It is but a very few years ſince that great city, which is the metropolis of theſe kingdoms, and the center of our wealth and commerce, felt an alarming ſhock, though, through the great mercy of God, it did little more than threaten and terrify. Since that time, and very lately, there have been ſeveral very unuſual phœnomena among us, of ſuch a nature as to have an alarming aſpect. Extraordinary agitations of the waters both on our coaſts and within land, and ſhocks of an earthquake felt in ſeveral parts of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, and of his majeſty's dominions abroad.

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Thus the divine judgments ſeem to be advancing upon us, and have gradually begun to operate. But ſuch is the mercy and forbearance of God towards us, that he ſeems loth to inflict upon us the fierceneſs of his anger, or to pour forth all his wrath. He is pleaſed to give us previous warnings, to awaken and rouze us out of our ſecurity, that, by a timely repentance, and by humbling ourſelves under his mighty hand, we may prevent the neceſſity of inflicting ſeverer puniſhments. His hand is lifted up, but the awful ſtroke ſeemeth to be ſuſpended for a while, as if he were unwilling to proceed to extremities with us. Upon conſidering theſe things, that moſt affecting expoſtulation comes to my mind, which God condeſcendeth to make by his prophet *Hoſea*, with regard to his people *Iſrael*, when in a very dangerous backſliding ſtate. *How ſhall I give thee up Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee up Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger; I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midſt of thee.* Hoſ. xi. 8, 9. Yet we find at length, upon their obſtinately perſiſting in their diſobedience and ingratitude, and abuſing the methods of his indulgence, and even growing more and more corrupted, he ſaw it neceſſary to execute his awful judgments upon them,

even

even to the utter ſubverting that kingdom, and ſubjecting it to a foreign yoke. God forbid that this ſhould be our caſe. Let us therefore make a right uſe of the divine forbearance. We have hitherto had reaſon to *ſing of mercy* as *well as of judgment*. Let us not, by our abuſe of his goodneſs, provoke him to pour forth upon us the full vials of his penal wrath. With an ingenuous ſorrow and ſelf-abaſement we ſhould acknowlege our aggravated tranſgreſſions, our neglect and abuſe of the privileges and advantages we have ſo long enjoyed, the contempt that hath been caſt on his glorious Goſpel, and the prophaneneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners, which hath ſo much prevailed. On theſe accounts, let us humble ourſelves deeply before God, and implore his mercy, and contribute, as far as in us lieth, to the carrying on a work of national repentance and reformation. It is undoubtedly our duty, in the preſent conjuncture of affairs, when we ſeem to be entering upon an hazardous and expenſive war, to exert our utmoſt efforts for aſſiſting and ſupporting the government, and to apply ourſelves to the uſe of all proper means which human prudence may ſuggeſt. But ſtill we muſt get this fixed upon our minds, that whatever projects may be formed for procuring national advantages, and promoting the public proſperity, all other expedients to make a people flouriſh without reformation of manners, and without the knowlege and practice of religion, and public virtue, however they may

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ſeem to have an effect for a while, will, in the iſſue, prove ineffectual and vain.

The moſt proper way we can take to avert impending judgments, to preſerve and maintain our valuable privileges, and promote the public welfare and happineſs, is not to expreſs a clamorous zeal for liberty at the ſame time that we abuſe it to an unreſtrained licentiouſneſs, than which nothing hath a greater tendency, both through the righteous judgment of God, and in the nature of the thing, to deprive us of our liberties; but it is to endeavour to make a juſt and wiſe improvement of our advantages, to maintain a ſtrict regard to *religion*, *probity*, and *purity of manners*, and to guard againſt *vice*, *libertiniſm*, *prophaneneſs*, and *debauchery*. This, and this alone, will preſerve us a free, a flouriſhing, and happy people. God grant that this may be the bleſſing of theſe nations to the lateſt poſterity; and that we may long enjoy the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt ſhining among us in its genuine purity, and the ineſtimable advantage of a freedom to profeſs it, and to worſhip God according to the directions of his word, and the dictates of our own conſciences, without being expoſed to perſecuting rage and violence. Happy nations that we ſtill are! if we be but duly ſenſible of our happineſs! and careful to make a right uſe of our privileges! What a glorious face of things would ſoon appear among us, if, as we have the beſt religion in the world, we took care to govern

