

**The rise and dissolution of the infidel societies in this metropolis : including, the origin of modern deism and atheism; the genius and conduct of those associations; their lecture-rooms, field-meetings, and deputations; from the publication of Paine's Age of reason till the present period / [William Hamilton Reid].**

### **Contributors**

Reid, William Hamilton, -1826.  
Paine, Thomas, 1737-1809. Age of reason.

### **Publication/Creation**

London : J. Hatchard, 1800.

### **Persistent URL**

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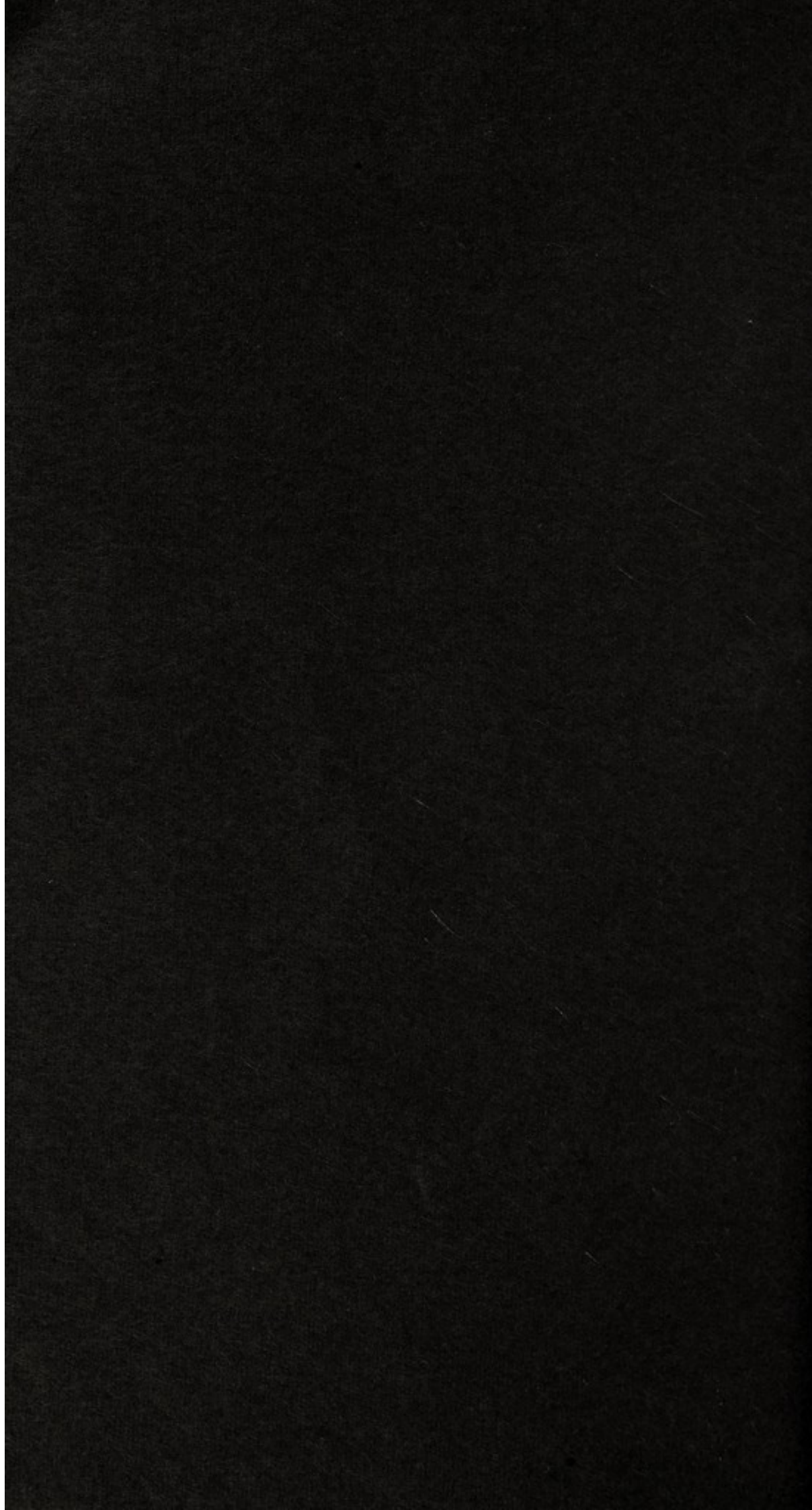
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William H. Reid  
Infidel Societies  
in London

London

1800






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THE  
RISE AND DISSOLUTION  
OF THE  
INFIDEL SOCIETIES

*IN THIS METROPOLIS:*

INCLUDING,  
THE ORIGIN OF MODERN DEISM AND ATHEISM;  
THE GENIUS AND CONDUCT OF THOSE  
ASSOCIATIONS; THEIR LECTURE-  
ROOMS, FIELD-MEETINGS,  
AND DEPUTATIONS;

From the Publication of PAINE'S AGE OF REASON till  
the present Period.

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Φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοί, ἐμπαράνθησαν. ST. PAUL.

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WITH  
General Considerations on the Influence of Infidelity upon  
Society; answering the various Objections of Deists  
and Atheists; and a Postscript upon the present  
State of Democratical Politics; Remarks  
upon Professor Robison's late  
Work, &c. &c.

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BY WILLIAM HAMILTON REID.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. HATCHARD, BOOKSELLER TO HER  
MAJESTY, NO. 173, PICCADILLY.

1800.



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## INTRODUCTION

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THE Reader is candidly informed, that the mention of *Infidel Societies*, by the Bishop of London, in his late excellent charge, was a forcible motive for digesting the narrative contained in this work. After the enumeration of its contents, in the title-page, it is scarcely necessary to insist upon this new and important æra, herein described: *new*, because it delineates the first period in which the doctrines of Infidelity have been extensively circulated among the lower orders; and *important*, because the trial they have had, as it will appear in the sequel, has decidedly pronounced upon their weakness, and absolute incapacity to ameliorate or improve the state and condition of mankind.

Professor Robison and the Abbé Barruel, it is acknowledged, have given an interesting account of similar societies in France and Ger-



many, previous to the late revolution; but if these are to be regarded as an illustration of the monition

*“ Nam tua res agitur paries cum proximus ardet,”*

the firing of a neighbour's house shall be esteemed trivial indeed, in comparison with a mine that was ready to burst our under feet! With the existence of these English affiliations, it is probable, that, few of the higher orders were acquainted; but their extensive influence and energies, certainly communicate a degree of interest to the detail here given, as the first account of them.

The Author of this undertaking, having been involved in the dangerous delusion he now explodes, may reasonably be admitted a competent witness of the events which he relates; as may also the presumption, that he has demonstrated the impracticability of the Infidel scheme, not merely from speculation, to which former writers have been confined, but from facts deduced from real life and actual experience.

Like our predecessors, we are then no longer under the necessity of arguing without a living precedent; on the contrary, we have seen the principles



principles of Infidelity transferred from *books* to *men*; from *dead* characters to *living* subjects; not among a few isolated or speculative individuals, but in numerous and compact bodies.

What was formerly a dispute, is thus brought upon a new ground; and from the heterogeneous composition of this upstart body, the question “Whether a Society of Atheists can subsist?” it is presumed, may now be decided in the negative.

Agreeable to this statement, Mr. Robert Hall, of Cambridge, in the preface to his Sermon intitled, *Modern Infidelity considered, &c.* observes, that the controversy between Infidels and Christians *appears to have taken a new turn*: the influence of Infidelity upon society, he says, is a point hitherto little considered. The present exposure of these opinions, by one who has witnessed their most secret operations; and the most unqualified expression of the views of those who espoused them, may awaken the rancour of Infidel fanatics; but this he presumes, will be more than counter balanced by the approbation of the learned and sober-minded of all Christian denominations. As for the probable defects of this work, in point of

I style,



style, or in the art of composition, my apology to the learned is, that it was written upon the spur of the occasion, and *currente calamo*.

Perhaps the relative obscurity of these affiliations may have been the reason they were not sooner noticed; as, in respect to their locality in this metropolis, it must be confessed they bear some resemblance with the Parisian Fauxbourgs of St. Antoine, &c.

After the faithful delineation of facts, in this work, it is hoped, Infidels will no longer claim the character of Philosophers! If Philosophy has any connection with the conduct of the human mind, towards the *Chief-good*, it is not the Infidel, but the rational Christian, who has the best right to that high distinction; for, “the man who happily unites Philosophy with Religion, is the dupe, neither of scepticism, superstition, or fanaticism.”

Were I at liberty to mention *several eminent literary characters*, who have honoured this work with their attention, while in manuscript, it might be construed into an attempt to bias the public opinion; but, till that decision is pronounced, the Author alone, is responsible for the whole; I am therefore “ready  
to



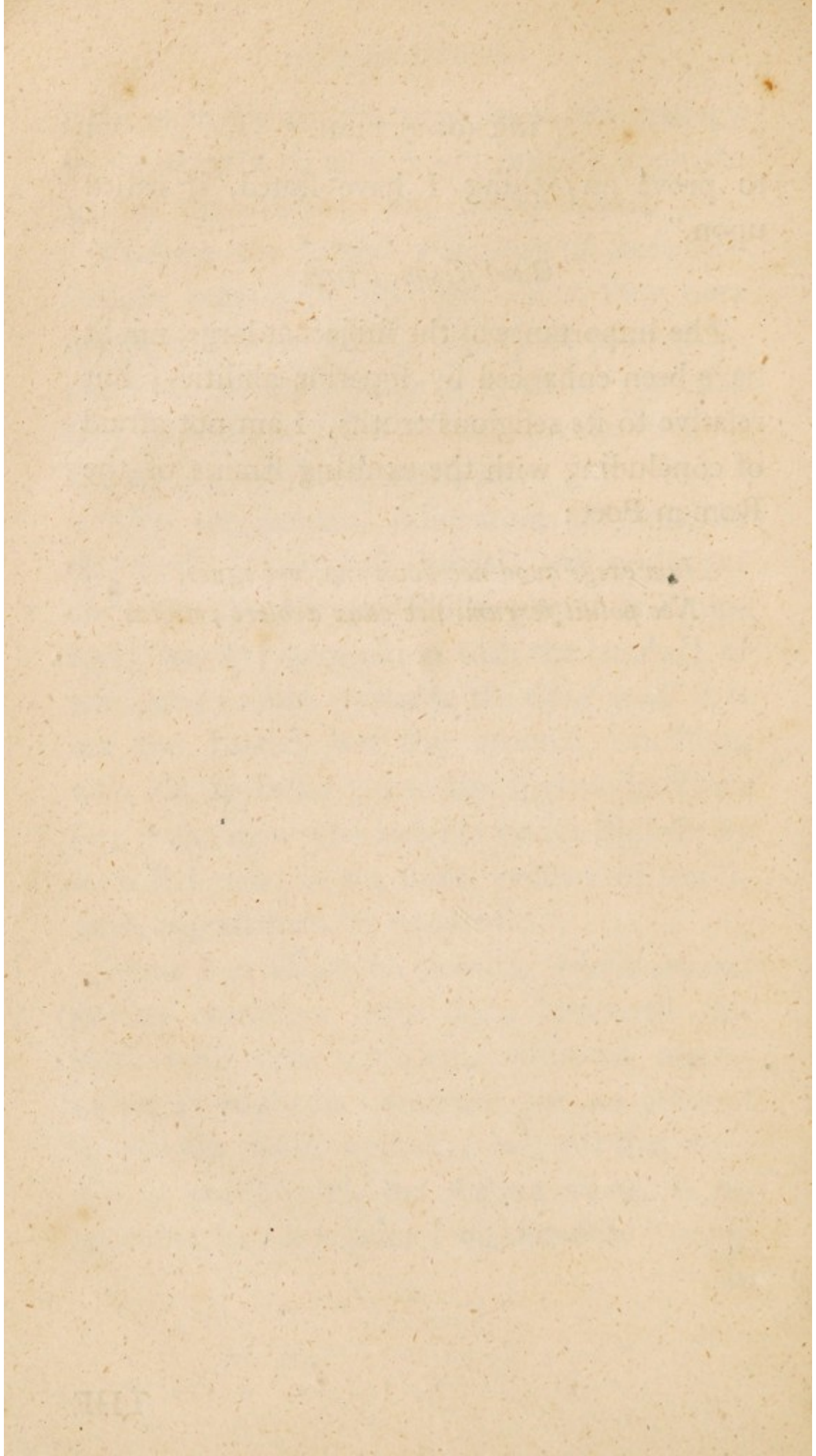
to prove any thing I have stated, if called upon."

*Quod scripsi, scripsi.*

The importance of the subject at large, might have been enhanced by superior abilities; but relative to its religious truths, I am not afraid of concluding with the exulting strains of the Roman Poet:

*Jam exegi quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,  
Nec potuit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.*





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THE  
RISE AND DISSOLUTION, &c.

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CHAP. I.

*Upon some remote and the immediate Causes of the late Rise and Progress of Infidelity.—Patronage of the Age of Reason by the London Corresponding Society.—Mirabaud's System De la Nature.—Volney's Ruins of Empires.—Conversion of the Division-Rooms into the Mediums of Infidelity.*

TO suppose the late inclination to infidelity, to have been the result of cool inquiry, or rational conviction, would be a gross libel upon the good sense of the country. On the contrary, the most prominent reason which can be given for this new propensity is, that the public mind was taken by surprise, merely through the medium by which the evil complained of was obtruded by a certain society, assisted by the politics of the moment.

With these politics, it was supposed the new religion would blend and unite; and to the mis-

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applied



applied zeal of this society, and its partizans out of doors, the short-lived increase of those opinions was owing.

Still there were other causes which, though seemingly remote, had an immediate effect upon the minds of many who were waiting to avail themselves of any public event to promote a particular object. It being a general tradition among Protestants, that the seat of the Roman Catholic religion was to be annihilated, it unfortunately occurred, that, as the French were successful, after the period of the revolution, in despoiling that church, notwithstanding their general espousal of infidelity, their admirers still supposed them to be the *instruments* of fulfilling their favourite prediction; and were so much the easier persuaded to adopt French principles in religion, while they excused the perpetrators of deeds, at which they could not but shudder, under the idea that the former were the select *agents* of Providence; and thus, from the dereliction of one religious denomination, they were led, by an easy gradation, to wish for the destruction of all the rest.

From hence, under the idea of the instrumentality of the French revolution, in the fulfilment of prophecies, religion itself became accessory to deism and atheism! Prophecies, relative to the destruction of almost every kingdom and empire in the world, teemed from the British press, some of them in weekly numbers, till government, perfectly aware of the tendency of these inflammatory means, prudently transferred the prince of prophets to a mad-house.

It was natural for infidels, who had a revolution in view, to connive at those enthusiasts who believed in vulgar predictions relative to the destruction of Popery; it was natural also for the former to embrace  
such



such converts; but the attachment they obtained from those characters, who had the least remains of true religion, was of very short duration; as the general habit of ridiculing every thing before held sacred, frequently created disgust, and occasioned a revolt from a party, who, notwithstanding all their professions about a *general* improvement of the morals of men, could not conceal the little value they set upon *personal reformation!* just as if the aggregate of society was not made up of individuals. In fact, to have hinted any thing relative to religious impressions, though with all the modifications of a Socinian, would have stigmatized its author as a mere idiot, or driveller, among these modern sages and pretended reformers. The Rev. Henry Kett, in his striking application of the Scriptures in his *History, the best Interpreter of Prophecy*, seems to impute too little to the secret and almost imperceptible operations of Infidelity through the whole course of the last century, especially in the interval between the publication of Bolingbroke's works, and the year 1776. This hiatus, not to keep my readers from the contemplation of more recent danger, I shall endeavour to supply in my postscript, only observing at present, as the immediate cause of the late rise and progress of infidelity, that an Englishman in Paris, the head of a political party here, probably wishing to revive his popularity in France, produced that last effort of religious Quixotism, the Age of Reason. The early predilection of the London Corresponding Society for this performance, was the sole medium which, for the first time, made infidelity as familiar as possible with the lower orders. But the experiment thus tried, instead of consolidating the wild theory of its authors, has only furnished their



Christian opponents with the strongest grounds of objection.

It may now be said, that the splendid theories of Voltaire have been reduced to practice ; the impassioned eloquence of John James Rousseau applied to the objects designated by its author ; and that the pertness and scurrility of Thomas Paine have been added : but all these efforts have been, and will still be found illusory, as will farther appear from a faithful statement of recent events, and such reflections as naturally result therefrom.

If the facts I am about to adduce were not well warranted, posterity would not believe, that in consequence of the publication of a rhapsody against the doctrines of Christianity, hazarded by a theoretical politician in 1794, and under favour of the French revolution, a very considerable number of our countrymen adopted his notions ; and became equally as violent for the extermination of the Christian religion, as for the remedy of those *civil abuses*, for which alone their society was at first established !

Without experience of the fact, who would believe that while the infatuated disciples of the new philosophy were declaiming against their clergy, for mingling politics with religion, they themselves, employed missionaries to add deism to the democracy of their converts ! Or, who would credit that every religious obligation, in civilized society, was resisted as priestcraft, by the same persons who were the loudest in their demands, for what they chose to disguise with the name of a reform !

Perhaps this mania, in its first appearance, may be attributed to an implicit belief in most of its advocates, that the new philosophy would produce better effects upon the manners of society, than  
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the religion of their forefathers had done. But how strongly the *practice* of the philosophers has belied the *theory*, will evidently appear in the impartial examination of their public conduct, which, as propagandists, would have been much more alarming, had their secret activity been appreciated sooner.

It is still fair to admit, that the adoption of Paine's Age of Reason was not agreed, to in the London Corresponding Society, without considerable opposition, especially in the general committee; but as zeal superseded judgment, in their discussions upon the subject, the epithets of d-m--d fool, and d-m--d Christian, ultimately prevailed; and a bookseller was soon persuaded, by the heads of the party, to undertake a cheap edition of the Age of Reason, for its more ready dissemination through the divisions, at that time rapidly increasing in number every week: but after Williams, the bookseller just alluded to, was imprisoned for this publication, his family received much less assistance from the society, than from mere strangers.

In the hour of its admiration, this rhapsody was ridiculously termed the *New Holy Bible*; a circumstance which fully evinced the intentions of Mr. Paine's partizans: in fine, the attachment of the party was carried so far, that the bare circumstance of having the Age of Reason in a house, was deemed a collateral proof of the *civism* of the possessor.

It may be urged, that this conduct of the society was never justified by any act of the body at large: this is granted; but when it is considered, that their inclination for deism was sufficiently powerful to occasion a schism, which produced a *new society*,  
under



under the denomination of the *Civil and Religious*; it follows, that the preponderance of a party, in the original body, was equal to a decision of the whole, and fixes the charge of a partiality to infidelity, beyond the possibility of a doubt.

If farther proofs were wanting, I might urge the circumstance of the establishment of a test, by the newly formed body, in which, each member acknowledged the *belief of the Holy Scriptures, and that Christ is the Son of God*; and this as a necessary qualification for their admission. This fact alone, I presume, would be sufficient for my purpose; to which may be added, that Bone and Lee, two seceding members, and booksellers by profession, were *proscribed* for refusing to sell Volney's *Ruins*, and Paine's *Age of Reason*; and that refusal construed into a censure upon the weakness of their intellects. Still, nothing like a miraculous conversion of the London Corresponding Society is to be imputed to Mr. Paine's *Anti-theological Work*. On the contrary, their minds were prepared for this more popular performance, by the more learned and elaborate productions of Mirabaud's *System of Nature*, and Volney's *Ruins of Empires*: the latter, in point of style, is looked upon as the Hervey of the Deists; the former, as the Newton of the Atheists: and, as the *System of Nature* was translated by a person confined in Newgate as a patriot, and published in weekly numbers, its sale was pushed, from the joint motive of serving the Author, and the cause in which the London Corresponding Society were engaged.

Northcote's *Life of David* was also reprinted in a very small edition; and if this vehicle for degrading the Bible had been better received, it was in agitation to biographize all the leading characters



ters in the Old and New Testaments, as the most certain means of bringing the Christian religion into contempt.

Proposals were circulated for reprinting the whole works of Peter Annet; much being expected from the plainness of his style, and his mode of reasoning against revelation by scriptural quotations; but, owing to the dread of a prosecution, not more than three weekly numbers, at three-halfpence each, made their appearance. The Rights and Duties of Citizenship, most remarkable for copying the blunders of Voltaire, was one of the last things, of this kind, ushered into public view; but being prosecuted, and the publishers sentenced to two years solitary imprisonment, a final stop was put to this mode of promoting scepticism and infidelity.

The Beauties of Deism; A Moral Dictionary; Julian against Christianity; and, lastly, that paragon of French Atheism, *LE BON SENS, Ou Idées Naturelles opposées aux Idées Surnaturelles*, were in agitation to have followed. The latter, for its audacity and virulence, has possibly never been surpassed, and its last section is probably no bad summary of the whole.

“ La religion, n’a fait en tout tems que rem-  
 “ plir l’esprit de l’homme de tenebres et le retenir  
 “ dans l’ignorance de ses vrais rapports, de ses  
 “ vrais devoirs, de ses intérêts véritables. Ce n’est  
 “ qu’en écartant ses nuages et ses phantômes que  
 “ nous decouvrons les sources du vrai, de la  
 “ raison, de la morale, & les motifs reels qui doi-  
 “ vent nous porter à la vertu. Cette religion nous  
 “ donne le change, & sur les causes de nos maux  
 “ & sur les remedes naturels que nous pourrions  
 “ y appliquer: loin de les guerir, elle ne peut  
 “ que les aggraver, les multiplier, & les rendre  
 “ plus



“ plus durables. Disons donc avec un celebre  
 “ moderne, *la Theologie est la boîte de Pandore;*  
 “ & s’il est impossible de la refermer, il est au-  
 “ moins utile d’avertir que cette boîte si fatale est  
 “ ouverte.”