ourſelves

ourſelves by its ſacred rules, and to act under the influence of its divine inſtructions and important motives! Virtue, ſupported and animated by the glorious hopes of the Goſpel, would appear in its genuine ſacred charms, and in its lovey beauty and excellence. Love, the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, would prevail, and produce a mutual forbearance in leſſer differences, at the ſame time that there would be a happy agreement in matters of the higheſt importance; there would be a zeal without bigotry, a liberty without licentiouſneſs. The natural conſequence of all this would be peace and harmony in larger and leſſer ſocieties. Such would be the face of things among us, as far as could be expected in this ſtate of imperfection, if the religion of Jeſus were firmly believed, and duly conſidered, and men would be more generally perſuaded to give up themſelves to its divine conduct. This would render perſons in *high ſtations* ſignally uſeful to the public, and *ornaments* as well as *ſupports* to their country. And at the ſame time *ſobriety*, *induſtry*, *temperance*, and *good order*, would ſpread among the body of the people. Nor would *true bravery* and *fortitude* be wanting. For though *ſuperſtition* tendeth to produce *mean* and *unmanly* fears, *true religion*, and a *ſteady belief* of a *wiſe* and *righteous Providence*, hath a tendency to fortify and eſtabliſh the mind, and to produce a real *courage* and *greatneſs of ſoul*, which will enable a man to meet death with a calm intrepidity

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in a noble and juſt cauſe, and ſtand the ſhock of the greateſt terrors.

It is a reflection which hath frequently occurred to my mind, eſpecially on occaſion of the late dreadful judgments of God, how different, under the apprehenſion or preſſure of an amazing calamity, muſt be the ſtate of *one* that firmly believeth Chriſtianity, and endeavoureth to govern his practice by its excellent rules, from that of the *Atheiſt* and *Unbeliever*, or of the man who though he profeſſeth to believe the Chriſtian religion, liveth in a plain contradiction to its ſacred obligations. The former, however black and diſaſtrous the face of things may appear to be, which naturally tend to create fears in the human mind, yet is perſuaded, that all things are under the direction of infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, and that we live in a world where every thing above, beneath, and on every ſide of us, is in the hand of God, and under the direction of his Providence; who, as he can arm all the creatures againſt us, and make them the inſtruments of his juſt diſpleaſure; ſo, if we be careful to pleaſe him, and approve ourſelves in his ſight, can make the whole creation around us to be as it were in a covenant of peace and friendſhip with us. Or, if a good man be involved in the ſame outward calamities with others, as muſt often, without a miracle, be expected in calamities which happen to large communities, ſtill he hath this to ſupport him, that the great Lord of the univerſe is his father and his friend, and will cauſe thoſe

outward

outward evils to turn, in the final iſſue, to his greateſt benefit. Death itſelf, if this ſhall befal him, ſhall prove a real gain to him, and ſhall introduce him to a better world, and a nobler ſociety. It is juſtly obſerved concerning the *man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments*, that *he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed truſting in the Lord*, Pſ. cxi. 1. 7. Not only may he ſay, upon good grounds, with the Pſalmiſt, *The Lord is on my ſide, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?* Pſ. cxviii. 6. And again, *Though an hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear, though war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident*, Pſ. xxvii. 2. But he may break forth into that noble ſtrain of triumph, *God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea: Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof*, Pſ. xlvi. 1, 2, 3. On the other hand, the wicked and ungodly man, continuing ſuch, hath no proper reſource, no ſolid comfort or ſupport in a day of calamity, when all things ſeem black and diſmal about him. For either he looketh upon them to be the effects of a *wild chance*, or *blind neceſſity*, which cannot poſſibly be the object of a rational truſt and confidence, and which leaves no room for hope, but in that which nature hath an abhorrence of,

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an utter extinction of being: or, he apprehendeth them to be the juſt judgments of the wiſe and righteous Governor of the world, whom he hath offended by his ſins. And vain it is to brave it againſt the wrath of heaven. Not to fear creatures like ourſelves, in a juſt cauſe, argueth a noble and manly fortitude: but not to fear God, the Almighty Lord of the Univerſe, is not courage, but madneſs. The only proper thing which remaineth for ſuch perſons to do, and it is what reaſon, as well as Scripture, directeth to, is to humble themſelves deeply under the mighty hand of God, and to flee to his infinite mercy, through Jeſus Chriſt, in a hearty compliance with the moſt reaſonable and gracious terms which he hath appointed, for obtaining an intereſt in his grace and favour.

Upon the whole, the beſt thing that can be wiſhed, for the honour of God, for the happineſs of mankind, and for the real welfare of our country, is, that a hearty zeal for the knowlege and practice of our holy religion may have a revival among us: and that perſons of all orders and conditions may join in contributing to promote its ſacred intereſts. And notwithſtanding the corruption too juſtly complained of, there are many, I am perſuaded, among us, and may the number of them daily encreaſe, who are earneſtly deſirous to do this. Every man has it in his power to contribute ſomething towards it, at leaſt by endeavouring to *walk in a converſation becoming the Goſpel.* But there are ſome perſons who have peculiar advantages for doing honour

honour and ſervice to Chriſtianity. Thoſe eſpecially that are diſtinguiſhed by their HIGH RANK, their FORTUNE and QUALITY, ſhould make uſe of the influence this gives them for recommending and promoting true religion and virtue, which will add a luſtre to their *titles* and *dignities*, and is one of the beſt ways they can take to ſhew their regard to the public happineſs. MAGISTRATES ſhould account it their duty and their honour to employ the authority they are inveſted with, for ſerving the intereſts of religion, and diſcountenancing vice and wickedneſs; ſince for this purpoſe they are appointed, that they *may be for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.* And it is then that their authority will have its proper influence, when it is ſtrengthened by that of their own good example. But above all, they who are honoured with the character of the MINISTERS of the holy Jeſus ſhould make it the very buſineſs of their lives to ſpread and promote real vital Chriſtianity, to inſtruct the people in its important doctrines, and build them up in their moſt holy faith, and to enforce upon them the excellent duties it enjoins, by all the powerful and moſt engaging motives which the Goſpel ſets before us. And that their inſtructions may have the proper effect, it highly concerneth them to keep themſelves free from the *faſhionable vices* and *follies* of the age, and to endeavour to be enſamples to their flocks, by a well-tempered zeal, piety, and charity, and the virtues of a holy life. Thus will they not only

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only do the higheſt ſervice to religion, but procure the greateſt honour to themſelves, and the moſt juſt veneration for their ſacred character, which, where it is not diſgraced by a conduct unworthy of it, naturally demandeth the eſteem and regard of all the true friends to religion and virtue.

For theſe valuable and excellent purpoſes, may the God of all grace pour forth his holy Spirit upon all orders and degrees of men in theſe nations, that, as they bear the honourable name of Chriſtians, they may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; and, *being filled with the knowlege of his will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding, may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work.*

I may be thought perhaps to have inſiſted too largely upon theſe things. But I cannot but think, that one of the principal things which ought to be propoſed in books written in defence of Chriſtianity, ſhould be not merely to promote the ſpeculative belief of it, but to engage men to that which is the main deſign of its excellent doctrines, as well as precepts, a holy and a virtuous practice.

I am, dear and worthy Sir,

Dublin, Feb. 6, 1756.

Your moſt affectionate

And obliged Friend and Servant,

JOHN LELAND.

AN

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AND THE

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FINIS.

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