Impregnated with the principal objections of all the infidel writers, and big with the fancied importance of being instrumental in a general reform, almost every division-room could now boast its advocate for the new philosophy. In fact, such a torrent of abuse and declamation appeared to burst from all quarters at once, that as the idea of a *Deist* and a good *Democrat* seemed to have been universally compounded, very few had the courage to oppose the general current. On the other hand, several persons really sacrificed their private sentiments to the public opinion, merely to avoid the contempt every where bestowed upon those who dared to open their mouths in defence of principles and opinions, till then held sacred.

Next to songs, in which the clergy were a standing subject of abuse; in conjunction with pipes and tobacco, the tables of the club-rooms were frequently strewed with penny, two-penny, and three-penny publications, as it were so many swivels against established opinions; while, to enable the members to furnish themselves with the heavy artillery of Voltaire, Godwin, &c. reading-clubs were formed. But still, so it happened, that those who despised the labour of reading, took their creeds implicitly, from the extemporaneous effusions of others, whose talents were comparatively above their own. And yet these people were invariably in the habit of ridiculing Christians, in concert with the orators, for being blindly led by priests.



After these notions of infidelity were in a manner established in the divisions, it is natural to suppose, that in choosing their delegates, those persons were preferred who were doubly recommended by *their religion*, and their politics; in fact, this was so prevalent, that in the recommendation of any person to an office among them, it was common to distinguish him as "*A good Democrat and a Deist.*" Or, to fix the character more strongly, to add, "*That he is no Christian.*"

However, from this period, when the leaders began to force their anti-religious opinions upon their co-associates, it is undeniable that their intestine divisions hastened their dissolution more than any external obstacles.

I shall now proceed to a detail of the recent places of rendezvous, as they were held by these perturbed spirits, which, I hope, will not be deemed trivial. The once famed Robin Hood Society had several historians in prose and verse; and yet, unlike its successors, it combined no *political* with its so-called *religious* views. In its decline alone it bore the most resemblance to the modern clubs, in the defection of many of its best members, when the consequences of their discussions, acting upon the public morals, appeared to them in a different light from what they seemed at first.



## CHAP. II.

*Of various new Societies, Field-Meetings, and Deputations.—Their Conduct and Progress.—Violence of the Clubbists against the Clergy.—Effects of their Enthusiasm upon their Auditors.—Propagandists in the Benefit and Convivial Societies.*

ONE of the first of these associations was fixed in the club-room of the Green Dragon, in Fore-street, near Cripplegate, in the spring of 1795. That apartment was then occupied by a Reading Society, which was soon swallowed up in the vortex of the ensuing debate, and was so much crowded, in a very short time, as to render an entrance, as well as respiration, extremely difficult.

That no opportunity might be lost, a question, subversive of the Christian religion, was also agitated, in the same room, on a Wednesday evening; but being very thinly attended, it was found necessary to pay both the speakers and president, out of the money collected from the audience.

On the other hand, the debate on a Sunday evening always drew a crowded audience, during a twelvemonth, in which it was continued at that house; when, upon the complaint of some of the neighbours, that the landlord kept bad hours, (as the disputes above and below stairs seldom terminated before one in the morning) they were compelled to leave the premises, to prevent worse consequences to the keeper of the house.

Their



Their sittings were afterwards alternately held at a house in Windmill-street, Finsbury-square; and at the George, in East Harding-street, Fetter-lane, which, being a very commodious room, the noise made by the clapping of the speakers, and the late hours kept by the company, occasioned a complaint, that, being immediately attended to, by a worthy officer of the ward, not far from the spot, the club was removed to the Fountain, in Fetter-lane, and again hunted from its new retreat, till they ultimately settled at the Scots Arms, in Little Britain, and were as numerously attended as at any former period: here they continued the greatest part of the winter of 1797, but being compelled to leave it, through the magistrate's interference, the landlord was afterwards deprived of his licence for entertaining them. Its next stage of existence was at the Golden Key, near Moor-lane, Moor-fields; but here it attracted so great a concourse of attendants, that the landlord, dreading the consequences, warned them away: this was also the case at another house, near Union-street, Moorfields; till, adjoining to the British Wine-house, near Hoxton, beyond the limits of the city-officers, they carried on their disquisitions, near two months, without meeting with any new embarrassment.

In the interval, between the spring of 1795 and the period last spoken of, several other societies, upon a smaller scale, had been set on foot: one of these, the next, in point of promise, to that of the Green Dragon, was intitled, "The Moral and Political Society," who, like the former, converted their place of meeting, near Bunhill-row, into a Debating-room. A few revolutionary pamphlets, written and printed at the society's



expencc, were published, during the interval to which I have alluded.

Similar meetings were also held at a public house, near Grub-street; and another, near the quarters of Moorfields.

Another, and one of the last places of any note for the exhibition of infidelity, in the eastern district, was at a Hair-dresser's in the High-street, Shoreditch, where a theological question was debated, on a Sunday evening; but, as no money was taken at the door, the law, then in force, was evaded.

Several other small branches spread themselves in the neighbourhood of Whitechapel, Spital-fields, and Hoxton; but were not of sufficient notoriety, or duration, to merit much attention.

The West end of the metropolis, having in the mean while attained to a degree of rivalship, in consequence of an association, in Wells-street, Oxford-road, where the members were permitted to recite their own productions; and another, on a Sunday evening, much more numerously attended, *viz.* the Angel, in Cecil-court, St. Martin's Lane. Those nearest the city were, in some measure, deserted; but, as they closed their debates sooner than those at the west end of the town, some of the speakers contrived to exhibit at two places on the same night: even the weather presented but few obstacles. The visionary expectation of a new order of things, it is presumed, often vibrated from the imaginations of the leading members to their fingers ends, and rendered them less sensible of the operations of the elements than the vulgar herd.

The Wells-street Society being dissolved, in consequence of some disagreement among the members, the whole focus of Deism and Atheism was



was concentrated at the Angel, in Cecil-court, St. Martin's Lane, where a mingled display of real talent and miserable imitation was continued, on the Sunday and Wednesday evenings, till February, 1798; when, without any previous notice from the Westminster-magistrates, as had been customary in the city, a period was put to this promising school; the whole of the members, *and others* present, being apprehended, and, the next day, obliged to find sureties for their appearance, to answer any complaint, at the next Quarter-Session, at Guildhall, Westminster; but no bill being found, the business ended with the withdrawing of the recognizances of the parties, 57 in number; which would certainly have been doubled, if the police-officers, sent to apprehend the club, had stayed till the business of the evening had commenced.

This meeting was then deemed wholly political! an idea which could have no other foundation than the silly appellation of *citizen*, made use of by the members; or the circumstance of its being attended by John Binns, who was apprehended. about the same period this society was disturbed, in company with Arthur O'Connor, in Kent. This unexpected stroke of justice, however, put the last hand to the Sunday-night meetings, at the west end of the town; the associators in that quarter, after holding a few thin sittings, at a house near Compton-street, Soho, being completely dispersed. Previous to the establishment of the club at this place, another had been continued a considerable time, on a Wednesday evening, at a public house, the corner of Long-Acre, opposite Newport-Market. Here, as well as at the other places, the questions agitated were partly religious, and partly political.



In all these places, where anti-religious opinions were stated, it was surprising to observe how strongly their novelty attracted the public mind. The perfection to which the orators had attained, by a long practice, was such, that had commodious apartments been opened in any of the neighbourhoods, occupied by working people, there can be no doubt of their commanding large auditories. The zeal and energy of the speakers, as there were few, very few, whose judgement was matured by time, had also great weight in making converts; for, among the lower orders of people, an extemporaneous harangue, against the ministers of religion, had an effect not easily imagined. This was particularly noticeable about Spitalfields, when, as the French system of politics insensibly attached itself to the auxiliary ideas of prophecies, fulfilling on the Continent, it would be difficult to say, where the effects would have ceased, had time been given to obtain that consistence wished for by the visionary movers of those irritable bodies.

It may be objected, that these clubs were only frequented by low and obscure characters; but such, it may be remembered, were Massinello, the Fisherman of Naples, the Cobbler of Messina, and many others: though the objection does not altogether lie against the societies in question. They were, for a time, sanctioned by some persons above the common rank, by their fortunes and professions in life. Among these, a singular character used to be remarked, being in the habit of attending in a large round hat, nearly the size of an umbrella, bordered with gold-lace; and he had other eccentricities, which he used to vary according to caprice. And to fortune and talents, might be added, an enthusiasm capable of rousing  
 I the



the most infensate to act against what was deemed a *spiritual tyranny*, in the compulsory payment of church-rates, to the amount of a few pence per week ! A favourite theme with some of the club-orators ; with one of whom, it used to be a common-place observation, that, “ *There could not be a more awfuller sight in the world, than to see a Bishop rolling about in his chariot.*” Of another of these enthusiasts it was mentioned, “ That it was with difficulty he could restrain the most violent feelings, whenever the present Archbishop of Canterbury passed under his window.” After these traits of club-characters, and among men with whom *private assassination* was looked upon as no crime, one might think, that even what has been contemptuously called the *pop-gun* plot did not deserve that air of incredibility and mystery thrown upon it by some writers.

Still as the reins were then held by government, very little was to be feared from any overt-acts among these descriptions ; though, if their temporary ebullitions of zeal could be deemed a fair criterion, this negative obedience might be imputed more to a want of power than of will. Vain glory, and a blind resentment, as silly as it is savage, often hurry men into the wildest extremes.—I am an Atheist ! exclaimed one of those persons, and, jumping upon a club-room table ; here, said he, holding up an infant, here is a young Atheist ! Another, to shew how little he regarded the Bible, observed, at another meeting, “ That just before he came from home, he kicked something before him, and, picking it up, what should it be but an old Bible ; that, till then, he did not know he had any such thing in his house !” A third philosopher, censuring the  
present



present mode of education, observed, “ There  
 “ would never be any good done, till towns and  
 “ cities were built without a single church, cha-  
 “ pel, or any place of worship, in them ! ” Another  
 member, being weary of the deliberations at which  
 he was present, exclaimed, “ *What signifies our*  
 “ *sitting here ? let us go and kill all the bl—dy*  
 “ *priests !* ”

I mention these instances, only as the effects  
 of a party spirit, breathing sentiments by no means  
 natural, but merely forced from the hot-beds of the  
 clubs.

It should be observed, that as apprentices  
 were admitted into these assemblies ; and, ac-  
 cording to the modern notions of equality, eligi-  
 ble to the chair ; so sudden a transition, from do-  
 mestic inferiority to professional importance, often  
 turned a weak head : and, if the same extremities  
 had been proceeded to as the religious fanatics of  
 the last age were engaged in, the London appren-  
 tices might again have distinguished themselves,  
 and the cry of *no king* followed that of *no bishop*,  
 as a natural consequence.

But in hinting at a parallel between modern  
 democratic zeal and the fanaticism of the sixteenth  
 century ; of the latter I ought to beg pardon.—  
 A degree of monstrosity, sufficient to make any  
 humanized being shudder, seems to have been  
 reserved for the English Clubbists and *Anti-Reli-*  
*gionists* of later times.—I allude to a common  
 toast, which used to be received among them  
 with acclamation, *viz.*

“ *May the last King be strangled in the bowels of the*  
 “ *last Priest !!!* ”

In ascribing so much of this intemperate zeal  
 to party-spirit, youth, and inexperience, every  
 candid



candid mind will acquit me of any charge of partiality or misrepresentation. An observation of Mr. Neckar's may probably confirm the propriety of the present application, by exhibiting a striking similarity between the modern Free-thinkers in France and those in England: " We  
 " now reckon, says he, among those who oppose  
 " a contemptuous smile to religious opinions, a  
 " multitude of young people, often incapable of  
 " supporting the most trivial arguments; and who,  
 " perhaps, could not connect two or three abstract  
 " propositions: these pretended philosophers art-  
 " fully, and almost perfidiously, take advantage  
 " of the first flight of self-love, to persuade be-  
 " ginners, that they are able to judge, at a glance,  
 " of the serious questions which have eluded the  
 " penetration of the most exercised thinkers."

Instead then of reckoning, as many persons have done, upon the total abolition of Christianity, and fondly anticipating the *acquirements* of the next generation, as wholly Infidel, it should have been made a question, Whether the present generation of the French will retain its Infidel principles after its judgment is matured, and the hey-day of revolutions has subsided?

But, to return: at the same time that all these energies were called forth in the clubs, it became another branch of the duty of the members, and their partizans, to attend, perplex, and harass, by all possible means, the itinerant preachers, in the vicinity of town. For instance, during the summer, of 1797, a very formidable party were organized, and assembled, every Sunday morning, at seven o'clock, near the City-road: here, in consequence of the debates, forced upon the preachers or the hearers, several groupes of people would remain upon the ground till noon, giving an op-



portunity to the unwary passengers to become acquainted with the dogmas of Voltaire, Paine, and other writers, of whom they might have remained in ignorance; in fact, the fields were resorted to, by the new reformers, upon the same principle as a sportsman goes in quest of game:—"We shall be sure to find some Christians in the fields" was the standing reason for these excursions.

So indefatigable were these propagandists in their labours, that, besides their attendance on the Sunday morning, in consequence of which the groupes would remain till noon, they were again assembled from three or four in the afternoon; and, if the weather permitted, retained till eleven at night; and this not in one but various parts of the environs of this metropolis. The cavilling parties, engaged in this business, demurred at no distance of place; being as ready to attend at Hoxton, Hackney, or Hornsey, as at their own doors. One of these bodies, I was afterwards informed, used to meet, every Sunday morning, in a garden near Bethnal-green, and, after spending some time in reading and commenting upon Paine's *Age of Reason*, distributed themselves for the purposes above-mentioned.

In fine, this opposition from Deists and Atheists was carried to such extremes, that, in 1798, the magistrates were compelled to put a partial stop to field-preaching; till that period, as common and habitual in the eastern suburbs, as it had been in Moorfields, previous to the erection of Finsbury-square. A measure prompted intirely, by the advantages taken by the Infidel party, to propagate their absurd opinions with more effect.

In addition to the redoubtable army before-mentioned, marshalled for every kind of attack,  
both



both within and beyond the sphere of the clubs, a number of straggling auxiliaries might be reckoned upon, who were drawn together by the noise and alarm of the Field-Disputants. These consisted of Mystics, Muggletonians, Millennaries, and a variety of eccentric characters of different denominations: I call them auxiliaries, because, their ridiculous mode of defending, or enforcing, their different tenets only increased the objections to the Christian Belief, in the minds of those persons before unhinged by the subtleties of Infidels; and thus, unintentionally, an additional weight was thrown into the scale of the common enemy, by those who had a zeal, but not according to knowledge. Among the latter, were two preachers, called *Jew-Quakers*, from the circumstance of their having but one beard between them; one shaving the *upper*, the other the *under*, lip only: to these may be added, a Bird-catcher, and a Basket-maker, both well known as Holders-forth, and, of course, having their admirers.

All these grotesque characters, the Deists and Atheists, justly considered as so many Punchinellos, whom those who held the wires behind the scenes might play off, as best suited their purpose; a position which a superficial observer might not immediately perceive: but I recollect an instance, in the summer of 1798, at the conclusion of a Field-sermon, when it was remarked, that, the Deists did not oppose the Arian preachers with the same virulence as the Trinitarians. The full force of the observation was admitted, while it was urged, as a reason for this forbearance, that, the Infidels considered the Arians as doing a part of their business for them.

But besides the fields, and the division-rooms, the Infidel-propagandists made use of another me-



dium for spreading their principles, in which they were but too successful: this was in the various Benefit-Societies, within the circle of the metropolis. Here, after the business of the evening was over, the disciple of Paine was sure to introduce the subject of religion; and, by these means, several copies of the *Age of Reason* were circulated, from the reading of which many of its victims dated their *conversion*.

But this insidious mode of introducing the *Age of Reason* having been successfully resisted by some of the Benefit-Societies, who have complained to the magistrates of such disorderly members; the latter, finding their temporal interests at stake, and not being inclined, by the new philosophy, to sacrifice *principle* for *interest*, it is supposed, will act with more cunning in future; it being through dissimulation alone, and that kind of it, which a Christian would disdain, by which these obnoxious members have escaped the erasure of their names from the books of the Society, and, perhaps, in more than one instance, engaged the magistrates to prevent their exclusion.

The introduction of democratic songs was another part of the duty of these political missionaries; but their talents were not confined to Benefit-Clubs, their business was to worm themselves into convivial societies of every kind; where, though scuffles have frequently ensued, these delegates have often succeeded in erecting a party, or an interest, which, otherwise, would not have had an existence.

Upon the whole, the disgusting licentiousness, coarseness, and brutal indelicacy, too frequently apparent in those field-disputations, more than counteracted every degree of utility attending them. It  
has



has several times occurred, that, when two persons, rather seriously inclined, have been discussing the attributes of the Deity, a third has abruptly interfered, with what he has supposed to have been a shrewd question, *viz.* “How do you know there is any God at all?”

Having now done with the delineation of these distorted features of humanity, I shall now proceed to give an account of the establishment of a place of public instruction; always an important object with the Infidel Illuminati. The next chapter will therefore shew how far that establishment was founded upon a judicious or a fanatical estimate.



## CHAP. III.

*Upon the opening of a Temple of Reason in the  
Spring of 1796.*

IT had long been a favourite idea of the Club-Orators, and Field-Missionary Disputants, that exhibited upon a proper stage of action, their eloquence would be irresistible. Favoured by the French Revolution, they fondly imagined the time, for the explosion of the whole fabric of Christianity, had at length arrived; and that, to convert all sects from the absurdity of Christian notions, nothing was wanting but the opportunity which then presented itself, for proclaiming the *beauties of nature*, and *unassisted reason* to the world at large. Flushed with these expectations, a committee was selected to meet at a public house, in Jewin-street; when, after a few adjourned sittings, being assisted by two gentlemen of the law, something like a society was organized; a fund adequate to the undertaking was deposited, and the name of the association agreed upon, to be that of the *Friends of Morality*. To keep up the spirit of this institution, it was ordered, that no person should be admitted, unless known some months, by more than one of the members, and that exclusion should follow any act of immorality; but in consequence of the trouble that seemed likely to ensue upon the adoption of this regulation, these modern Cato's were soon compelled



pelled to give up a measure, at first conceived to be indispensibly necessary to support the character of this new establishment.

It being justly conceived that every member was not qualified to deliver lectures in public, it soon became an object of high debate, in the committee, whether the lecturers should or should not be paid for their labours. And as any resemblance to the allowance of a stipend to a real or nominal superior was looked upon as rank superstition, or of aristocratic tendency, it required all the influence of the two lawyers, to induce the majority of the members to agree to a clause in their articles, to allow half a guinea to each lecturer, by way of compensation for his trouble.

A committee of managers was also appointed; but a card and some emblematic device being found a necessary appendage, an engraver belonging to the body was employed, who produced a plate, exhibiting Truth with a speculum in her hand, concentrating her rays upon the figure of Error, recumbent upon the ground. Some of the committee, whose taste was not congenial to the fine arts, thought the charge of half-a-guinea most exorbitant, while others supposed that the artist, being a member, should have contributed the assistance of his talents without fee or reward.

After several fruitless attempts to procure a commodious place of meeting, owing to a variety of objections from the persons applied to, Nichols's sale-room, in Whitecross-street, being taken at a rent of twenty pounds per annum: by the contributions and labour of some of the members, it was soon furnished with seats, a tribune, &c. Books being the next object; to accommodate such persons as chose to read before the Sunday lectures commenced, the members were called upon to contribute



contribute their stock for the public good, particularly such works as militated most strongly against Christianity; but it so happened, for want of better knowledge, that some of the books sent into the depository, were written in its behalf! A circumstance something like the conduct of some of the rioters in 1780, who being called upon to go to such a house, as they were *Catholics* there, replied, "What are Catholics to us? We are only against *Popery*!"

After this room was opened, and looked upon, *bona fide*, as a Temple of Reason, the opening being announced by the posting of bills, it was imagined that the superiority of Infidelity would inevitably appear. The hopes of the leaders were equal to any thing, and some of them, almost persuaded themselves, they were the very persons designated by Dr. Priestley, but a few years before, for the important and momentous purpose of setting fire to the train so long accumulating under the Established Church, from the successive contributions of inflammable matter, by Arians, Socinians, and other Schismatics. From this opinion, and the promising æra of preaching the doctrines of Deism, &c. in the fields, which was partly contemporary; an æra, which appeared to have been reserved for the year 1796, portentous of the Millennium of Infidelity, and of which, the newly-opened Temple of Reason was viewed as the immediate forerunner. It was therefore not strange that the most active members should expect to have their names handed down to posterity, as the restorers of religious liberty, which was first to eradicate superstition and slavery from this island, and afterwards, supported by the French Revolution, make the tour of Christendom.

Respecting



Respecting the external economy of this new Temple, as the acts of prayer and praise were expressly excluded, the defects of solemnity or impression upon the attendants may easily be conjectured. Simple as the worship of the Quakers, without their gravity, singularity in dress, &c. each person that mounted the rostrum seemed rather to be trying his talents than employed in any serious undertaking; and, while the doctrines of the new philosophy, as far as they related to morality, were much too general to suit any particular purpose, the feelings of the impartial hearer, who justly expected the *new* religion would supersede the *old*, were invariably those of surprize and disappointment.

It was the endeavour of the most rational members, to confine the lecturers to the delivery of their sentiments upon morality, abstractedly, without reference to Christianity, or any other system: but this the majority of the members opposed, well persuaded, that, deprived of the most copious themes of argument, or rather declamation, they would entirely lose the command over the passions of their auditors, and, of course, become more insipid and uninteresting than any of the professions they were determined to condemn.

This being the temper of the chiefs of this new Temple of Reason, the lectures there delivered were generally compiled from the writings of Voltaire, David Williams, and other authors, distinguished for their rancour or prejudices against Christianity. As for the decorum, indispensably necessary in every kind of worship, or public instruction, the strangers that attended this institution could not be less influenced by it, than the members themselves; as, from the opening of the place, from ten in the morning till one, and



on the Sunday afternoon, till the moment of the commencement of the lectures, the time was invariably spent in sarcastic or facetious conversation, across the tables, between the members; and, from the noisy approbation this entertainment occasionally produced, it was difficult to determine, whether amusement or astonishment preponderated in the minds of the audience at large.

As these boasted philosophers were ignorant of the force of motives, and of such doctrines as influence the minds of individuals, it was not unaccountable, that a laxity of attendance among the members soon produced a similar disposition in strangers; so that, notwithstanding the additional notice which the place attracted, in consequence of a disturbance by some intruders, and the statement of their examination at one of the police offices, in some of the daily papers, the society, finding all their declamations "wasted upon the desert air," at length agreed to shut up the Temple till a more convenient season; for, at that period, it was not thought impossible but that, in a few months, the pressure of external circumstances, and the co-operation of the New Apostleship, might occasion the conversion of St. Paul's Cathedral into a Temple of Reason! No one foreseeing, that, in the summer of 1799, the Theophilanthropic Temple, at Paris, would share the fate of its humble imitator at Nichols's sale-room in Whitecross-Street, notwithstanding the support of Thomas Paine and other eminent characters.

These uncontrolled experiments upon the lower orders of society in this country, among whom credulity is ever the strongest, must completely invalidate the plea of Infidels against the restraint of the civil law, and the old pretence, that Christi-  
anity



anity is obliged to the secular arm for its support.

It may be asked, what power restricted the Theophilanthropists in the performance of their worship at Paris? The government was not only in their favour, but the public mind had been training for years for the reception of their notions, from the writings of the whole tribe of French Atheists, in which, as Mr. Courtenay observes, a constellation of genius seemed united. These Atheistical tenets, he justly remarked, were diffused in every species of writing, and the dulcet poison was greedily imbibed in every part of Europe. The most poignant ridicule, the finest sallies of wit, and the most brilliant traits of imagination, threw a false lustre over this deceptive system; the pernicious dogmas of their school captivated the attention, and were conveyed to the heart in the enchanting page of a novel, amidst the feigned adventures and passionate endearments of lovers. But the luminous scrutinizing genius of Montequiou, the splendid levity of Voltaire, the impassioned and fascinating eloquence of Rousseau, the precision and depth of D'Alembert, the bold and acute investigations of Boulanger, the daring paradoxical spirit of Helvetius, the majestic sublimity of Buffon, the profound astronomic researches of Baille, the captivating elegance of Marmontel, and the impressive condensed thoughts of Diderot, *have not*, as the gentleman concludes, "*unsettled the consecrated opinions of ages, nor shaken the venerable gothic structure from its very foundation.*" For, on the contrary, this many-twinkling meteor of Infidelity, after blazing its hour, has paled before the milder radiance and commanding lustre of the gospel luminary, the doctrines of which, are not extraneous, but congenial to human nature.



The new philosophy, it is granted, may adorn the head, but these ennoble the heart. This wisdom may be allowed to bear the impress of human reason, but it will never pass current with weak and wounded humanity! It is formidable in books, but contemptible in life: in argument strong; in practice weak: a coin which may be kept for shew, but not for use: it is a counterfeit, and its detection, by the standard of experience, now enables us to say, with a confidence approaching to mathematical demonstration, and oracular authenticity:

*“Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.”*

Yes, ye Atheists, it is true that our minds were confined in a narrow region, while our imaginations were delighted with the smiling heavens above, and the rich diversity beneath. But what have we obtained of *you* in exchange? To the fruitful, though bounded view of hill and dale, has succeeded the immeasurable desert! Amazement was our first sensation at the magnitude of the prospect; but now our eyes are appalled, and our hearts sickened at the sameness of the scene. Here the heavens above are as brass, and the earth as iron beneath our feet. Our ears are torn by the screaming of the bittern, or alarmed by the howling of the beasts of prey. *The voice of the turtle is not heard in this land, and the time for singing birds never comes.*

But again, to advert to the history of this grand failure of Infidelity; that the fatal experiment was not tried upon a much larger scale, is not to be imputed to the want of will in the persons engaged, but to the salutary prevention which originated in another quarter: for no sooner was the opening of the place last described known in the country,



country, than a notice was given in that assembly,  
 “ That if any person, qualified as a teacher, could  
 “ make it convenient to leave town, a Society, at  
 “ one of the Western ports, could insure him from  
 “ 150*l.* to 200*l.* per annum.” Nor is it straining  
 any probability to suppose, that every assembly of  
 this nature would eventually have formed itself  
 into a political body, the consequences must then  
 have been obvious.

The project for distributing the missionaries of  
 Deism and Democracy about the country, it seems,  
 had certainly been acted upon, to a certain degree,  
 anterior to the period I have just alluded to, when,  
 as the Bishop of London observes in one of his  
 Lordship’s charges to his clergy, *that, to his know-*  
*ledge, the Age of Reason had been circulated among*  
*the miners in Cornwall.* A degree of mischievous  
 industry, unknown to the original propagandists of  
 the continent, whose impious labours, as far as I  
 have heard, terminated upon the *surface* of the  
*earth!* But of the former it may be said,

“ That when on earth they could no farther go,  
 “ They spread the mischief in the realms below!”



## CHAP. IV.

*Upon the common Prejudices in Favour of Debating Clubs ; and the immediate Influence of the late Associations, upon the Families and Connections of their Members.*

PERHAPS the long practice of agitating civil and religious subjects, in various societies, has lent too much strength to the hitherto prevailing opinion, that such verbal discussions did certainly tend to the establishment of truth, and the detection of error. But speaking from long experience, at least, ever since Infidelity has been at issue with the established religion of the country, these salutary effects have been so few, as to be scarcely perceptible.

Indeed, the majority of attendants upon these places, both of former, as well as recent date, have been led, by successive gradations, to doubt of the very fundamentals before admitted ! And he that began with scruples, concerning some parts of revelation, has commonly ended with questioning the existence of a God ! Thus Circe transformed men into beasts, but Atheism converts them into monsters.

The supposition of a candid discussion in these assemblies is a mere farce ; for in proportion as party-spirit enlarges its sphere of action, candour is uniformly jostled out of its place. The number of hands held up, for or against a question, is always more attended to, than the weight of the arguments



guments in its favour ; nor has any kind of ridicule been spared by the Infidels to ensure success over the Christians, when other means have proved abortive.

It has been intimated before, that the London Corresponding Society, by adding Deism to its politics, engendered the seeds of its own destruction : and, in fact, many of the leading orators, as if they were aware of going too far, after depreciating the character of the Saviour, in their harangues, used frequently to add the ridiculous assertion, " That they believed Jesus Christ was a " good republican." This mischievous levity, this superficial disposition, was carried into every scene of private, as well as public life. Having no taste but for scandal and declamation, among the multiplicity of publications which they sanctioned, no work upon the relative duties, no work inculcating moral or religious obligations to virtue, was either called for, or made its appearance. Volney's Law of Nature, or Catechism of Reason, published by Eaton, is the only exception to this charge : but as an unerring indication of Infidel propensities, in a hundred houses furnished with Paine's Age of Reason, the former was not once to be found ! Neither Plato, Socrates, nor Antoninus, though praised by Voltaire, had any charms for the turbulent disciples of Paine and Mirabaud : and hence the advice of a parent or master, for the want of some standing rule or authority, is generally weak and ineffectual ; a deficiency frequently increased by the difference of opinion between a man and his wife. The woman, we will suppose, even from habit, prefers seeing her children dressed, and at church, on a Sunday ; but not to disoblige her *enlightened* husband, who has read the Age of Reason, this is a point she gives



gives up ; the children remain all the forenoon in their every day drefs, or stray into the fields, where they contract vicious habits ; and thus, all the obligations that result from a place of public worship ; the influence of a copious history of striking examples, and the sanctity and authority of ages is lost and evaded. But if a disposition for reading is in any degree indulged, the sublimity of the sacred Scriptures is perhaps bartered for the effusions of some superficial or political pamphleteer !

In fact, the whole system of domestic economy seems reversed, by the introduction of deistical notions. I have observed, that the heads of many industrious families, who, previous to their *illumination*, made it an indispensable duty to appear *abroad* decently dressed on a Sunday, would afterwards not only remain the whole day in their working dresses, to shew their contempt of the *Christian Sabbath*, but spend it *at home* in sottishness and stupidity. And yet Paine's Age of Reason, Godwin's Political Justice, &c. have remained upon their shelves, and full in the sight of their possessors during the whole time ! Others, who before, were honest and frugal, have become knavish and luxurious ; and while their tables were covered with all the varieties of the season, could, without scruple of conscience, defraud their poorer neighbours of their just dues. In other instances, self-murder has put a period to these fatal deviations from order and decency. Thus the minds, even of adults, after soaring for a short period in the vacuity which they were taught to consider as an enlightened region, undetermined what object to alight upon, have sunk at length into the muddy pools of vice ; or having nothing more to hope for, embraced that dreary scepticism which cannot promise a safe conduct through this temporary existence :



istence ; from hence, these unhappy subjects have not unfrequently fallen into a situation so truly deplorable as to baffle every remedy, but have lived the astonishment of all who knew their wanderings, and died without regret !

Instead then, of the Millennium, which modern Infidels had promised themselves from the number of their converts, what has been the consequence ? Their public and private efforts have equally failed ; and, lastly, a number of their members have left them spontaneously, convinced that their notions upon matters of faith could never be attended with any wholesome effects ; a mode of conduct, as I have before observed, similar to that of many members of the once famed Robin Hood Society. Nor is there any thing which an Infidel ought to dread more than the reaction of his own principles upon himself, from his inferiors or his dependants : I have known a recent instance of a servant refusing to pay a just debt to his master ; and, in reply to his reproof for such conduct, he pleaded his master's pre-instructions ! The latter it seems, had made him his companion to the Clubs, and had frequently told him, "There was no account to be taken hereafter of actions in this life."

There was another species of inconsistency, which materially checked the dissemination of Infidel opinions in private families ; that is to say, the propensity of several individuals to attend places of Christian Worship, though in the constant habit of declaiming against them all ! When such persons were asked the reason of this conduct, their answers generally were, that they went merely for amusement, or, that the Preachers making excellent moral discourses, they supposed no harm could be taken ; a tacit confession of the weakness of their own fundamentals : but not resting here, this produced



duced a strong propensity in their children or servants to doubt their sincerity in other respects, and frequently gave the whole of their objections against Christianity the cast and colour of prejudice. Now these involuntary testimonies to the natural power of religion upon the human mind, may be urged so far as to prove, that while Deists and Atheists are appealing to *Nature* for the justification of their irreligious opinions, that same *Nature*, is confirming the truth of the Christian system, by compelling them, as it were, to sanction certain acts of divine worship, in spite of their opinions, and the system they profess

*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.*

These charges I presume, belong to that class of facts, which no sophistry can remove; but, as many of them will necessarily appear new, not having been urged by former writers against Deism, let it be remembered, that Infidelity having never gained so much ground before, among the common people, the scope of observation was proportionately narrowed: for, till the Age of Reason was adopted by the political societies in the metropolis, Deism, to say nothing of Atheism, was rather the affair of a few isolated individuals, than, as it has been since that period, the concern of a considerable part of the community. Another instance of the weakness and inferiority of modern infidelity is, that manifest want of passive, or suffering, virtue, which seems to be a natural result of the laxity of its principles. The Infidels therefore, had they continued a rising sect, could never have been formidable; passive virtue, in a civil or a religious body, being the same as discipline in an army: wanting it, both would act without energy, or be subject to a speedy dissolution.



tion. How unlike, then, are these philosophers to the *Original* Quakers, whom they are fond of proposing as a model to other Christian denominations ! These Quakers, raised themselves into consequence by cherishing the virtue, in which their modern panegyrist is most deficient : the true ground of their increase was a perseverance, arising from motives universally discountenanced by Deists and Atheists, that is to say, a hope of reward beyond the present life.

In all the recent declamations against the Christian Religion, it is a principal charge that its ministers are the most sordid and temporizing beings upon earth. But how stands it with their accusers ? As far as facts can speak for themselves, I answer, that, when their domestic concerns, or sincerity in what they profess, does, as occasion offers, demand any sacrifice of *interest* ; *principle* is generally given up in its room, with very little scruple ; an assertion, which if necessary, could be justified by a number of instances. Christianity, on the contrary, daily exhibits its nobler sacrifices of a *present* for a *future* good ; a virtue arising from a temper totally incompatible with the Infidel system, which admits of nothing beyond time and sense, and thus excludes the possibility of exercising this duty towards man ; and a due confidence in the Creator. Of the philosophers, it has been justly said ;

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“ *Ils ont l'art de détruire,  
Mais ils n'élèvent rien.*”

Proceeding upon these false principles, while modern Infidels have promised themselves happiness and unanimity in their families, discord has followed. Among others of this class, the man who has taught his children to avoid a place of worship, as a place



of infection, will nevertheless send them to Church, if education and an annual suit (for which he could pay) are the conditions of their attendance ; or rather than his new-born infant should lose the present of a frock, the good graces of a godmother and a few gossips, he will submit to have it baptized, and still continue to upbraid Christians, as the most absurd and inconsistent beings in the universe !

Another, if a place is to be obtained under government, has no objection to receive the Sacrament as a qualification ; and thus it happens that modern Infidelity instead of reforming, tends to increase the number of hypocrites !

As a farther proof of their prostitution of conscientious rectitude, a recent instance has occurred of the disappointment of a Benefit Society, in their wish to exclude a member for boring them with Paine's Age of Reason ; and who, much to their astonishment, to obviate their complaints, did not refuse to take an oath before a magistrate, and to profess his belief of that Bible which it had been his constant endeavour to discredit !

From such temporizing conduct in parents and masters of families, what must be the inferences of the children ? Will they regard the precepts which are continually at variance with the practice of those who recommend them ? Certainly, whenever the Infidel attempts to realize his theories, he betrays the most confirmed ignorance of human nature. A want of sympathy and commiseration is also a common failing with these pretenders, who have at the same time some theory or other, constantly in their heads for lessening the evils in society—which defect may perhaps be imputed to the system of fatalism, pretty general among them. If an Infidel refuse to contribute to the necessities of his brother, he may tell you he has no motive,



not being a *free agent* ; and in this case may laugh at any reply that can be made to his objection. To insist upon the superiority of the Christian Religion, which suggests such a variety of motives for repeated acts of humanity and benevolence, would be needless ; I shall, however, state one instance : a person, known as a professor of religion, being solicited to join with others for the relief of a third person, confined for a small debt, at first started several objections ; but, said the solicitor, such a one, and such a one, have come forward, and can *you as a Christian* refuse to contribute ? This being an argument *ad hominem*, which he was unable to resist, he gave liberally. But as the *Book of Nature*, so much boasted of by Deists, is not so express upon this subject as the *Book of Revelation*, such an appeal as I have just cited, cannot be made to an Infidel.

As it must be evident to every reflecting mind, that our hopes and fears are the strongest motives of all our actions ; to expatiate here upon the difference between ancient and modern Deism would be unnecessary. To those not versed in the ancient Pagan systems, I shall only observe, that while *modern* Infidels are too wise to admit of any future rewards or punishments, the *ancients* had their expiatory sacrifices, purifications, retributions, and judgment after death. These doctrines, instead of destroying every medium which could affect the heart, or fix the imagination, presented and propagated an infinity of ideas and motives of consideration ; while the modern philosophy, urges and insists upon nothing beyond a *bare probability* ! A motive which is often too weak to operate upon disciplined and exalted minds, and consequently is not in the least degree qualified to arrest and fix the grosser and more perverted apprehensions of the  
profane



profane and vulgar ; even the Pagan Polytheism, was as much superior to the inanity of modern Infidelity, as Christianity is to both of those systems.

Thus we have had a specimen of philosophers, without philosophy, and reformers, unreformed : men, of whom, in the language of Jude, we may more truly say, “ These are clouds without water, “ carried about by the winds, wandering stars, “ raging waves of the sea, murmurers and complainers speaking evil of dignities.”

I should have observed, when speaking of the inferiority of modern Deists and Atheists to the ancient Pagans, that the notions of the former have a tendency to render every plan of education, vague and uncertain. For, being anxious to suppress any idea their children may entertain of a Being, or Beings, superior to men, they are necessarily excluded from most of the benefits which the imagination derives from works of taste and the history of antiquity. The *system* of modern Infidelity, if such it may be called, has not the least congeniality either with Polytheism, or the Christian Faith. Equally despising Heroes and Demi-Gods, Saints and Angels ; Infidels can never be elevated with exalted ideas of purity or superior excellence ; and of course, besides being deprived of the pleasure of wandering in the flowery fields of useful and agreeable fiction, they may lose all the motives to virtue and piety, which music, painting, and poetry, are well known to inculcate.

To every one of these degraded mortals, who pride themselves in being nothing more than mere organizations of matter, this fine appeal of the minstrel does most forcibly apply,

Oh ! how canst thou renounce the boundless store,  
Of charms, which Nature to her vot'ry yields?

The



The warbling woodland, the surrounding shore,  
 The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields;  
 All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
 And all that echoes to the song of ev'n,  
 All that the mountain's sheltring bosom shields,  
 And all the dread magnificence of heaven,  
 Oh! how can'st thou renounce and hope to be forgiven!

BEATTIE.

Thus, all these low and obscure puddles which I have described, flowing through such a variety of channels, have at length settled in the stagnant pool of French Atheism, which few have passed in safety, where many have perished, and in which many others may plunge, during the term of their existence.

But even this, like the deadly lake of Sodom, has its fruits, goodly to the eye, but mortal to the taste; and perhaps the specious appearance of Atheistic virtues was never more aptly illustrated than by the remark made, upon the French philosophers, by the late Empress of Russia. See Professor Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, page 52, 53, 54. "*Ces philosophes*," said she, "*sont beaux, vus de loin; mais de plus près le diamant paraît chrystal:*" which may be rendered thus, "The actions and sentiments of these philosophers appear like *brilliants* at a distance, but, closely inspected, are nothing beyond *common paste*."

The natural inanity, froth, and vapour, of these philosophical bodies, have appeared in various instances, since the period of their visible decline; the defection of a number of persons, from the principles they professed, while in a collected state, having proved, that they were only held together by the vociferation of a few flippant leaders, ignorant that *Religion is natural to civilized society*.

It has farther appeared, that many, even while they remained with them, so far from being convinced



vinced by Infidel arguments, only wanted some person upon whose judgment they could rely, to bear them out in renouncing the whole, or the principal parts of their new creed. And this recantation, it seems, was long declined by others, lest their *civism* should be called in question; *Deism* and *Democracy*, as it has been observed before, being deemed inseparable qualifications.

Thus, as in France, supported by external agency, the meteor, which they falsely denominated, the Light of Nature, might longer have continued to astonish the multitude; but even this admiration must have ceased, when they found its rays afforded no genial warmth; that it led them into a trackless void, and, after exposing them to all the storms of adversity in this life, left them without hope of recompense beyond the grave.

But, of the Christian system it has been elegantly said,

“ Religion is a gen’rous lively flame,  
 “ That brightens, not deforms, the human frame :  
 “ A lambent light, around the heart it plies,  
 “ Not like a fury, threat’ning in the eyes.  
 “ No sour restraint, no forc’d concern it wears ;  
 “ No public sighs, no ostentatious tears ;  
 “ No self-applauding boast, no love of strife ;  
 “ No spleen against the blameless joys of life.  
 “ As far from these are Piety’s sweet charms ;  
 “ As settled courage from confus’d alarms ;  
 “ As solid Reason’s calm confederate train,  
 “ From the wild frenzies of a moon-struck brain.”



## CHAP. V.

*Upon several recent Causes of Scandal upon the Established Religion.—Uncommon Increase of Itinerants.—Lady Ann's Preachers.—Visiting Preachers at Workhouses.—Societies for relieving the Poor at their own Habitations.—Character of the late Rev. Mr. Richards, Curate of St. Sepulchres.—Rev. R. Southgate.—Origin of the Swedenborgian Worship.—Popish Emigrants.*

ONE of the principal evils, the subject of the present complaint, originates in the increasing and unprecedented number of preachers in what is called the Methodist line, or at least, in the Calvinistic department of it, patronized by a Lady, the supposed successor, to the Countess of Huntingdon, and hence commonly called Lady Ann's preachers. This description, besides such of them as obtain appointments within doors, are generally to be found haranguing the passengers on a Sunday, during the summer-season, in the Spa-Fields, or in the avenues leading to Islington, Hackney, &c. most of them beardless boys, and mechanics or labourers by profession, whose ignorance of their mother-tongue is not to be equalled, since the business of out-door preaching was *lain* down by Oliver's preachers.

Many of the former, well known to persons acquainted with them before their metamorphosis, have contrived to appear out of doors, decorated in a gown, before they were well missed from their



shop-boards! What qualifications are deemed necessary to authorize so sudden a change into a clerical habit I have never been able to learn, unless volubility be mistaken for elocution.

That several of these upstarts were apprentices at the time they commenced their ministerial career, particularly one of them, who fancied he was sent to call the Jews, (in Duke's Place) is a fact notoriously known. Hence the most nauseating egotism, and the want of every requisite, except assurance, are sufficient to make religion itself (in the eyes of the undiscerning) accessory to its own disgrace, without the additional ridicule of Deists and Atheists, who are happy in the opportunities of charging the follies of a few upon the whole profession.

Numbers of the same class, as to ability, have also obtruded themselves as missionaries to foreign parts. One of these, now a carman to a tradesman near Smithfield, was absolutely shipped for Sierra Leona, soon after that colony was established, but was obliged to return in consequence of a disagreement with the natives.

Though not generally known, it is no less a truth, that several of the workhouses, in this metropolis, have been used as places of training and exercise for, some years past, by these fanatical adventurers.. Some of them, for what they term exercising *their gifts*, absolutely give the poor women in these houses a few halfpence, on a Sunday, to purchase snuff, tea, &c. which is again charged to those who employ the preachers, as a part of their ordinary expences.

At some of the workhouses, according to the disposition of the governors, the visiting preachers receive small gratifications for their labours; for instance, a poor creature, now in the habit of attending Clerkenwell-workhouse, generally receives a  
ing



glass of gin, as the reward of his visit, and is farther allowed the privilege of trucking with his humble auditors for the house allowances of pudding, cheese, &c. with which he fills his pockets, upon his return home from what he calls his sermon! This is the same person mentioned in page 19, in the double capacity of bird-catcher and field-preacher.

Till a regulation happily took place, a few years since, some men of this character used to force themselves upon the malefactors under sentence of death. In conformity with the complaint, here advanced, it has been the opinion of several judicious observers of the manners and morals of mankind, “ that  
 “ great hurt has been done by the fanatical conver-  
 “ sation, the visionary hymns, and the bold and im-  
 “ pious applications of the Scriptures, by such  
 “ people above described, when attending con-  
 “ demned malefactors. It cannot be denied that,  
 “ in consequence of the most culpable prostitution  
 “ of sacred things, many daring offenders against  
 “ law and justice have had their passions and ima-  
 “ ginations so worked upon, and have been sent into  
 “ the other world in such raptures, as would much  
 “ better become martyrs, innocently suffering in a  
 “ glorious cause, than criminals of the first mag-  
 “ nitude.” In fine, the conduct of these *immoral*  
 preachers of *religion* appeared in so odious a light, a few years since, that it induced the magistrates of the city of London to confine the office of attending upon the prisoners in general to the Ordinary of Newgate; but, being refused there, I can see no reason they should gain admittance into the workhouses.

A poem, called the Literary Census, which I have before me, thus describes some of the characters, who are the constant means of heaping scandal upon the established religion.



“ In terms uncouth, and mystic phrase they rave  
 “ Of saving faith and faith that cannot save,  
 “ The spirit’s teaching, and the spirit’s rod,  
 “ And how the Devil over-reaches God;  
 “ How lion-like he seeketh to devour,  
 “ And damns more souls than grace to save has pow’r.  
 “ You’d swear, so loud their rant, and so abstruse,  
 “ Bedlam, or Babel’s workmen, were let loose.”

In a note to page 88 of this pamphlet, I find the opinion of this ingenious author, upon the multiplication of these fanatical schismatics, exactly similar to the impressions I had previously entertained, from a consideration of their conduct; I have therefore taken the liberty of transcribing it at full length.

“ The incalculably rapid increase of these locusts, and the obloquy their frantic demeanor, ignorance, and vulgarity, entail upon true religion, and the respectable part of the clergy, render the interference of the legislature indispensably necessary. If any of the magistrates of the realm should honour this work with a perusal, they will acknowledge that my remarks are just. Mr. Mainwaring, to his credit, has exerted himself, as far as the power vested in him by law will permit, to suppress this unsufferable nuisance; but, as the law stands at present, the hands of magistrates are tied, and they scarcely dare refuse a licence to the most contemptible blockhead, who believes, or wishes to make others believe, he has received a call. I am credibly informed, and I honour the gentleman for his conduct on the occasion, that the magistrate whom I above named experienced some difficulty in rejecting the application of a mean despicable wretch, who, upon being questioned what profession he followed, proved to be a *bellows-blower*



“ *blower to a forge*, and was so shockingly illiterate,  
 “ that he could not even tell the letters of the  
 “ alphabet. The subjoined list, of some of the  
 “ recently-ordained retailers of the Gospel, was  
 “ communicated to me, by a worthy and religious  
 “ friend, and will serve to illustrate the propriety  
 “ of the preceding remarks :

Mr. Norton,	Dealer in Old Clothes,
Mr. Wilson,	Grinder,
Mr. Timothy Hinds,	Sheeps-Head Seller,
Mr. Saunders,	Coach-Painter,
Mr. Colston,	Pressman,
Mr. O———,	Mangle-Maker,
Mr. Downes,	Glazier,
Mr. Hickup,	Footman to J. G. Esq.
Mr. Staunton,	Tooth-Drawer, Peruke- Maker, and Phleboto- mist,
Mr. Parry,	Breeches-Maker, &c. &c.

“ Almost, *ad infinitum* ; not less than 397 having  
 “ taken out Preaching-Licences, at the New  
 “ Sessions-House, Clerkenwell, in the course of  
 “ the years 1796-7.”

The author goes on to observe, “ That, having  
 “ once touched upon this subject, it would be  
 “ an act of injustice to dismiss it, without observing,  
 “ as it accounts, in a great degree, for the vast  
 “ number of upstart teachers and doctrines for  
 “ which this country is pre-eminently distinguish-  
 “ ed, that, there is, in this metropolis, a *ci-devant*  
 “ Coal-heaver, notorious for no qualification upon  
 “ earth, but consummate impudence and incor-  
 “ rigible ignorance, whom, I am given to under-  
 “ stand, is in the receipt of nearly £1000 *per*  
 “ *annum*. He is proprietor and *fac totum* of two  
 “ chapels,



“ chapels, and has lately purchased the elegant  
 “ mansion of the late Dr. M——h, with grounds  
 “ and appurtenances; in addition to which, he  
 “ keeps his carriage.”

Two months after I had determined upon sketching out an account of the scandals occasioned to religion, by illiterate enthusiasts; and, after I had proceeded thus far in the execution of my design, I learned, with pleasure, that this subject of complaint had been noticed in the House of Commons: on Monday, Februry 3, M. Angelo Taylor gave notice of an intended motion; and in which, he asked relief in the case of licensing preachers; urging, that, within a very short time, he had been applied to, and obliged to grant a licence to a boy of seventeen years of age, as a *Preacher of the Gospel!*

I may now add, since writing the last remark, the additional satisfaction of finding my observations, upon the wretched ignorance of these itinerant preachers, fully confirmed by the Report from the Clergy of the Diocese of Lincoln, convened, the first time in August last, for the purpose of considering the State of Religion; Printed for Rivington, St. Paul's Church-yard, and Hatchard, Piccadilly.

In this valuable production, one of the leading causes of the dangers arising to the church and government of this kingdom, and the alarming increase of profaneness and irreligion, is justly imputed to those Methodists, such as I have described in London, “ who attend and encourage  
 “ a wandering tribe of fanatical teachers, mostly  
 “ taken from the lowest and most illiterate classes  
 “ of society; among whom are to be found, raving enthusiasts, pretending to divine impulses,  
 “ of various and extraordinary kinds, practising  
 “ exorcisms,



“ exorcisms, and many other sorts of impostures  
 “ and delusions, and obtaining, thereby, an un-  
 “ limited sway over the minds of the ignorant  
 “ multitude.”

This third and lowest class of persons, to whom the name of Methodists is usually given, it is also observed, are neither qualified by education for the office of teachers, nor bound by the declaration of any fixed principles, nor restrained by any sense of decency or shame; and so various are their absurdities, that they seem to have no point of union, except a determination to calumniate the established Clergy, which design they execute with unrelenting violence and malice, at all times, and in all places. “ Some  
 “ of them, it is repeated, practise exorcisms, and  
 “ capricious forms, and modes of it, utterly in-  
 “ consistent, not only with religious gravity but  
 “ with morality and decency: they have also  
 “ frequently denounced the reprobation not only  
 “ of particular persons and families but of whole  
 “ villages, and publicly execrated the churches,  
 “ as being nothing but a heap of stones.”

This report, evidently dictated by a spirit of moderation and veracity, farther imputes “ the  
 “ propagation of these misrepresentations and im-  
 “ postures to the private assemblies, known by  
 “ the name of Classed Meetings;” but it does not dwell upon the unprecedented influence of the leaders of these *bands*, as they are called. The latter are, to all intents and purposes, Father-Confessors, in their way; and though generally less informed than the preachers, to which office they occasionally ascend, yet these men are professionally called upon, to hear the secrets of families, and to determine upon, and direct such intricate movements of the mind as would justly require  
 the



the skill of an acute philosopher, or a judicious divine; but, being filled by illiterate zealots, their manner of questioning young persons, relative to their sensations arising from attachments, &c. &c. has not seldom been the subject of observation and censure.

More information respecting the extraordinary missions of Lay Methodist-preachers, in the country, may be copiously collected from the Evangelical and other Magazines, still in circulation, under the head of Religious, or Missionary Intelligence. Perhaps these are neither of the lowest nor the most mischievous description; however, all must tend to shew, that, “the interesting statement of facts” contained in the Report of the Diocese of Lincoln is “really applicable to a great part of “the kingdom,” and that the complaint seriously calls for the attention of the Legislature, by the inlet which it gives to Socinianism, Deism, and even Atheism. And, farther, that, “the same means “might, with equal efficacy, be employed to sap “and overturn the state, as well as the church; “of which some flagrant instances have not been “wanting.”

If the same scrutiny, thus happily begun in the Diocese of Lincoln, should be applied in London, we shall then find the same designs of these low and bigotted Sectarists branched out into a thousand shapes. One of their methods, not generally known, and in which some of the most illiterate bear a principal part, is, in qualifying themselves for a more public ministry, by visiting the sick-poor at their own houses; being employed, by various societies, rather with a view of making proselytes than to alleviate, as they profess, the temporal wants of the indigent and sick: for, if the persons visited hear their exhortations with patience,  
half-



half-a-crown is the utmost reward of their attention; and the visits and the donation may be repeated twice or thrice. But if, on the contrary, no disposition is shewn to adopt the *particular mode of faith*, professed by these humble Missionaries, (I speak from certain knowledge) instances have not been wanting, when they have departed without leaving any evidences of their *charity*!

Now, while, by the operation of these proselyting agents, false religion is palmed upon the unwary for the true; and, while the mere endeavour to increase a party borrows the name of piety, it is evident, that a constant source of scandal, against the established church, is kept open, and daily adding to those uncharitable divisions, of which Infidels are ever ready to avail themselves, for depreciating religion in general.

It is much to be lamented, that so many opportunities present themselves to these fanatics; it is, perhaps, one of the incurable evils attendant upon a numerous population. However, that much might be done to counteract them, even in the metropolis, is clear, from what has been done already. The memory of the Rev. Mr. Richards, Curate of St. Sepulchre's in this city, is still fresh in the minds of his parishioners: his diligence, during thirty years residence, in visiting, relieving, and admonishing, the lower orders of people, both within and beyond the bounds of his parish, has made an impression on the minds of all that knew him which will never be effaced. Unblest with any brilliancy of parts, or a captivating address, his steady and indefatigable perseverance, in the line of his duty, alone ensured him that fame, which he never sought after.

Though truly humble in his deportment, so far from exposing him to insult, his conduct and appearance



pearance would frequently call forth the warmest wishes for his welfare, as he passed through the streets. He was, indeed, gentle and easy to be intreated, and was frequently known to rise from his table, to attend any sudden call for his services. He died so truly lamented, that, as many persons can testify, there were very few dry eyes at the period of his interment in his own parish-church.

But, with very little income besides his curacy, it is not to be supposed the many that partook of his bounty owed their obligations to him alone. As I am informed, several well-disposed persons, convinced of his integrity, deposited their alms with him, to be distributed at his discretion: an office which he had the faculty of executing without letting the receivers feel their inferiority, though it was never unaccompanied by some suitable admonition. A Reverend Gentleman, in giving evidence upon the trial of Jane Gibbs, at the Old Bailey Sessions, for September, 1799, mentioned his own precaution of wearing an *unpowdered wig, because Clergymen could not pass along the streets without being insulted*. A most surprising assertion! for though the late truly-pious Curate of St. Sepulchre's used to be remarkable for a plainness of dress, almost bordering upon meanness, and wore a white bushy wig, the populace were so far from insulting him, that even the butchers in Fleet-market, and the very lowest and profligate characters in the parish, have borne his admonitions with temper and respect; and this, in the moments of excess. Severe examples, no doubt, would have been made of any person attempting to have trespassed against this truly good man, beyond the bounds of decency or good manners; an instance of which, was never known to have occurred.

But



But independently of the influence of personal virtue, the populace of this city has never degenerated so low, as to justify the unheard-of precaution of Dr. Ford, which, if well founded, would have given such of our Gallic neighbours, as have thrown off the Christian religion, an idea, that we were in a very hopeful way. The contrary, I believe, thousands as well as myself are ready to testify.

It should have been mentioned, that Mr. Richards, having no children, though married, took one of the girls out of a large family belonging to one of his parishioners; not to bring her up as a menial servant, as might have been expected, but whom he caused to be educated as one of his own; and, after his decease, she was the companion of his pious relict, his constant imitator in acts of piety and condescension.

But besides the public and private duties of his own parish, Mr. Richards, for a considerable time, was engaged in the painful and discouraging task of officiating at Clerkenwell-Bridewell. Here, his admonitions in the pulpit were always seconded by acts of kindness to such prisoners as shewed any signs of contrition and amendment; a stamp of sincerity and condescension on his part, which was very seldom lost upon the objects with whom he was engaged.

The late Rev. Mr. Richard Southgate, of St. Giles's in the Fields, was another of these valuable characters. He was, says one of his biographers, "in the daily habit of visiting the retreats of sickness and misery, and the most abandoned and profligate in the holes and corners of that parish." And yet, like Mr. Richards's parishioners, they treated him with that good manners which they paid no one else. It should be observed, that



the poorest of the Irish, who form a principal part of Mr. Southgate's late parish, though Catholics, treat a regular Clergyman with considerable respect.

Before such conduct as this, how wretched a figure must the Infidel maxim make, "That every priest is either a knave or a fool." A conduct which must for ever silence the objections both of Infidels and fanatics, by demonstrating, in the strongest manner, that a pastor of an exemplary life, is "*an incalculable blessing*." Perhaps, with others, who have borne the appellation of evangelical preachers, the late Rev. Mr. Berridge was a pastor, justly esteemed a blessing to his people.

The real friend and companion of his parishioners in the country, Mr. Berridge's charity and officious attention was the most impressive recommendation of the doctrine which he delivered from the pulpit. In fact, one would think the bare recollection of the natural and acquired abilities of such ministers as Messrs. Berridge, Percy, Peckwell, &c. would force a blush for the comparison between them and Lady Ann's preachers; but, for the credit of the cause, this Lady would be thought to support, it is hoped that, in future, some education will be a *first* and not a SECONDARY consideration for these young men, at present decorated as scholars, while, instead of being apt to teach; their friends pity, and their enemies deride them: so that the injunction once delivered to some others, *viz.* "to tarry at Jerusalem till their beards were grown," seems particularly applicable to their state and condition.

Innovations, in matters of faith, always weaken the obligations of religion, and sometimes scandalize its professors; of course, the opinions of Baron Sweden-



Swedenborg, approaching nearer than any others to modern Infidelity, may be supposed to have administered in proportion to the objections of Deists and Atheists. What must these think of a sect, who, under the appellation of Christians, explain away the doctrine of the atonement, the resurrection, and the day of judgment? Let them be told, that, from the canon of the New Testament, this new sect have excluded all the Epistles, which they class as *private letters*! That with them the day of judgment is more a *figure* than a *fact*: that it commenced about 1758, in the printing and publication of the judgment of Emmanuel Swedenborg, to condemn, collectively, all the doctrines of the *Old*, or Trinitarian, church.

These and several other opinions, held by the disciples of the New church, would certainly meet much of the approbation of Infidels, as some of the most eligible means of bringing Christianity in general into disrepute.

The principal article of this self-called *New* church, it should be observed, is just as *Old* as Muggleton and Reeves; who, after the protectorship of Oliver, were the first who published, that the whole godhead is circumscribed in the person of Jesus Christ, still retaining the human form in heaven; the *belief of which*, and not *repentance*, both Muggletonians and Swedenborgians enforce upon their followers, as the *first* and most essential condition of gospel acceptance.

Notwithstanding all the recommendation of a pompous worship among the new sect of Swedenborgians, the fantastical disposal of the two officiating ministers in one chapel, and the dress of the pastor in another, imitating a *Chef de Famille*, among the French theophilanthropists, a new liturgy, and the substitution of the name of the temple



temple for that of church, so slow is their progress in making profelytes, that to prepare for a decent retreat, some of their leaders have published an opinion, that it never was the design of the illuminated Baron, to found any new mode of public worship upon his doctrines.

But notwithstanding this hint, and a previous failure at the West end of the town, another temple has been opened in York-street, St. James's, namely, the late Roman Catholic chapel; into which, if some persons should enter, while the minister (according to a former custom in the temple, near Hatton-Garden) is reading with his back towards the congregation, the place may still be taken for what it has been, and tend to confirm the vulgar opinion of a resemblance between this *New* church, and the *Old* church of Rome.

Having failed of success in the Eastern part of the metropolis, which abounds with religious persuasions of all denominations, mechanics, and others, with less learning and leisure to make inquiries, than the inhabitants of the Court end of the town, it requires no gift of prophecy to predict the fate of the New church in York-street, St. James's. As for the apology, that it never was the will of the Baron to establish a new form of worship, after a series of unsuccessful attempts for twelve years past, it is nothing more than a clumsy attempt to make a virtue of necessity. The real cause of this preparation, for a decent exit, is in the doctrines themselves, which have too much of the metaphysics for the head, and too little energy for the heart; and of course are not adapted to obtain any lasting interest with the generality of men, after their novelty has subsided. Nor can they produce that change upon the profligate, which succeeds to stronger motives, congenial with the natural ideas which uncontaminated



nated judgments entertain of the results of virtue and vice: a change, which notwithstanding always follows a cordial belief of the doctrines generally taught by the *Old Church* of England; but which the *New and enlightened Church*, is led to consider as “a tissue of shocking absurdities.”

As the origin of Swedenborgianism in this country differs from that of any other religion that I know of, a little farther digression may be excused. In most cases, new sects have been collected by the superior address or elocution of the original founders. Thus, in the instance of Methodism, the powerful appeals made to the minds of numbers of people, grounded upon the doctrines of the Church of England, did really excite and persuade great bodies of them to adopt its principles, feeling their mental interest in so doing. Not so, the founders of Swedenborgianism, a sect, which literally originated in a printer's job! being hatched in the parish of Clerkenwell, near the spot where the Baron had his obscure lodging, viz. at a hair-dresser's, in Bath-street, Cold-Bath-Fields, while he resided in this country. Its next appearance was in an alley, in Little Eastcheap, partly in the modern and fashionable form of a debating society: but, instead of preachers collecting the people, these people were so hard run to collect preachers, that for a considerable time the office was generally confined to the printer alluded to, and one of his relatives. After some of the Baron's works were translated, and published in this city, the idea of quickening a heavy sale might have had its weight in the attempts to make them the basis of a new mode of worship. The celebrity of the Baron was, in the next place, diffused by the publication of the *Magazine of Heaven and Hell*; and a Romance, calculated to introduce



roduce his, or rather the principles of his editor's, among the ladies; so that with the subsequent labours of some ingenious men, and the assistance of a few of the wealthy, in opening Temples at Manchester, Birmingham, &c. they have hitherto contrived to keep the name of the sect alive, notwithstanding some steps have been taken for withdrawing altogether from any farther exhibition in public. Yet, if appearances are to be trusted, the most heterodox opinions that ever bore the name of Christianity, will not trouble the orthodox much longer.

This pageant, this pantomime of religion, having no fund of support, but a slender annuity in the lives of a few wealthy individuals, can never descend to posterity, nor exist but as an additional article in the catalogue of some Alexander Ross's *History of All Religions*. From appearances, one would suppose this sect already verging towards bankruptcy, as it is not long since a subscription was opened to reprint the works of the Baron, in which the small sum of one penny a week was not unacceptable.

How are the mighty fallen!

The late disposition for a more extensive sufferance of the Roman Catholic religion, and especially the relief of the unfortunate Emigrant Clergy, has not only been the subject of bitter invective in the clubs, but out of them, some zealots, bearing the Christian name, have gone so far as to publish heavy censures upon the late Rev. W. Romaine, merely for collecting alms for the Emigrants. People of this cast, and those professing Infidelity, wished to see all the ancient animosities between Protestant and Papist, revived in the present war. To inflame the Protestants against a government that entered into an alliance with Popish powers; and, lastly, with the Pope himself, was a favourite undertaking;



dertaking ; but here, exclusively of political motives, these calumniators, were not aware, that their own partizans in irreligion, the French Robesperians, by proclaiming death an eternal sleep, and other enormities, had left their opponents no medium to choose between Atheism, and the old established religion of the country. The new philosophy then, by its unqualified opposition to the Catholic religion, was the indirect cause of all the protection, the latter has since met with from the enemies of the republic.

Glad, indeed, would have been the partizans of Atheism, could they have persuaded Dissenters, and others, that the Protestant religion was really in danger. But, unhappily for them, while they were spreading alarms of the growth of Popery, some of its chapels in the metropolis, were actually shut up, for want of their usual support from abroad. And thus, from the charity of the English Clergy towards the Emigrants, the enemies of both were reduced to the necessity of branding an exemplary virtue with the character of a vice !

In concluding this narrative, I have the conscious satisfaction, that I have removed none of the ancient landmarks between things sacred and profane ; that I have administered to no new sect or division ; and that my design, however weakly executed, has not been to destroy, but to build up ; to strengthen the weak, and confirm the feeble. But did sectarians, who build speculative opinions, even upon the ancient foundations, previously reflect, they could have little hope of benefiting mankind. If they fail in their attempts, they only reap shame and remorse ; and, if they succeed, it is probable, that they lay the foundation of new feuds and dissensions ; and, like the madman mentioned in the Proverbs, “ scatter firebrands, arrows, and death.”



Having now gone through a detail of all the late branches of modern Infidelity, without the least known deviation from matter of fact; and having shewn that the societies owed their dissolution principally to the reaction of their own maxims and opinions, I shall now leave the application of these facts to the country at large.

But, as there are numbers, who still indulge the ruinous sentiments of Deism and Atheism, and only wait for an opportunity of rallying their scattered forces, I shall now offer a few more reflexions upon the operation of those sentiments; not merely as they have hitherto been argued from, in books; but as they have occurred in real life, since the habit of disbelieving the Christian religion has been fashionable. In these reflections I flatter myself that I shall demonstrate the blindness of Infidels, in persisting to shut their eyes against the clearest convictions of truth and reason.



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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

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*On the Influence of Infidel Opinions upon Society ;  
answering the various Objections of Modern Deists  
and Atheists against the Doctrines of Christianity.*

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Non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus omnium, aut  
timementum inferos, aut colentium.

SENECA.

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THERE is, undoubtedly, a secret cause, why the most convincing arguments, hitherto urged against modern Deism and Atheism, have failed of effect, viz. a general persuasion among the *illuminated*, the *new* pretenders to *philosophy*, “ that, under  
“ some system of government more favourable  
“ than the present, their doctrines will certainly  
“ display their superiority, in exterminating these  
“ vices and *individual calamities*, which, during the  
“ present order of things, must remain as they are.”

Now, without waiting for this imaginary period, the best mode of investigating the solidity of this assertion, will be to examine what progress has been made in this supposed scale of perfection.



As Infidels have a natural antipathy to miracles, they will the more readily admit, that every species of reformation has its gradations; the progress, therefore, that you have already made upon a part of the community, is the best criterion to enable us to judge of your probable success upon the whole.

To come to matter of fact: During the five years in which the dissemination of your opinions has been comparatively free, Have any of you been able to convince the whole circle of your acquaintance, a whole house, or a whole family, of the falsity or irrationality of the Christian doctrines?

If to these interrogations you are compelled to answer, No; Where then is the probability of your succeeding upon a larger scale?

The Roman satyrift, Juvenal, has observed, that a single house will shew whatever is done or suffered in the world; it then follows that, if the little Theatre, upon which you have acted, had been enlarged, it would only have exposed you so much the more, to the hisses and insults of a disappointed audience. In fact, the recent shutting up of the great Theophilanthropic Theatre in Paris, though supported by all the strength of the Republican government, is a convincing proof, that no inferior attempt will ever succeed, especially in a country, which, in opposition to the comparative levity of the French, has borne the proud distinction of "A nation of philosophers."

Destitute of every kind of public worship, beyond a mere fête or shew, I would ask you, what impression this is likely to make upon sullen and untoward dispositions? Levelling all distinctions between sacred and profane, you, alas! have no history either to seize the imagination, or interest the passions. But, without this, be your public institutions  
or



or your Religious Fêtes ever so splendid, still, as Pliny said of the Circean games ; *Nihil novum, nihil varium, nihil quod non semel spectasse sufficiat*, must ever apply to such exhibitions. Not so, either the doctrines or dogmas of the Christian Religion, they are suited to every necessity, and adapted to every disposition. Even the diversity and variety of senses, attached to the different parts of the sacred Scriptures, are the ground of unanimity upon general principles ; they fix the attention, they excite the discursive faculties in the mind, or they elevate or sustain it under adversity ; while the cold and undiversified symmetry, which your system of *reason* would suggest, grows wearisome by its sameness, and disgusting from its uniformity. Indeed, while you must acknowledge, that the “ passions are the elements of life,” your introduction of a system, which tends to quench, or destroy them, is one of the most glaring of inconsistencies.

We, you say, only wish to cultivate and improve the faculty of reason ; this leads to the charge of another absurdity and inconsistency in your conduct as philosophers, which I shall immediately consider. Is it possible that the cultivation of reason should be your principal object, while you are actually destroying or undermining the strongest incitements to the exercise of the reasoning powers ? I am aware, that in consequence of your prejudices, you will not readily comprehend this charge ; but I will explain myself. The great truths of Religion, which fix and recall the wandering senses and affections of men, you endeavour to resolve into vain fears and useless chimeras. Those sentiments, which powerfully stimulate the mind to a calculation of the probable effects of moral good or evil, you deride as folly and enthusiasm ! You must know that a volatility and inconstancy of mind is common to youth ;

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and



and that it is indispensably necessary to fix this volatility, before the faculty of laying down premises, and reasoning from conclusions, can be introduced. You should know also, that the attachment of pains and penalties to the non-performance of these conditions is necessary to excite men to action : but instead of the strong motives of everlasting happiness and misery, as they are expressed in the Scriptures, what are the inducements of your code ? The *Reason and Fitness of Things* ! the persuasion that virtue is its own reward ; that human actions are necessary ; that man is accountable to man only for any of his actions ! As these are charges which you can neither palliate nor deny, will you have the effrontery to assert, that the laxity and indifference attending these notions have not an indirect tendency to annihilate the necessity of reason or calculation ? Men who cannot be interested in your creeds, beyond giving them a bare assent, can never suppose themselves under the necessity, either to compare or judge of the probabilities, or improbabilities of any other system ; and principally because, beyond the opinion of the world, they have no stake to hazard.

On the other hand, the Christian, however mean his natural abilities may be ; however weak and unpractised his reasoning faculties, if once roused from his vices, or supineness, by the awakening voice of Religion, it is more than a hundred to one, if his reasoning powers are not much improved by the change. It then becomes his irresistible interest to reason upon the consequences of emerging from, or apostatizing into, the state from which he had been awakened. In fact, he not only becomes a Naturalist, but he may exalt his faculties still higher, by contemplating the nature and attributes of Deity, or those intelligences superior to man : a sphere to  
which



which the poor alienated Infidel has no excitement. The Christian, in the former state, like the prodigal son restored to the house of his father, truly enjoys an intellectual feast; while the Infidel, a fugitive, and an outcast, and especially, if he be a sensualist, may be said to *feed upon the husks with the swine*. Deluded men! and is this the state of degradation for which you plead? Reason, you assert, is the great object for which you contend; and yet, rejecting the doctrine which can best allay and tranquillize the impetuous passions, and forsaking that calm region where its voice can only be heard, you destroy the means by which you should arrive at the end proposed! That many of you are not reasoners, at least from your own principles, cannot be denied. But what was the primeval cause of this exertion? Most of your leaders, originally professing the Christian Religion, are indebted to its faith and doctrines, for the *primum mobile*, which gave the first impulse to their rational faculties; first excited and sharpened the talent of investigation: nor would they have been able to wound Religion, if they had not first stolen her arrows.

Perhaps, the thunders of that religion, you now deride, were the means of arresting some of you in a course of sensuality, which would ultimately have smothered every latent spark of ratiocination then dormant in your minds; and does it thus become *you* to depreciate the only medium, by which you have risen to your recent distinction? Still, this absurdity, peculiar to modern Infidelity, does not rest here; for degenerating into downright ingratitude, like an offspring perfectly unnatural, you chiefly sustain your character by descanting upon the vices or frailties of the parent stock; beyond the sphere of declamation, you cannot exist. The *reformation* you pretend to advocate, would be your *ruin*.

Like



Like the animalculæ, bred upon the filth of creation, you delight in clinging to the weak side of humanity. You have no sustenance which you do not derive from its wounds. No foundation which is not built upon the ruin of others. Your consequence is enhanced by their degradation; and your unanimity derives all its force from the divisions, you are the first to create or extend. These charges, harsh as they may appear, I am not disposed to fix in the malignity of your nature, but rather, in an over-weening vanity and affectation of knowledge. But as this mania has almost exclusively taken possession of young minds, it may behove you to reflect upon the influence these sceptical opinions may have in future upon your own happiness, as fathers, husbands, and other relatives. Cease, then, to boast of perplexing a few weak minds by a hackneyed string of common place arguments, or drawing a multitude, by the torrent of your declamation: the majority of your objections to the Christian doctrines, as it will presently appear, are grounded upon prejudice, and the want of a proper discrimination.

First, I observe, that what are called the atrocious cruelties of the Bible History, are in the mouth of every objector who has read Paine's Age of Reason, without perusing the Answer of the Bishop of Llandaff. But even granting the full force of the Infidel's objections, without insisting upon the purity of circumstances in God's government of the natural world, so judiciously urged by the learned Bishop, I would fain know, what influence these histories of cruelty have upon the generality of Christians? The acts complained of, were mostly perpetrated by Princes; from whence there is little danger of their examples upon the people; upon the score of inability: and besides, these acts are  
placed



placed at such a distant period, and are necessarily involved in such a peculiarity of circumstances, as to produce very little, if any effect, upon the manners of civil society.

If the Infidel will still urge, that this inefficacy of example is equally applicable to the acts of piety and benevolence recorded in the Scriptures, I answer, that upon the latter, the minds of men are fond of dwelling with complacency and delight, and will frequently revolve them in their recollection ; while deeds of comparative atrocity are passed over with indifference, and seldom, or ever made the subject of meditation, nor even recurred to, without necessity ; or, in the course of their reading or worship. To prove the charge brought by Infidels, it is incumbent upon them to shew that those denominations of Christians, who have drank the deepest of Scripture knowledge, have perpetrated the greatest proportion of barbarities. Unhappily for Deists and Atheists, the contrary has been the fact, as the Papists, to whom the reading of the Scriptures has been the most part prohibited, have been almost exclusively the perpetrators of the enormities, uncandidly charged upon Christians in general.

The natural cruelty of the Mahometans, is another argument in favour of the humanity of the Christian system ; notwithstanding the opinion of Infidels, that the former approach the nearest of the two, to the standard of reason.

But, religious persecution, though not peculiar to the Christian Religion, attaches to bigots of every description ; consequently it is an imputation, from which *unbelievers* are by no means free. Helvetius, one of the most eminent of the modern materialists, observes, “ there are few men who would  
 “ not employ violence to engage the world to adopt



“ their sentiments, if they had it in their power.” A stronger truism than this could not have been pronounced, had Helvetius been an eye-witness to all the petty malignities made use of by his successors to the present day. Very little experience, among this kind of people, is quite sufficient to shew, that a persecuting spirit is not peculiar to the Christian communities.

Modern Infidels frequently calumniate our religion, in opposing the forbearance of Pagans to what they call, the persecuting spirit of the Christians; a vice from which they say, the former were quite exempt. But to undeceive such persons, I shall present them with the following instances of the contrary of their assertions, selected by a recent writer in favour of Christianity.

Aspasia, having been accused of impiety, owed her father's life to the intercession of Pericles, and the tears he shed while pleading her cause.

Anaxagoras, of Clazomenæ, was in danger of losing his head, for asserting that the sun was a huge mass of hot iron.

Diagoras, of Melos, had a talent set upon his head, for ridiculing the religious mysteries.

Protagoras, having questioned the existence of the gods, only escaped death by flight.

And, lastly, Socrates was compelled to drink poison at Athens, by an express law of that city, against any person who should be the introducer of a new god.

But leaving the ancients to inquire, whether modern Infidels would not be as violent persecutors as any others whom they accuse, and even greater than Christians have been; this, I presume, may be determined by a few plain questions, and their answers. First, since it is evident that the hopes and comforts of Infidels are bound up in the pleasures



pleasures and enjoyments of the present life ; is it not undeniable, that any persons, propagating a system which tends to disturb their pursuits, interrupt their enjoyments, or lessen their consequence, must render themselves odious ?

Is it in the power of the laws to suppress or controul the private hatred, or animosity, of Infidels against their opponents ?

Is it not also probable, that calumny and contempt will be made use of to ruin the credit of such persons, who may innocently suppose the present life not to be the *ultimatum* of all their hopes and happiness ?

But while Christians might thus expose themselves to the persecutions of Infidels, the probability that the latter would not be persecuted in return ; or that their retaliation would be considerably less in proportion, than that of the former, is evident from various considerations. For instance ;

The Christian, expecting a hearing before another tribunal, may bear with many offences and repeated wrongs ; and, therefore, will be less liable than the Infidel to retaliate an injury upon his neighbour, or enemy.

He may also be quickened in this spirit of forbearance, by the consideration, that he obeys one of the positive commands of the Gospel ; and that, by the patient endurance of other men's faults, he shall the better ensure the forgiveness of his own.

And, upon the same belief, he may even go farther, by returning good for evil.

Now, as Infidelity acknowledges neither motives nor objects of this kind, its objections to Christianity, upon the ground of cruelty, or persecution, are proved to have no real foundation in fact.



We have also been told, that the wisdom of a nation may be seen in its proverbs. To the advantage of Christianity, then, we may remark, that the Mahometans have an adage, expressing that, “He who forgives an injury, does well; but he that revenges it, does better.” A maxim this, which, however it may assimilate with Infidelity, militates against both the letter, and the spirit of the Christian religion.

Having done with the charge of persecution, I must advert to the Infidel’s opinion of the *Reason and fitness of things*, which they recommend as a standard to try the absurdity of Christian doctrines; and which, if we could give them credit, these gentlemen have the exclusive privilege of exhibiting to advantage. If so, how is it that their demonstrations have been repeated, years after years, without effect; and that people in general still reject their solutions of the phenomena around them? How is it that your notion of the origination of all things from a confused mass of atoms;—that there is no other God than the universe;—that all the men and animals, which destroy each other, are only parts and modifications of the supreme Being;—that matter first set itself in motion;—that man’s superiority to the brute results entirely from his organization;—that he is like a piece of mechanism, or a plant, and that when he dies, all dies with him:—I say, what is the reason that these opinions of yours, gain no more evidence than they have done, though they have wanted none of the advantages of rhetoric or elocution to recommend them to the world? How is it that these leaves, from your tree of knowledge, so flattering to human vanity, meet with no more admirers? How is it that the great mass of people do not join issue with you in  
the



the support of those opinions, which are to free them from the fetters of their education, and the pressure of superstition and tyranny? But above all, How is it that your doctrines cannot deliver men from their personal vices and defects, and the predominance of evil habits and passions? You must acknowledge that, after all your perseverance and indefatigable endeavours to enlighten them, they do not comprehend the magnitude and importance of your schemes! otherwise, they could not reject them! What then becomes of your *Reason and Fitness of things*? This question must resolve itself into one of these solutions; “Either you  
“are *not fit* to teach;—or it is *not fit* that mankind  
“should be so instructed.”

The superior efficacy of the Christian doctrine upon the minds, even of such men as are, or have been, immersed in vice and folly, cannot be disputed, but by those who are enveloped in prejudices, which I have found as prevalent among Infidels as any description of Christians whatever.

One of the principal obstacles to your instruction, I find to be, that flattering notion of Mr. Paine, “that every man’s mind is his own church.”

Some of you are ready to deify Mr. Paine for this discovery;—but let me tell you, he was not the first that broached this deleterious nostrum; it was in the mouths and writings of almost all the sectarists that distracted this kingdom, between the reigns of Charles the First and Second. It is a principle, virtually acknowledged by the Quakers, and was very pointedly urged and insisted upon, by a person in the last century, known by the appellation of Cobler How; in a pamphlet entitled, “The Sufficiency of the Spirit’s Teaching;” and in plain sense, means very little more, than that  
every



every man loves to be led by his own whims and fancies, as soon as ever he becomes a Dissenter from the established order of the church. This explanation, I think, is well warranted by the conduct of those who have, from time to time, adopted the principle of *self-sufficiency*.

In fact, so far from answering the end proposed, either by Infidels or Sectarists, I have generally observed, that when this notion is reduced to practice, instead of being sufficient for the teaching of all, it has been the principal reason why none have been sufficiently taught! In cases of common life, men naturally ask the advice of others, but here, in a concern of the last importance, every man's knowledge is supposed sufficient for himself.

In no single point whatever has the ignorance of Atheists and Deists appeared so glaring, as when they affect a capacity for Bible criticism. Mr. Paine's observations, under this character, might be corrected by many school-boys. With him, neither metaphor nor allegory is allowable in religion! The Book of the Revelations he condemns at once as a book of enigmas; at the same time, the 19th Psalm, which is almost a complete allegory, is, in his estimation, a *Chef d'œuvre!* In fact, if the style of our religious instructions could be squared, according to the demonstrations of Euclid, at which Mr. Paine seems to hint, all his reproach upon the Quakers, about "a drab-coloured creation," as the result of their taste, would, with equal propriety, apply to himself. Several of Mr. Paine's notions are borrowed, but his criticism is all his own.

The small number of Christians, in comparison with the great majority of Pagans and Mahometans in the world, is an *objection*, I will not call it an *argument*, almost idolized by Deists and Atheists.



ists. It is, I acknowledge, formidable in its first appearance; but, on a close inspection, it soon loses its consequence. I will not only admit the relatively small number of Christians in the world, but that they are equally small among ourselves, so few there are who live up to the spirit of Christianity. This concession, however, makes nothing against the universality of the Christian Religion, but rather tends to its establishment, because, among Pagans and Mahometans, there are, on the other hand, many who, living above the dictates of those false systems, are, in the best sense, true Christians. Hence, as it is expressed in Acts x. v. 34, 35. “ God is no respecter of persons, but “ in every nation he who feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.”

Christianity, then, is more of a *principle* than a *profession*; yet any person who could undervalue the written word, upon this account, would justly fall under the censure of the Apostle, Romans, chap iii. v. 1, who insists upon the advantage of the Jews over the Gentiles, “ Chiefly, that “ because unto them were committed the *Oracles of God*.” And unbelievers should notice, that the same reasoning, used by the Apostle, all through the second chapter of the Romans, is exactly applicable to those persons who, at this time, enjoy the light of revelation, and others who possess it not. Vain then, are the efforts of Infidels, as they say, to *simplify Religion*; and futile the attempt to magnify *Reason*, by supposing the *Light of Nature*, and the *Revelation of the Gospel*, to be one and the same! Volney, for this purpose, refers me to the remains of Egyptian antiquities; I examine them, and am disappointed. As well might the bigotted Papist appeal to the exterior and venerable appearance of some Gothic structure; which  
may



may be surveyed by the rational with a sigh, while it is worshipped by the superstitious: the former, penetrating its inmost recesses, might scrutinize the character and principles of the original occupants. The observations of the latter, would probably extend no farther than the monuments, the ramifications of the columns, the storied windows and the length of the aisles! And, as in many old mansions, some apartments are kept locked up, under the pretext that they are haunted; so, the pretended mysteries of ancient Paganism, like the rooms in these old mansions, are found, upon the opening, to contain very little, besides antiquated dust, or useless lumber.

And now, oh! ye Reformers of ancient opinions, if your leaders are thus superficial and ignorant, how is it with those that are led? The latter, for implicit faith, are not surpassed by any of the Christians you condemn. Among these, as faith is designed to establish an object, it produces and preserves unanimity. Among you, as your negative belief is only calculated to remove every restraint, except individual whim and caprice, discontent and discord ultimately follow. Where all wish to command there is none to obey. Thus you neither “enter into rest yourselves nor suffer others; you can “neither seek peace nor enjoy it.” Within your own pale, having no crimes or failings which you dare condemn, you are compelled to seek them in others! Where every one is a malefactor, none can assume the office of censor or judge. Where nobility of mind, is not admitted, all are considered as base; and, having no scope for acrimonious propensities at home, this restraint only tends to sharpen the daggers you prepare for others, and render them still more destructive. No longer, of any consequence to each other, you can hope for no importance,



portance, but in proportion as you distinguish yourselves by the inroads which you make upon religion, as your common enemy.

Like the Indian warriors who recommend themselves by the number of scalps they bring in, so must you exalt yourselves, or sink into absolute insignificance. Similar to the fallen spirits, you have no longer any consolation but in manifesting your enmity against all who have not involved themselves in your revolt. Unwilling to *serve* in the *Heaven* of Religion, you seem determined to *reign* in the *Hell* of your own licentiousness; and, having broken from your original orbit, the harmony and brightness of superior intelligences, no longer excite in you, the correspondent sensations of delight and concord.

This parallel, founded upon no fiction, but upon a sober truth, I shall carry no farther, than to observe, that while the fallen spirits are admitted to be eminent for their *knowledge*, you, not deficient in pride, are the most conspicuous for your *ignorance*.

Into such a community as theirs, who would wish to enter, or who, made sensible of its spirit and tendency, would wish to remain? What credit or safety can be expected where, religion being excluded, all the bad passions are let loose, or but feebly confined by the slender tie of human convenience? Will those who look upon every action, as the result of a selfish or interested motive, respect either merit or virtue in others? Where virtue has no interest, it has, of course, no influence. Where depravity is under no check, excellence is of no value. Where superiority creates no generous emulation it is the cause of envy. And where benevolence fails to excite gratitude, it only stings the receiver with a malignant, or uneasy sense of his inferiority, and the motives of the donor are construed into



selfishness. Perhaps this is the reason that, among the disciples of the New Philosophy, *Public Charities* are looked upon as *Public Robberies*. The visionary reformers of the present day have also an idea that the state can positively prevent *personal* and *individual* wretchedness!

The genuine philosopher will not be surprized at the contention, and privation of real happiness among herds of men, equally pretending to philosophy! If petty squabbles and antipathies, in the literary world, have justified the poet's observation of the natural enmity of wits and authors, a number comparatively small, what is to be expected from a whole community of would-be wits and rival philosophers? Till modern philosophy came in with its *moral equality*, other civil bodies used to be composed of head, feet, hands, and other subordinate and correspondent members; but here is a community that wishes to be *all head!!!* Under the contemplation of this chimerical idea, it is difficult to name the sensations which it excites.

Before Deism and Scepticism became fashionable, or were rarified into Atheism; and particularly, when the former was here and there, the opinion of some speculatist, or solitary enthusiast; standing in the same relation to multiplied Infidelity as natural, to artificial society; the spirit of piety, like the rustic virtues and artless simplicities of unpolished life, would sometimes accompany its wanderings. Unconnected with the "corrupt majority" it might then breathe its guileless effusions, to him whose temple it conceived "all space," Still, under the mildest designation we can bestow, this is a branch, indigenous only to the wastes of society, and can never be grafted upon the common stock. To descend from figure; the most innocent of Infidel opinions, once liberated from the brain that conceived them, and  
left



left to operate, as they *recently have done*, upon large and mixed multitudes, can never be accounted for; the multitudes being ever disposed to carry these theories to extremes never thought of by the theorist, in whose closet they originated. The circumstance of these domestic opinions being acted upon, by a political revolution abroad, as I have before hinted in the introduction to this work, has also given them a feature, altogether unknown in the annals of this country.

It is a mere quackery, in religion or morals, to prescribe reason only, as a specific for the numberless diseases of the human mind. Wax is hardened and dissolved by the same sun. Nor are all men, as the Atheists dream, equally disposed to virtue and probity, or even capable of the same intellectual attainments. If it were not deemed a crime, by Infidels, to quote Scripture authority, one might send these modern smatterers in philosophy to that excellent Parable of the Sower, in the New Testament, in which they may find an infallible theory of the moral capacities or incapacities of the human kind. Though I should not have referred them to Parables, by any means, had I recollected their common prejudice against those parts of the Gospel, as being purposely intended to *obscure*, and not *illustrate*, the truths they should convey! A mode of reasoning they would not dare apply to the Fables of Æsop; though as our Lord makes no use of the personification of trees, birds, beasts, &c. between the perspicuity and simplicity of the one and the other, there is no comparison. The perverted taste of Mr. Paine, for literal instruction only, has led his imitators to think little of those superior, and more striking modes of impressing doctrinal truths, exhibited in the Parable of the good Samaritan, and others contained in the New Testament. Yet



that these serpentine dispositions, which have no zest for sublime truths, should recoil from the depositories, in which they are preserved, is more the subject of regret, than astonishment!

Even the reading of prophane history, through the medium of your opinions, but too frequently strengthens very hurtful prejudices. General charges and insinuations against religion, and religious men, are not unfrequent among Historians, especially the moderns. But before you proceed upon such shallow grounds, it is necessary to weigh the decision of one of your own oracles, Mr. David Hume. The practice of arguing against any profession, from the abuse of it, comes from you with a very ill grace, after he has asserted, that, "This sophism is one of the grossest, and, at the same time, the most common to which men are subject." He also observes, that, "the history of all ages offers examples of the abuse of religion; but those who would thence draw an inference to the disadvantage of religion in general, would argue very rashly and erroneously. The proper office of religion is to reform men's lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all the moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws and civil magistrate. While it pursues these salutary purposes, its operations, though infinitely valuable, are silent and secret, and seldom come under the cognizance of history. The historian, therefore, has scarcely any occasion to mention any other than that adulterate species of it, which inflames faction, animates sedition, distinguishes itself upon the open theatre of the world, &c. and he may retain the highest regard for true piety, even while he exposes all the abuses of the false. He may even think he cannot better shew his attachment to the former than by detecting the latter



“ latter, and laying open its absurdity and pernicious tendency.”

To proceed farther, with respect to the mental indevotion of the new philosophers; if the mind can conceive a continual effervescence, or figure to itself a family of children in perpetual warfare with their parents, it might have some idea of the temper and disposition of modern Infidels towards the Great Creator. While Christians thank him for their creation, the former do not think their preservation worthy an acknowledgement! In fact, deeper in degeneracy, than any of their predecessors, through having more light, they have made themselves intire strangers to the spirit, or exercise of devotion towards any object of supreme worship. Averse to praise, and only alive in censuring the harmony and beauties of Creation, Mr. Edmund Burke's idea, of “ the heart of a thorough-bred metaphysician, the cold malignity of an evil spirit, and not the frailty and passion of a man,” is by no means harsh, when applied to you!—To the fond hopes and endearing conceptions of the Christian, you naturally oppose the petrifying resistance of the Torpedo! Thus fallen, your mention of the names of a Socrates, or Antoninus, is a profanation. To pass over your degrading sentiments of the Divinity, not the regions of Siberia and the gardens of Hesperus can produce a stronger contrast, than the chilling influence of your opinions, set in competition with any kind of worship, or internal reverence, of which we can conceive!

“ Go, then, contracted Infidel! withdraw thyself still farther from the views and comforts of thy fellow-men. Still, confined within thy own narrow sphere of reflection, persuade thyself thou art not made for immortality. Avail thyself, then, by any means, of all the advantages of  
“ the



“ the present life : add to thy estimation of every  
 “ perishable good ; and, stifling sympathy for the  
 “ sufferings of others, let thy *own accommodation*  
 “ supercede every other consideration. Regard-  
 “ less of the awards of posterity, leave it to poets  
 “ and orators, to dignify the desire of immortality,  
 “ as the passion of great minds : tell them, the  
 “ philosopher, who calculates the result of human  
 “ actions, is not to be duped with pompous  
 “ phrases. Reply to them, that, thousands have  
 “ perished for their country, at Rome and Car-  
 “ thage, whose names are forgotten. Persuade  
 “ thyself, that vices, rather than virtues, tend to  
 “ immortalize a name ; and, that the records of  
 “ history prefer those who have desolated the  
 “ earth. Tell the advocates for humanity, that  
 “ the majority of Heroes have been Tyrants ; and  
 “ to others, leave the folly of sowing where they  
 “ shall never reap.

“ From the darkest corner of the intellectual  
 “ world, thus continue, like the envenomed spider,  
 “ to envelope thyself, and all intelligent beings in  
 “ the cobweb-chains of necessity. Believe, if thou  
 “ canst, that every action, as well as the means for  
 “ obtaining its object, is impelled by a first cause :  
 “ and that even the hand of a murderer is only a  
 “ feeble link in the great concatenation of events !  
 “ Go on,—but I will withdraw from this precipice,  
 “ from whence we cannot look down, but with hor-  
 “ ror and dizziness.”

Having now shewn the invalidity of the expecta-  
 tion of Infidels, that any change of the political  
 system would be more favourable to their opinions  
 than the present ; that, under the pretext of improv-  
 ing the faculty of Reason, their neglect of proper  
 means to stimulate and apply it, has a certain,  
 though indirect, tendency to destroy the end pro-  
 posed.

Having



Having refuted the charges of cruelty, and a persecuting spirit in the Christian Religion, and urged several arguments to prove its humanity, superior to the Mahometan or Infidel system.

Having made it appear that the condition of Infidel Society, is necessarily a state of warfare and competition, subversive of good order, discouraging to merit, and destitute of proper motives to excite emulation, or prevent a degeneracy of principle and practice: Having shewn the danger and novelty of relation, in which these societies were placed by political events, the *Quackery of Reason* as an universal medicine in morals, and the groundless prejudices of unbelievers against the parables of the New Testament.

And lastly, having demonstrated their total want of devotional taste, or veneration of the Supreme Being, or any form of worship, I shall for the present, prosecute these charges no farther.

If it be said, that I have lighted up the beacons of alarm, it is granted; but I have invoked no persecution, nor imprecated any greater punishment upon the opinions I explode, than the contempt, and the caution, this exposure must necessarily produce.

Detached from any *political agency*, the momentary triumphs of individual, or collective, infidelity, are neither to be envied nor feared. It is a painful pre-eminence, and Infidels well know it, when they again wish that to be *true*, which they had persuaded themselves was *false*! Nor let the reader be surprised, that I have classed Atheists and Deists indiscriminately: for the common practice of Infidels, to cover themselves with the name of *Deists*, is a mere pretext, calculated to escape the more odious appellation of *Atheists*. For those who will not admit of God's moral government of the world; nor allow mortals any knowledge of his attributes;



or who deny, the immortality of the soul, I say, whatever such persons may think to the contrary, their notions can never present to the *minds* of the *impartial*, any other ideas than those of *doubt*, and a privation of every degree of worship or affection ; if they do not even exhibit an object of *absolute aversion* or *contempt* : so that between such Deism as this, and stark Atheism, there may be a nominal *distinction*, but no *difference*. This idea was very justly appreciated by the Bishop of London, in his Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese, in 1794. Speaking of the French ; they were, said he, “ pre-  
 “ tended Deists, but real Atheists. And although  
 “ the name of a Supreme Being was sometimes  
 “ mentioned, yet it was seldom mentioned but with  
 “ ridicule and contempt. They acknowledged  
 “ nothing beyond the grave ; and they stigmatised  
 “ all opinions different from these, with the names  
 “ of superstition, bigotry, priestcraft, fanaticism,  
 “ and imposture.

These dangerous opinions were rendered more illusive, by the great names that sanctioned them ; but as none of them are more familiar than that of Voltaire, I would caution the young and unwary, against any seductive influence upon this head. It is wrong, in the Infidels, to oppose, as they do, the *disbelief* of the French Wit, to the *belief* of *Christianity* by the immortal Newton. For, granting that Voltaire deserved the panegyric of a German Nobleman, who entitles him “ the divine Magician  
 “ whose breath dissipated the thick cloud that  
 “ covered all Europe, and observes, that happier  
 “ in his attempts than Orpheus, he did not stop at  
 “ humanizing the furies, but metamorphosed the  
 “ monsters of intolerance, fanaticism, and blood,  
 “ into humane and sociable beings :” I say, unless it could be proved that these monsters, against whom this giant of French literature exerted himself



himself, were the *legitimate offspring of Christianity*, these pompous phrases mean nothing. But till the tolerating spirit of Protestants, and the persecuting genius of the Church of Rome, be proved one and the same, the Christianity *believed* by Newton, and *disbelieved* by Voltaire, will remain as essentially different as light and darkness.

The Rev. Mr. Fellowes, in his Christian Philosophy, with others I could mention, are of the opinion, that the late enmity of the French Infidels, against Christianity in *general*, was at first excited by the *particular* enormities and corruptions of the Romish Church, “which accumulating for centuries, at last produced a monster, which devoured its mother. The Deistical philosophers might, says he, have hastened its birth, but they had no share in its formation. Had they been the essential cause of the decline of Christianity, the same cause existing still, would have prevented its revival; but the best informed travellers assure us, that Infidelity itself is declining, now the cause, which produced it, is no more.”

More, and undeniable evidence of this decline, and the consequent revival of Christianity in France, has since been brought forward by the invitation given by Bonaparte, to the return of the Clergy; the opening of a greater number of churches, and his own attendance in person, at divine worship. The conductors too of the public prints, who, during Robespierre's tyranny, had professed themselves Atheists, though all of them may not be sincere in their recantation, acknowledged their faith in Christianity, in the course of March, 1800; a circumstance, sufficiently indicating the altered state of the public mind in the French nation.

Now, as a collateral proof of the remarks by Mr. Fellowes, which were written in 1798, it seems this

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decline



decline had made such progress in the summer of 1799, as to occasion the shutting up of the Theophilanthropic Temple, and the opening of several churches in the French capital. But without resting upon these events, as facts, there are several natural reasons, from which a true philosopher may infer, “ that the Christian Religion, stripped of its “ abuses, will take a deeper root than before, in “ the minds and affections of the French people. “ Nor is it unworthy of remark, that the late Rev. Mr. “ Fletcher, of Madeley, wrote a letter from Macon, “ in Burgundy, in 1778, in which he observed, that “ Popery would fall in France in this or the next “ century.” He adds, “ I make no doubt, God “ will use those vain men (the Voltaires, Rousseaus, “ Mirabeaus, &c.) to bring about a reformation “ here, as he used Henry VIII. to do that work “ in England: so the madness of his enemies “ will at last turn to his praise and the furtherance “ of his kingdom.”

I shall only observe, that of the permanence of this approaching change, no rational doubt can be entertained. Having borne the last and most violent shocks of Apostacy and Infidelity, no hope now remains for the Infidel, that the light of Christianity shall ever be extinguished, but with time itself. The veil of pretended philosophy has been torn asunder, and its features exposed to shame and derision; while the beauties of Religion have increased seven-fold. This bright constellation having received its impetus from the hand of the Divinity, no human effort can resist its progress. That it may penetrate the darkest regions of the earth, ought to be the sincere wish of every man, who has the least pretence to sound reason or understanding.



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## POSTSCRIPT.

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*Chronological Sketch of the Origin, and Progress of Infidelity, in England, anterior to the French Revolution.—Remarks upon Professor Robison.—New Illustrations of German Literature.—Beautiful Translation from Professor Ramler.—Vindication of the Sedition-Bills.—Declining State of Democratical Politics.—Physical and Moral Superiority of the Aristocracy in every Nation and Government.*

AS it is natural for the mind, when taking a view of any multiform, or mighty mass of matter, to inquire from whence, or by what means, it accumulated, so, in reflecting upon the late increase of Infidelity in this country, I was led to conclude, that the developement of the various sources of this evil could not be indifferent to a curious investigator of men and manners.

However indisputable the Rev. Henry Kett's assertion may be, "that the ideas of Infidelity, which had been long floating in the world, were first embodied into a practical system of wickedness, by Voltaire, and others," I must still beg leave to fix its æra in England, long before the writings of Bolingbroke made their appearance; this I must ascribe to a period of history, which bears a nearer resemblance than any other to recent transactions in France, *viz.* the period of the civil wars,



between Charles I. and his Parliament. Then churches were converted into stables, or ruins, and their ministers driven into exile; while their successors were divided into various sects, alternately supporting the most absurd, impious, and extravagant, opinions, whose variety of creeds naturally tended to the discredit of all religious authority.

During this period, I say, it cannot be doubted, but as one extreme always produces another, so the impiety and fanaticism of the sixteenth century were as properly the parent of the Infidelity that succeeded it, as the late massacres and proscriptions in France were consequences of the rejection of the milder doctrines of the Gospel; and the result of a decree, that "death is an eternal sleep!"

That much Infidelity did succeed the civil wars of Charles I. was most visible in the licentious reign of his successor; and may also be gathered from the many treatises written against avowed and unqualified Atheism before the close of the sixteenth century: even the learned Dr. Henry More did not think the Atheism of that time beneath his attention.

This monstrous feature, in the religious history of this country, did not escape the French writers; Bossuet in particular seems to treat Free-thinking, "as the last refuge of minds tired out with religious wars, and the revolutions to which they gave rise."

Charles II. Monsieur Grosley observes, "either through a secret attachment to the Roman Catholic religion, or from views merely political, favoured the Free-thinking turn of his subjects."

James II. to increase a toleration that suited his purpose, suffered all the Latudinarians, among the Noncon-



Nonconformists, to escape notice ; and, in the reign of William III. it is observed, that Shaftesbury and his admirers thought very freely upon religious subjects.

In 1696, John Toland published his *Christianity not Mysterious* ; a work publicly burnt in Dublin, as soon as it appeared ; but, flying to England, the author and his book were left unmolested.

Encouraged by this reception, in 1699, he published the *Life of Milton* ; in which, insinuating his doubts concerning the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments, he next answered his numerous objectors, in another work, intituled, *Amyntor*.

The ineffectual opposition made to these writings, by the inferior Clergy, assembled in convocation in 1702—(*See Life of Toland prefixed to his Works, in 1725*) only tended to increase their popularity and reputation.

In 1705, the Works of Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, were first published in English.

In 1713, Collins's Discourse upon the Rise and Growth of a Sect, called Free-thinkers, served to increase the consequence of that party ; the more so, from the number of replies made to it by Dr. Bentley, and other Clergymen.

In 1716, it may be supposed, that Free-thinking had made some progress in the genteel or literary world, as a very sensible and well-written pamphlet made its appearance in behalf of the belief of a providence, &c. addressed to the Wits, at Button's Coffee-house ; not Addison, Steel, or Arbuthnot, it is supposed, but some of the minor geniuses.

In the reign of George I. Socinianism, so near a-kin to Deism, was disclaimed by that monarch, who, as head of the church, published a proclamation, prohibiting the dissemination of such writings



writings as were favourable to the new opinions concerning the Trinity.

The New Annual Register, for 1782, observes,  
 “ that the first and most formidable attack upon  
 “ the Christian religion was made by Lord Her-  
 “ bert, of Cherbury. Collins, was afterwards fol-  
 “ lowed by Toland; and Tindal’s Christianity, as Old  
 “ as the Creation, succeeded to Morgan’s Moral  
 “ Philosophy; then came the more subtle perform-  
 “ ance of Christianity not founded on Argument.”

From Bishop Gibson’s Pastoral Letter, in 1729, though principally directed against Woolston’s Treatment of the Miracles, and the publications of Chubb, which immediately succeeded, and continued till 1749, it appears, that no respite was suffered to take place. It should also be observed, that, between 1730 and 1744, the first period being that which produced the famous controversy of the Resurrection, and the celebrated pamphlet, the Tryal of the Witnesses: there were three editions of a Deistical Answer to the same, by Mr. Peter Annet; besides two other pamphlets written by him, *viz.* the Resurrection Reconsidered, and, lastly, the Resurrection Defenders stripped of all Pretences. These things, from the conveniency of their price, and the zeal of the party who distributed them, who, no doubt, considered themselves as a rising Sect, certainly had their weight in shaking the pillars of popular opinion, among the middling and lower ranks of men.

Under the reign of George II. “ the philosophy  
 “ of Shaftesbury, became so far predominant, that,  
 “ for a number of years, no book was more uni-  
 “ versally admired, or more generally read, among  
 “ people of taste and fashion, than that nobleman’s  
 “ Characteristics.”

These



These were succeeded by the publication of Lord Bolingbroke's Essays, about the year 1754, by his friend Mallet; of whom Dr. Johnson observed, "that he discharged the blunderbuss, the noble author had left loaded, against the religion of his country." Queen Caroline, it is also reported, was favourably disposed towards these heterodox opinions.

In Monsieur Grolley's New Observations on England, in 1765, he observes, that Catholics, Church of England men, Methodists, &c. all make a common cause against a Sect which every day gains ground; I mean *Free-thinking*.

Relative to the original Debating Societies, perhaps the ultimate celebrity of the Robin Hood, the first of these dangerous Schools of Eloquence, or the impatience of some of its members to appear in print, was the cause of the prosecution of Peter Annet, one of its members, and his sentence of one year's imprisonment in Newgate, with an exposure in the pillory. Nor had the final dispersion of this Society, about 1773, scarcely taken place, before the Infidel system was transferred, with increasing attractions, into the closet, by the fashionable reception of the writings of Hume, and the daily improvements of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and the French philosophers in general.

The association at the Robin Hood, it cannot be doubted, had left the seeds of Infidelity deeply rooted in many of the members, who recollected the speeches of Annet; Dr. Lucas, of Dublin; and other orators of no mean talents. Among these people, the prosecution of Annet was a frequent source of conversation; while the kindness he experienced, from the amiable and ever memorable Archbishop Secker, was forgotten, or only confined to the knowledge of a few.

During



During Annet's imprisonment, in Newgate, that worthy primate, I have been told, sent to make some inquiry into his pecuniary affairs, and offered some comfortable assistance, which Annet, far advanced in years, did not live to enjoy; and from the following passage of the present Bishop of London's Review of the life of Archbishop Secker, it appears, that Mr. Annet was not the only object of such generous treatment on the part of the primate. "Whenever any publications came to his knowledge that were manifestly calculated to corrupt good morals, or subvert the foundations of Christianity, he did his utmost to stop the circulation of them: yet the wretched authors themselves, he was so far from wishing to treat with any undue rigour, that he has more than once, extended his bounty to them in distress." The translation of the whole works of Voltaire, and their repeated publication in sixpenny numbers, was also the means of putting the public in possession of his plausible dialogues between a Christian and an Honest Man, a Caloyerian, &c. And these were again multiplied, when the complete sets being sold off, the remains were a second time disseminated among an inferior order of readers, by their exposure upon the booksellers stalls, in common with second-hand magazines, at no more than one penny a number.

As under parts to the principal acts of Infidelity, upon the grand stage of literature, it might have been observed, that, for near a century past, Blount's Oracles of Reason, Collins on the Free-thinkers, &c. have lain upon the booksellers stalls, courting the inspection of passengers; and that, after the public had been accommodated,



accommodated, in the same way, with the waste paper of Morgan, Mandeville, Annet, Chubb, and all the second race of Infidels, near half a century; by way of a more refined entertainment, the circulating libraries were supplied with the *Eloisa* and *Emilius* of John James Rousseau, and other translations from the French, equally subversive of good morals. To the literary abilities, above vulgar ken, we may add, those of Gibbon, the historian; The Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, and that impertinent parade about his domestic virtues, so smartly replied to by the late Dr. Horne; and, next to these, we might reckon the cheap editions of the Philosophical Dictionary, by Voltaire; printed at London and York.

Upon the whole, from the recollection of the remote concatenation here adduced, it may be presumed, that Infidelity had attained a degree of *relative antiquity*, and thus imposed upon many, who would have rejected a *novelty*, as hazardous and questionable.

But, after all, where Infidelity has failed of complete success, many upon whom it has operated have been, at least, brought under Socinianism, the *Frozen Zone* of religion, even if it can deserve the name; for, before Dr. Priestley had attained to his past celebrity as a *divine*, this opinion undoubtedly had its effects in deadening the human heart. But, when his improvements upon it, were dignified with the name of *philosophy*, the warm tide of intellectual life immediately ceased to flow. The character of a *materialist* was fixed, and all the benignant sources of genuine Christianity, which might have been expected in this quarter, were hermetically sealed.



It was this great chemist who reduced all the ideas of the grand enemy of the human race to a mere "*personification of human passions*;" from whence, and similar refinements in what was called the "*corruptions of Christianity*," a discussion of questions, in the debating societies, on a Sunday evening, previous to 1781, subversive of all the fundamentals of our religion, operated as a sufficient justification of the Sunday Reformation-Bill, passed in that year, which, by prohibiting the taking of money at the doors, put a temporary stop to the increase of Infidelity in the lower orders.

But this hydra had too many heads to be crushed at once; for, in 1786, it was remarked by Archdeacon Paley in his *Moral Philosophy*, "That Infidelity is now served up in every shape that is likely to allure, surprize, or beguile, the imagination, in a fable, a tale, a novel, or a poem, in interspersed or broken hints, remote and oblique surmises, in books of travels, of philosophy, of natural history, in a word, in any form rather than that of a professed and regular disquisition."

As to societies which subsisted in the interval which I have gone over, that in Margaret-street, Oxford-road, was the next, both in the order of time and in its publicity, to that of the Robin Hood. But neither the gentleman, then known by the appellation of the *Priest of Nature*, and who delivered Deistical lectures in his chapel, in 1775-6, nor his congregation, should, by any means, be ranked with those pestiferous clubbists of late date; although it unfortunately happened that his renewal of a dangerous profession of false philosophy continued the concatenation of Infidelity nearer to the æra of the French Revolution, which,



which, afterwards co-operating with those principles, increased the number of English Infidels beyond all precedent.

From the period when the above-mentioned lectures, in Margaret-street, had closed, till the publication of the *Age of Reason*; Deism, and the heterodox opinions of the times, seemed to have taken up their last refuge in a pretty numerous circle, near Hoxton, among a kind of *Infidel Mystics*, known to strangers, from the circumstance of broaching their sentiments in some writings and public places, by the appellation of *Ancient Deists*, as well as from the profession of their belief in the eternity of the universe, &c. This place, being attended by some persons above the common line of life, finally operated as a kind of vortex, which naturally attracted the restless and dissatisfied of every sect within its circle. Here human learning was declaimed against, as one of the greatest enemies to human happiness or the improvement of the intellect, and dreams, visions, and immediate revelations, were recommended as a substitute! The faculty of foretelling future events was also insisted upon; the discernment of spirits, by the physiognomy, the voice, the gait, &c. together with the possibility of conversing with departed souls. In fact, those pretences were carried so far, that any visitor, not in the habit of hearing supernatural voices, or not informed of the common occurrences of the day, by the ministration of Angels, would have been treated as a novice, and a disciple of the lowest form.

It was by no means unnatural, that this assemblage should be made up of Alchymists, Astrologers, Calculators, Mystics, Magnetizers, Prophets, and Projectors, of every class. In fact, this community seemed “to embrace all the ec-



“ centric modes, sectaries, visionaries, fanatics,  
 “ enthusiasts, rationalists, and every other name,  
 “ into which affectation, whim, folly, or caprice,  
 “ divide the populace.

Several of the members of this society have distinguished themselves, in their habits and manners, truly eccentric; but, as a description of them would be too long for the present purpose, I shall only observe, that, there was so little of real religion in their composition, that it almost immediately yielded to the stronger impulse of the French Revolution, and terminated in the general conversion of the members into *politicians* and *inquirers after news*.

What has occurred among succeeding associations, since the period last mentioned, has been sufficiently noticed in the former part of this work.

Relative to Professor Robison's History of a Conspiracy, &c. I shall now observe, that, after the minute details, given by him and the Abbé Barruel, of the object of the French and German affiliations, no persons, unless they are totally absorbed in prejudice, can any longer affect to look upon the relations of these authors, as being raked together, merely to serve a party-purpose.

Without the evidence which they have adduced, it certainly would demand some stretch of credulity, to admit that Deists and Atheists have associated, near half a century, for the sole purpose, as Voltaire expresses it, to “ *Ecraser l'Infame*,” viz. Crush the Wretch, Christ! However, the only difference between the English and French Infidels, is, in the term of their existence; the latter had arrived at maturity, while the former, being anticipated in their view, a salutary check was opposed to their progress,



progress, before they were capable of feeling their strength.

Every good member of society, now enjoying the benefit of a state of internal tranquillity, or comparing it with the storms and convulsions of a neighbouring kingdom, will, next to Providence, bless the means of his preservation; and, penetrated by the advantages he enjoys, they will at least inspire him with a tacit justification of measures, at first, perhaps, deemed harsh. I mean, those measures which have been adopted by a vigilant government, and which have, undeniably, prevented the disorder and confusion which must have otherwise ensued.

The blind tools of a party, and shallow politicians, may continue declaiming against what they deem unnecessary violations of the forms of the constitution, as if the executive could at all time be useful without a discretionary and a dispensing power.

It is to very little purpose, that some people argue, that, the modern democratic party has really or apparently received the sanction of some respectable names in this country, both in and out of the senate. But if any such persons have flattered themselves, that a Parliamentary Reform was the *real object*, and not merely the *stalking-horse* of the societies, their want of information is really to be pitied. They must have known very little of the hatred borne to all the privileges of birth or acquirements, or of the frenzy, which sometimes raged in the brains of their humble friends in the city, and eastern suburbs; or how impatient they were of the tardy proceedings in St. Stephen's Chapel; the safety and continuance of which was principally owing to an augmentation of the associated Volunteer-Corps. Of course they must be ignorant of the obligations they are  
under



under to those who directed this military force, and actually prevented the madness of democracy from a phaeton-like assumption of the reins of government; from whence the whole island might have been kindled into a combustion more destructive than the insurrection of Jack Cade, or any of the disorders of his successors. I will even hazard the supposition, no Volunteer-Associations being formed, that republican frenzy had proceeded so far as to corrupt the Guards, and *seize* or *massacre* the whole House of Commons; or as many of them as they found sitting; could these madmen suppose any men, or set of men, would have accepted of the government at their hands, reeking with the blood of the Senate? I trust there are none, who bear the name of Britons, so lost to the dignity of the national character, or of a cast so sanguinary or degraded. Of course, hating both the treason and the traitors, the shocking deed would have reverted, with tenfold vengeance and remorse, upon the heads of the perpetrators; while its results must have justified the most afflicting, and, perhaps, unheard-of recrimination. I intimated, that the safety of the sittings of the House of Commons was owing to the formation of the Volunteer-Corps, while democracy raged in this metropolis. I repeat it: for, notwithstanding not more than one person, as far as I recollect, has been convicted of seducing the soldiery from their allegiance, such attempts, among the Clubbists, were not casual, but part of a system constantly acted upon. To mingle with, and to treat, the soldiery was as much a part of the duty, while the Clubs existed, as it was to meet at the division-rooms; and reports of progress, in this undertaking, were constantly made and applauded.



I may neither have the abilities to pronounce, nor the consequence to substantiate, a panegyric upon eminent characters; but as the effects of measures are the best comment upon the abilities of the men who produced them, let us farther suppose, for argument sake, that, after the recent adoption of French revolutionary principles in this country, the government had delayed the punishment or prevention of any overt-act, till matters had proceeded as far as they were carried in 1780! Will any of their accusers, then, take upon them to say where the consequences would have ended? I will now hazard a contrast: the popular tumult of 1780, without any national views, and without any leaders to direct its movements, eventually cost the lives of two hundred persons; while the more recent desperate scheme, to overturn all the constituted authorities of this Kingdom, has been baffled, by the mere imprisonment of less than half that number, many of whom were afterwards liberated.

That government in dispersing these societies, and hindering their re-organization, have acted upon the principle, that "prevention is better than punishment," I believe might be justified by some who have smarted most severely for their attachment to republicanism. The *diet*, and not the *imprisonment*, in the House in Cold-Bath-Fields, being their principal complaint. But even this was not permanent; it being now some months since the few confined for seditious practices have been put upon the allowance of state-prisoners, while their wives and families, in order that the innocent might not share the punishment of the guilty, have had an allowance from government of half-a-guinea, and fifteen shillings, per week.

But



But it is not impossible to add to the testimonies brought by Professor Robison, as to the real views of the self-named philosophers: the following passage in the late Lord Orford's Letters, written in 1765, and which could not be brought forward to promote the views of a party, may now serve our purpose with double effect:

“ The Dauphin, says he, will probably hold  
 “ out very few days. His death, that is, the  
 “ near prospect of it, fills the philosophers with  
 “ the greatest joy, as it was feared he would endeavour the restoration of the Jesuits. You will  
 “ think the sentiments of *the philosophers* very odd  
 “ state-news; but, do you know who the philosophers are, or what the term means here? in the  
 “ first place, it comprehends almost every body;  
 “ and, in the next, men, who, avowing war against  
 “ Popery, aim, *many of them, at a subversion of*  
 “ *all religion; and still many more at the destruction of regal power.* How do you know this?  
 “ you will say; you, who have been but six weeks in  
 “ France, three of which you have been confined  
 “ to your chamber. True: but in the first period  
 “ I went every where, and heard nothing else;  
 “ in the latter, I have been extremely visited, and  
 “ have had long and explicit conversations with  
 “ many who think as I tell you, and with a few  
 “ of the other side who are no less persuaded that  
 “ there are such intentions. In particular, I had  
 “ two officers here the other night, neither of them  
 “ very young, whom I had difficulty to keep from  
 “ a serious quarrel, and who, in the heat of the  
 “ dispute, informed me of much more than I could  
 “ have learned with great pains.” Vol. V. p. 123.

In addition to the more recondite collection of facts, which the Professor has selected from the German language, I shall next notice a Memorial,  
 written



in 1733, upon Secret Assemblies: Vide, Des Herrn Baron Von Holberg's ubrige Kleine Schriften, Copenhagen printed, 1755. In this work, says Baron Holberg, " I deemed it necessary to publish my Philosophical Considerations upon the subject of Secret Societies, because it is notorious, that, at this period, several of them exist in various parts of Germany, the propagation of whose extravagant opinions seem calculated to excite despair rather than devotion."

But whatever might have been the precise object of these Secret Assemblies, the striking similarity, which the Baron traces out between the causes that led to the death of Charles I. of England, and those we have witnessed preceding the late French Revolution; I say, whatever the views of the former might have been, he makes it appear, that, the proceedings of the English regicides in that reign, like the recent commotions in France, caused some alarm, and the adoption of measures of precaution in some of the neighbouring states. We see, says Baron Holberg, (in his Considerations before-mentioned) from an Ordinance, published, Wintermonat, December 24, 1655, that our gracious Sovereign, Frederic III. stifled the Secret Assemblies, of that period, in their birth; not so much on account of the false doctrines which they taught, but for fear of the bad consequences usually resulting from such private meetings; the effects of which, we had learned by experience. And farther, that what was, *at first, only the business of the Clergy, or the Police, at length required the assistance of the Military.*—The grand Rebellion of England, the Baron goes on to say, has supplied us with proofs of the effects of these divisions. That tragedy, which has occasioned so much prejudice to Religion and  
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the State, had the same kind of beginning, viz. *Secret Assemblies, Attacks upon Public Worship, Prophecies, The expectation of the Millenium, An equal division of Property, or the possession of all things in common. Gleichheit unter Menschen zu stiften, viz. the Institution of Equality among Mankind and the like!!!* His Danish Majesty, therefore, thinking it necessary to use a timely preventative of the evil of Secret Societies, issued the following Ordinance against them:

“ Wir Friedrich der Dritte, &c. thun hiemit  
 “ kund und zu wissen: Da unsere Vorfahren so-  
 “ wohl, als wir, es beständig unsere vornehmste  
 “ Sorge haben seyn lassen, das das heilige und  
 “ wahre Wort Gottes rein und lauter erhalten  
 “ und bewahret werde, so haben wir doch er-  
 “ fahren, wie der Meister der den Weizen mit  
 “ dem Unkraut zu unterdrücken und zu werder-  
 “ ben suchet, das heilige Predigtamt und Mi-  
 “ nisterium in Verachtung zu bringen suchet, in-  
 “ sonderheit dadurch, das er durch heimliche und  
 “ schadliche Zusammenkünfte, die so es nicht be-  
 “ ser verstehen, von unserer Kirche, und dem  
 “ gebräuchlichen Gottesdienst abzuleiten ver-  
 “ suchet. Daher ist unser ernstlicher Wille und  
 “ Befehl, an alle hohe und niedrige Obrigkeit,  
 “ das si darauf Acht haben, so, wie sie es vor  
 “ uns zu verantworten gedenken, &c.”

To the following effect:

“ We, Frederick III. &c. hereby declare, and  
 “ make known: since it has been the constant care  
 “ of our predecessors, as well as ourselves, to re-  
 “ tain and preserve the true and sacred Word of  
 “ God in its purity; and as we have learned,  
 “ that certain persons are endeavouring to cor-  
 “ rupt and to tread down the wheat with the tares,  
 “ and to bring the Ministry and the sacred offices  
 of



“ of religion into contempt, especially by the means  
 “ of secret and scandalous meetings, by which  
 “ they endeavour to lead the ignorant and un-  
 “ wary from the established worship and practice  
 “ of our churches: it is, therefore, our absolute  
 “ Will and Command, that all our Magistrates pay  
 “ the strictest attention to these Secret Assemblies,  
 “ as they will otherwise be responsible to us for  
 “ their neglect, &c.”

That no doubt might remain, whether any of  
 the Secret Societies, hinted at by the Baron, were  
 political, it is sufficient to indicate, that, within a  
 very few years after, he thought them a proper  
 subject for Satire in his Comedy, intituled, *Der  
 Politische Kangießer, or, the Political Pewterer*; of  
 which, from Gottsched's German Theatre, I at-  
 tempted an English translation, for private amuse-  
 ment, some time since. Gottsched, it should be  
 observed, caused it to be translated from the  
 Danish, between 1746 and 1750, under the title  
 above-mentioned; but, from some similarity of the  
 piece, with our Upholsterer, I chose to give it the  
 title of THE DEMOCRAT CURED, or, *the Upholsterer  
 of Dantzick*. The Baron describes the Club, of  
 which the Hero is a leading member, with singular  
 humour and propriety, especially when contrasted  
 with the views and capacities of some, who have  
 borne the name of Reforming Societies, in this  
 metropolis. He also plies him with such a succe-  
 sion of embarrassments, in consequence of his being  
 imposed upon, with the belief that he is chosen a  
 Burgomaster, that he is only saved from destroying  
 himself by an explanation made to him by a Mr.  
*Worthy*, to whom, till then, he had refused to  
 give his consent to marry his daughter, in con-  
 sequence of his being *no politician*! In the dé-  
 nouement of the piece, the author makes him



order the burning of all his political pamphlets: and he leaves the stage, after most appositely observing, “ It is true, one may easily condemn a  
 “ government in theory, without having any idea  
 “ of the practical part. So, to have a general  
 “ notion of a Sea-chart, and to understand the art  
 “ of navigation, are two things essentially different.  
 “ In reading political tracts, it is also easy to ob-  
 “ tain a facility in speaking upon a variety of  
 “ subjects; but much more than this, is necessary  
 “ to understand the constitution of a country.  
 “ From what has befallen me to-day, every per-  
 “ son, of the same rank in society, may derive  
 “ an exemplary conviction, that a man, who has  
 “ no other capacity than that of censuring his  
 “ superiors and governors, must be totally unfit  
 “ to administer in their places. For an illiterate  
 “ Mechanic, to take upon him the office of a  
 “ Statesman, is just the same as if the latter  
 “ should assume the profession of the former with-  
 “ out any previous instruction.”

Thus far, as to the similarity of causes and effects, and the general opinion of the friends of good government, relative to Secret Societies, in England, France, and Germany. As to the *variety* of the means, adopted in those countries, for promoting their purposes, and the *few* made use of by the English Societies, the latter was probably for want of time; especially, if the opinion, “ That the English generally improve  
 “ upon the discoveries made by the French,” can apply in this particular.

Professor Robison has most copiously displayed the address of the French and German Illuminati, in qualifying their revolutionary poison to all states and conditions of men; and has intimated, more than once, that it was a principal object with  
 them,



them, to render the present state of society, odious, by a fictitious display of the indolent pleasures of the patriarchal life. It was their design, as he expresses it, in page 161, of his *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, to make the head of every family, what Abraham was, their Patriarch, Priest, and unlettered Lord; and Reason, the Code of Laws to all mankind. And, as an additional instance of this disposition, and the nefarious profanation of talents made use of to promote it, my readers may take the following translation from the French, selected from an Imitation of the Psalms of David, in poetic prose, and like them in the English, and some other Rubrics, insiduously adapted to each day of the month:

“ God of my Fathers! when shall the patriarchal  
“ ages revisit the earth?

“ Then were men worthy of thy presence,  
“ and thou didst deign to visit them with thy  
“ bounty.

“ Then the rustic altars, upon the sacred moun-  
“ tains, were neither loaded with gold, nor stained  
“ with blood.

“ Then thy ministers, clothed in linen and  
“ crowned with flowers, were not eloquent;  
“ but their hearts were as pure and as simple as  
“ their offerings.

“ Then the father of the family, king of his  
“ household, had no other sceptre but his pas-  
“ toral staff.

“ Without sword or balance, he administered  
“ justice at the foot of an Oak, or before the  
“ door of his Cottage.

“ Plain sense and an upright mind were his  
“ code of laws.

“ Then Sincerity watched at the doors, and  
“ Security was an attendant at the bed.

“ The



“ The sounds of the locks and keys of Sus-  
 “ picion were not heard, in the evening or the  
 “ morning.

“ Then, Oh! my God, man added nothing  
 “ to thy gifts, but received them as they came  
 “ from thy hand:

“ Blood never stained his lips, neither was he  
 “ preserved by the destruction of useful and peace-  
 “ able animals.

“ Then was the marriage-union, formed in the  
 “ face of Heaven, without a witness, and with-  
 “ out a priest.

“ Then, in the person of his father, the son saw  
 “ his God, clothed in the human form.

“ Then, Oh! God of my fathers, thy thunder  
 “ slept at thy feet, and thy right hand was in-  
 “ cessantly held forth to bless thy children.

“ Then thou didst not repent of thy work;  
 “ but the minds of men were like a spotless  
 “ mirror, in which thou wast pleased to multiply  
 “ thine image.

“ It is time, Oh! Lord, that thou shouldst re-  
 “ store those days upon the earth; that serene and  
 “ beautiful period, which should be had in ever-  
 “ lasting remembrance.”

Upon the abuse of French and German litera-  
 ture, I shall dwell no longer. To this there are  
 many brilliant exceptions, particularly, a pamphlet,  
 published in 1794, entitled, *Blick auf die Fran-  
 zösische Revolution—Von einem Freunde des Volkes  
 und der Regierungen.*” As far as this untranslated  
 “ View of the French Revolution, by a friend to  
 mankind and governments,” exhibits the origin of  
 that inexhaustable event, in causes, never likely  
 to occur in England, I shall quote a few passages,  
 after premising, as the most ostensible part of my  
 apology for so doing, that no farther knowledge  
 of



of the author may be necessary, than what is to be collected from the following note at the bottom of page 112. Alluding to the French Emigrants, it is there said:

“ Since there are nobles of the present day who  
 “ persuade themselves, that none but persons of  
 “ equal rank have a right to decide upon points of  
 “ honour, we wish to remind them, that our author  
 “ is no less known by his sword than his pen; that  
 “ he is no stranger in the Cabinet or the field; and  
 “ that, in respect to birth, he might challenge the  
 “ most ancient and illustrious houses.”

“ It would, says this noble author, be a glorious  
 “ example to the world, should a great nation  
 “ awaken instantaneously, after many ages of servi-  
 “ tude and indifference, and, with true magnanimity,  
 “ trace society up to its original source, found its  
 “ rights upon the principles of eternal justice, and,  
 “ at the same time, possess sufficient wisdom to keep  
 “ them under the dominion of reason, confining  
 “ even liberty itself within inviolable limits.

“ But who is capable of cementing an union  
 “ between extremes so distant from each other, as  
 “ inflexible prudence and violent enthusiasm? It  
 “ is highly probable, that a nation, giving itself  
 “ up to the guidance of philosophers, would be  
 “ wanting in that energy, which alone is capable  
 “ of overturning the thrones of despotism and pre-  
 “ judice. This energy, is the sole inheritance of  
 “ the passions. On the contrary, if this nation  
 “ should consist of men, animated with the spirit  
 “ of liberty, men, who had encountered and super-  
 “ seded every difficulty, can it be supposed, that,  
 “ while flushed with success, they will listen and  
 “ implicitly adhere to the dispassionate voice of  
 “ that reason, which places true liberty under the  
 “ dominion of the laws, and fixes the welfare of  
 “ civilized



“ civilized society, in almost an intire sacrifice of  
 “ the natural independence of man?

“ The same genius which plans a revolution  
 “ should conduct its progress; the same hand  
 “ that breaks the fetters of a nation should be  
 “ sufficiently powerful to restrain its passions; but  
 “ the revolutions of states, however sagaciously  
 “ planned, are subject to so many accidents, and  
 “ attended with so much ambition, and private  
 “ interest, that they frequently take a bias, in di-  
 “ rect opposition to the views of the first mover.  
 “ This was eminently the case with the French  
 “ Revolution, the origin of which, we must seek  
 “ not in its visible epoch, but look back to times  
 “ far remote.”

I shall wave this author's unqualified invectives  
 against the French Emigrant Noblesse, as the  
 cause of most of the calamities of their country;  
 to introduce his energetic description of the fall of  
 Robespierre.

“ At the moment this pamphlet is going to press,  
 “ Robespierre, is overthrown by a clap of thunder;  
 “ his guilty blood flows upon the spot where that  
 “ of the benevolent Louis, Marie Antoinette, and  
 “ several others, was shed. Divine justice seems  
 “ to have reserved him for this special retaliation;  
 “ this alone pursued him, and men were merely  
 “ passive in the execution of its sentence. Hu-  
 “ manly speaking, the condemnation of Robes-  
 “ pierre was by no means legal; even his murder-  
 “ ers were partakers in his guilt, though they  
 “ accused him of original, unatonable, and even  
 “ improbable crimes. In fact, his death seemed  
 “ to have been demanded by the howling of the  
 “ Furies, and merely a consequence of the appli-  
 “ cation of his own principles, and that denial of  
 “ responsibility, which led to the execution of the  
 “ King.



“ King. It was the First of September, turned  
 “ against himself; those cannibal tactics which  
 “ must still be repeated, to clear the earth of those  
 “ monsters, to whom they have been familiar.”

This author, a strenuous advocate for the constitution of 1791, as a proof of the futility of all democratic revolutions, is forced, unintentionally, to pay a compliment to the British Constitution, through his panegyrics upon that which approximates towards it, the nearest of any: and he, at the same time, demonstrates the vanity of every attempt to deviate from that line, to which, even the French nation, is necessarily returning. If the politics of 1791, says he, should ever obtain a predominance, after a thousand factions have had their day, they will infallibly convince the French, that their true happiness, is equally as distant from a licentious liberty, as from an authority without bounds or limits.

While some writers seem inclined to carry their prejudices against German literature too far, it is but just to observe, that the reign of the late Emperor Joseph seemed to inspire some of the authors of that period with true English notions of government. Far from the degrading sentiments of the Illuminati, their opinions add a dignity to human nature; and, as genuine liberty is never spoken of in any part of the known world without some reference to *England*, or *Englishmen*, some observations from a small German tract, published at Vienna in 1781, intituled, *The Creed of a Citizen of the Nineteenth Century*, as they may please, as well as flatter, our vanity, cannot be disagreeable.

“ I believe, says the anonymous author, that  
 “ the maxim, that we are under no obligation to  
 “ a bad government, and that one may violently  
 P “ deprive



“ deprive a tyrant of life, is scandalous, false, and  
 “ blasphemous.

“ I believe that the laws cannot be better ex-  
 “ pressed than through the will of an upright and  
 “ virtuous Regent.

“ I believe that unlimited liberty is a chimera.”

“ I believe, that if Rome had not destroyed Car-  
 “ thage, Carthage would have destroyed Rome. See  
 “ an illustration of this in England and her ene-  
 “ mies. If England does not lose her *superiority*  
 “ *at sea*, it is evident, that with respect to com-  
 “ merce, *all other powers must become her vassals*.

“ I believe the courage of an Englishman never  
 “ forsakes him. Exposed to the utmost danger, he  
 “ will improve the situation. If the country must  
 “ be ruined, he will say, rather to-day than to-  
 “ morrow.

“ I believe the abilities of any person in Geome-  
 “ try, may be equalled by another; the solution  
 “ of problems being founded in certain data. But  
 “ that in politics, there are no self evident proofs,  
 “ which necessarily lead to other truths: all depends  
 “ upon genius.

“ I believe there are cases when it is necessary  
 “ for a Prince to set himself above the laws; to alter,  
 “ and even infringe them. But if he is prudent,  
 “ he will neither tear, nor obliterate the picture,  
 “ but only give it a new face.”

It is to be lamented that several authors in Ger-  
 many, enjoying the character of fine writers, have,  
 with Wieland, enlisted under the banners of Infir-  
 delity. Religion, however, is not left without a  
 witness in the genius of that country. The reader  
 of taste will excuse my attempt in translating the  
 following beautiful specimen of the true sublime,  
 from a German version of Psalm xix. by Professor  
 Ramler.



THE heav'nly concave's everlasting frame,  
 The azure canopy where meteors flame,  
 The self-pois'd earth beneath, and these accord  
 To join in owning their eternal Lord.

Day speaks his praise, in heaven's all-chearing light,  
 Repeated by a thousand tongues at night ;  
 All nations learn the mighty theme to sing ;  
 All look with rapture to the day's bright King.

His presence, shining thro' th' etherial round,  
 Draws the dark forest from the earth profound ;  
 The dew-fraught clouds, he from th' ocean fills,  
 Distill'd anew, or stream'd adown the hills.

A verdant robe, he for the earth prepares,  
 Bedeck'd with flower's, whose various tistite bears  
 Each hue, that on his cloud-wrought cincture glows,  
 The azure violet, or crimson rose.

His purple Throne he in the East displays ;  
 His vast domain unwearied he surveys ;  
 Unnumber'd realms are in his circuit bless'd ;  
 His course triumphant, ends in glorious rest.

From his exhaustless sea of lambent light,  
 He richly fills the silver orb of night ;  
 The morning star, and brother choir advance,  
 And, wreath'd with rays, perform their mystic dance.

Thro' boundless space, thus Sun and Stars proclaim  
 Th' Almighty hand, that form'd this wond'rous frame ;  
 And, for his praise their rapid wheels employ'd,  
 For ever rolling thro' the mighty void.

I shall now leave the merits and defects of our continental neighbours, to shew by what means we have avoided the rocks, upon which others have split. With respect to the Democratical Faction, much indeed is owing to the vigilance of Ministers in saving the country from

*“ Oratores novi, stulti, adolescentuli.”*

Still, other causes co-operating, seem to have fixed the safety of this country, from the attacks of its domestic enemies, upon an immoveable basis ; and



have thus contributed to the gradual, but certain extinction of that hot spirit, which has caused so much alarm to the lovers of good order and that subordination, by which, it can only be supported.

In the first place, every degree of confidence which the London Corresponding Society reposed in the nobility and others, who, for a time, gave into the idea of universal suffrage, and annual, or triennial, parliaments, has been rapidly declining ever since their Association refused to come into the measures of the Whig Club; the proposal of which, by the latter, engendered that dislike which afterwards increased in proportion as the Reforming Societies imbibed the doctrines of *civil* and *moral* equality.

Secondly, divisions and mutual distrust among members, occasioned by the punishment of some of the number, the dread of the same fate, and the great loss of time requisite for serving the various offices. But another circumstance which contributed to hasten the crisis of the dissolution of this body, was, the introduction of the *United Men* into the metropolis, in 1797 and 1798; or rather the toleration of such persons in the London Corresponding Society, as joint members of both! I say the toleration, because the known violence of the former, caused them to be eyed with so much suspicion, that one division of the London Corresponding Society, was denied admission at the house of a member, only for writing a letter to one of the *United Societies*.

The grand arcana of this new establishment was always acknowledged to the *initiated*, “as to form  
“a diversion in favour of the enemy, in case of a  
“landing.” Many persons also undertook to learn the French language, no doubt, with a view of facilitating a communication.

That



That the *United Men* should be obnoxious to numbers of the London Corresponding Society may not be easily credited by strangers; the fact, however, which I have stated, must be admitted; for, if both of these associations were hideous or unnatural, still, a dissimilarity, might exist between them; such as is hinted in a German History of Apparitions, one of whom is described as being so exceedingly terrific, as to affright other spectres!

Notwithstanding, as the procuring and learning the use of arms were the ground work of the association of the *United Men*, numbers of the London Corresponding Society, who did not relish these daring measures, very prudently withdrew from both associations. The government's knowledge of these several circumstances, is, in my opinion, a sufficient vindication of the necessity of the Bills against Sedition, and the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

But farther, no accurate observer can possibly be ignorant, how much the herding principle has been checked by an unprecedented price of provisions; I speak only of the lower classes: the beer-houses which, previous to the late rise of the necessaries of life, used, in working neighbourhoods, to be filled three evenings out of the six, have been gradually deserted. The passengers, who, in the piping times of peace, were frequently obstructed, can now pass, unmolested by ballad fingers, and drunken squabbles in the streets, while the number of night charges at the watch-houses have decreased in proportion: and this accidental alteration of circumstances, by compelling mechanics and others to share their porter at home with their families, has prevented many of them from being introduced to the Infidel or Political Societies, at the public houses. As for the seceding and repentant clubbists;



bists, many of them are not a little astonished at their credulity, in being led away by men, only intent upon the display of their oratory, or filling their pockets at the expence of the public opinion. Nor will it soon be forgotten, that some persons of opulence, who had been clamorous for democratic distinction, were afterwards implicated in charges of monopoly and oppression; and, that during the late excessive dearth of provisions, the principal part of the public charity did not flow from men, before in the habit of haranguing the populace upon their *real grievances*, but from others, generally in *opposition* to such principles and proceedings! Another final mean of damping the revolutionary spirit, in the Societies I have been speaking of, was the recollection, that in their corporate economy, viz. in the petty administration of their affairs, though there were no millions unaccounted for, yet there were many and repeated defaulters, and dilapidations of a lesser amount, clearly demonstrating that *Citizens* and *Ministers* in *miniature*, forming the *Executive Committee*, or acting as Secretaries, have been the first to secure *their own interests*. And farther, when called to account for this *un-citizen like* behaviour, have even denied the right of responsibility, and withheld or destroyed the documents which might have been brought against them!

But, notwithstanding these lessons, a delirium seems to have attached to, and never to have left the divided remains of English Democracy, till it received the shock of Bonaparte's constitution! Otherwise, the voice of Reason, added to the former changes in the French government, must have been heard; or even those revolutions would have silently destroyed all the ideal and imitative frames, which the Constitution-builders had been laying  
for



for years on this side of the water, and have forced them back upon their own, though by a negative preference.

But in spite of the discouraging specimens exhibited to the London Corresponding Society and their adherents, *viz.* by their *Executive Committee*, and other mimic ministers; while they flattered themselves that the foundations of Republicanism stood sure in France, a cure was always expected in the old revolutionary mode of *changing men*. It was to little purpose that the societies were deterred from meeting: that their dispirited leaders had withdrawn themselves, or were scattered far and wide in different prisons; the Republican principle, they contended, still remained *inviolable* and *incorruptible*! But where? Not among the Nobles who had ceased to call Plebeian meetings, as the latter supposed, to consult with them!—not among the dependants upon these Nobles, who had seceded from the Senate, and enhanced their crimes in ceasing to harass the Minister:—not among the Commercial men in the City of London, whose interest it was to continue his support; but it was to France, that they still looked for the *fruits of the Tree of Liberty*, which was to be yielded to them also in due season. A signal victory, obtained by the Austrians, or any of the Allies, seldom damped the hopes of Democracy; this was looked upon, as no more than the pruning of the branches, necessary to make them shoot again with fresh vigour. If a commander was guilty, or accused of correspondence with the enemy, he was only deemed a canker-worm, who wanted to eat away the root. If crowds of Emigrants or Priests were adjudged to death, it was still necessary to destroy them as so many locusts or caterpillars, who would have devoured the leaves; or, if whole branches of this



precious tree of liberty were carried away to engraft upon other trees in Italy, Egypt, or the Indies, still all was well; or, if the State Gardeners murdered each other, in consequence of their disagreements about the manure, or the mode of dressing or fencing this hopeful scion, still no difference was made. Robespierre, it was thought, would certainly bring it to perfection. It was afterwards transferred to the Brissotines, the Sieyes, and others, who continued to clip, and even stunt its branches; still, as the root was supposed to be sound and vigorous, and that it would again shoot out with all its energies, when the managers could agree among themselves, these retrenchments created no alarm. Every succeeding Gardener, it was presumed, would mend the fault of his predecessor; and when it was put under the care of Bonaparte, then was expectation, for a moment, wound up to its highest pitch; yet no sooner had his new plan ripened into birth, than the falling off was inexpressible! Conjecture now seemed lost, and the zig-zag flashes of opinion, emitting a dark and dubious glare, refused to be confined to any given point. The multitude that set out to follow the French revolution, whatever course it might take, though before somewhat confused by the many languages it had spoken, were now at their *ne plus ultra*. They were exactly in the situation of those timid animals, who, pressed and perplexed by the shouts of the hunters, know not which course to pursue. In fact, it was now necessary, at all events, to return; for as the Archimedean ground of France, upon which all the world was to have been moved, had vanished, and only presented a yawning gulph in its place—there was no alternative. And to those who had recovered their reason, in ever so small a degree, it was now evident, that  
the



the shelter still afforded by the British oak, was infinitely preferable to any exotic substitute whatever.

But independent of these facts, which no sophistry is able to palliate, and which no dexterity of movement can evade, the relative merits and demerits of Aristocracy and Democracy, I think, may be illustrated from some considerations not hitherto explored; and which, I presume, must place the weakness and insufficiency of the latter in a new point of view, and beyond all contradiction. To proceed; if we compare the ruling members of the body politic, to the superior faculties in the human frame, it will appear that there is a natural correspondence, and apposite relation between the lowest and worst passions in individual existence, and the tumultuous motions, the furor, or the panic fears of democracy in the great world, or organized society; while Aristocracy, from its stability, and the superior enlargement of its views, naturally approximates to Reason, and the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude; and thus, abstractedly considered, is, in fact, the *wisdom and maturity* of human society, in opposition to its *rashness, its youth, and inexperience*.

For an experimental conviction of the evanescency, and absolute nullity of a Democratic form of government, we need not look at France, where it has recently withered even in the hands of philosophers, but turn our eyes to the petulancy and littlenesses, frequently attendant upon parochial administrations; and for no other reason, but because the administrators are chosen as it were *by lot, out of the body of the people*. These annual rulers, when vested with a "little brief authority," are often so much elated by the sudden change, that the consequence they assume, not being *educated* to rule, nor



habituated to command, is such, as to render themselves perfectly ridiculous or contemptible; to say nothing of their too frequent acts of inhumanity, which have so often called for the interference of superior courts, more enlightened, and consequently more humane judges. Thus, if the proceedings of the committee-rooms had been as public as those of the bench, the sarcasm of the comic muse would have found an ample subject in their discussions and awards.

If we reduce the experiments of Democracy to a narrower circle, notwithstanding some of its advocates have told us, that the head of the government should resemble the president of a common-club, not *hereditary*, but removeable at the pleasure of the members, the *sovereign people*, we shall still find the theory at war with the practice. Let us examine the internal economy of the numerous popular societies under the name of benefit clubs: Are they not subject to perpetual squabbles, growing, as it were, out of the facility of crimination? Are not their concerns generally managed by a small junto, and their disputes generally settled by the clerk? No member is he, but only a servant to the society: yet to his opinion the majority mostly pay a deference, merely on the supposition of his superior abilities! Is not some one, in these cases, the indispensable character who must temper their acrimony, soothe their jealousies, and mitigate their awards? These are undeniable facts. A governing Democracy then, even in miniature, is a non-entity which can have no permanent existence but upon paper, or in the imaginations of those who mingle and confound theories for tried facts.

But, after all, if any thing is wanting to satisfy speculatists, who hold a contrary opinion, let them  
try



try Democracy upon their own families, and they will there find it the proper parent of misrule and perpetual discord. And as I have shewn it to be that, in a constitution, which the passions are in the human frame, Aristocracy is, and must be, the *Reason of a State*. As such, it possesses the indefeasible right of pre-eminence. I do not say it can exist independently of Democracy; it has as much need of the strength and enthusiasm of the people, as they have of its prudence and stability. But as the passions in an individual should ever be subservient to reason, it is equally just, that the passions of a nation should be constantly subjected to the controul of the more noble and superior faculties of the body politic.

If the late degeneracy of the French nation, into the madness of Democracy, has given us just cause of alarm for our domestic tranquillity, its subsequent approximation, under the present Grand Consul, towards that Aristocracy we have just sketched out, should allay every apprehension upon that score.

The points of resemblance, in the situation of various branches of society, and the interests of clashing parties in this country, are not likely, after what has passed, to fall into a similar direction with those of France, immediately preceding the late revolution. Even the disaffected, with the failure of eight years of experiment full in their faces, and the consequent degradation of the French revolutionary spirit, are deprived both of precept and example. They are, in a manner, bound hand and foot, and thrown into the gulph of doubt and uncertainty. To recover from the shock, therefore, which the centre of *all revolutions* has sustained, must be a work of time; and, before the public mind can be roused into action, it will rather re-



quire a security against future sufferings, than an indemnity for the past.

In fine, the consequences of the French revolution may, for a long period to come, present themselves at the elbow of every project for political change or innovation; being perpetuated in those outrages of feeling, which cannot soon be forgotten, they are impressed upon the minds of men, in characters which cannot easily be erased. On the other hand, these characters may even defy the power of obliteration, being too deeply indented in the earth, in the graves which have been dug for the millions who have fallen.

But though, all through the course of this work, I have insisted upon the impotence of the Democratic and Infidel societies, unconnected with higher influence, or external agency; and though their meetings are no more holden; still, as scattered individuals, they are sufficiently numerous to do considerable mischief; the Atheistical class in particular seem mostly incorrigible. Incredible as it may appear, they are all looking forward for a millenium of their own! And, notwithstanding the repeated failures of the French philosophers and revolutionists, the English Atheists blindly insist, “that civil society is in a progressive state of improvement, to which every government, by its weakness and crimes, is unavoidably contributing; the final end of which, will be the dissolution of them all; and that the time is fast approaching, and will infallibly arrive, when man and nature will be perfect in all their relations, and the former will be able to live without government, without laws, and without submission!!!” In England, these fanatics call themselves the disciples of Mirabaud and Godwin. Upon the German Continent, one of their most  
8
notorious



notorious leaders is Professor Fichte, late of the University of Jena; for a particular account of whom, *vide* Appendix to Vol. IV. of the Anti-Jacobin Magazine, and the German Journals for 1799, one of which, thus strikingly contrasts the unexampled audacity of the new impiety, in an Epigram from the words of David—" *The fool hath said in his heart*"—

The ancient Atheist, dreading to impart  
His impious creed, conceal'd it in his heart;  
But modern Atheists, fearless of the rod,  
In words and deeds, proclaim, "There is no God!"

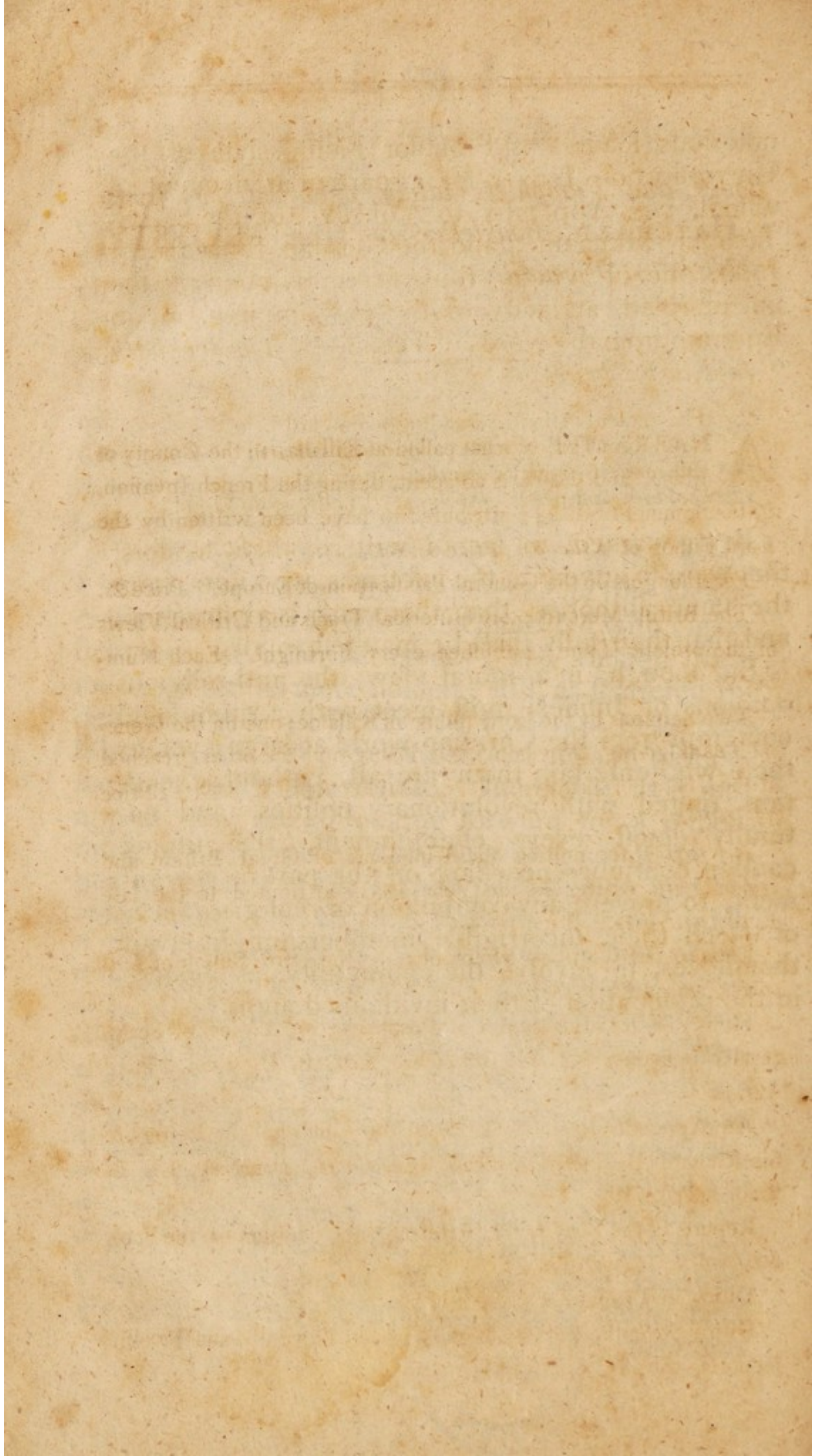
Being warned, in sacred writ, of these scoffers, that were to appear in the last times, we know, from the same authority, that their end is destruction, and that their folly shall be manifest to all.

But though, in a moral view, the anti-religious opinions of Infidels must meet with accumulated contempt from the Christian world at large; yet, as those who entertain them are all, without exception, tinged with revolutionary politics, and naturally detest every establishment, the utmost caution continues necessary on the part of government, to prevent any combustion or real grievance, of which these incorrigible members might avail themselves, to involve the community, as agents, in the prosecution of their invidious designs.

THE END.









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