

A slight sketch of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and his opponents on the subject of his Disquisitions on matter and spirit / [Anon].

Contributors

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C O N T R O V E R S Y
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D R . P R I E S T L E Y A N D H I S O P P O N E N T S
O N T H E S U B J E C T O F H I S
D I S Q U I S I T I O N S O N M A T T E R A N D S P I R I T .

In a L E T T E R to a F R I E N D .

*Pensantur eadem
Scriptores Trutinâ : non est quod multa loquamur.*

L O N D O N :

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To the READER.

IF I could have thought of a humbler title for the following performance, than that of a "Slight Sketch," I should certainly have adopted it.

I wished to present the reader with a brief and general review of a controversy to which the name of Dr. Priestley had given some distinction and popularity. Curiosity was excited by it; but few chose to be at the trouble of gratifying that passion by a laborious investigation of the argument in the state into which contention had thrown it. I have attempted to select what I imagined sufficient to answer the purpose of my title-page.

page. I engage for nothing more: and if more should be expected, I shall not be answerable for the disappointment of my readers.

I am no disciple of Dr. Priestley: nor would I insult his understanding, or violate my own sincerity by clouding his Altar with the incense of flattery. I would bear a willing tribute to his merit:—but with the spirit of a man who is not afraid to tell him of his faults. Of his faults and his merit, I pretend to be no judge, any farther than they are submitted to the public eye. I pursue no man to the retreat of private life: tho' if a meddling or malignant temper disposed me to be a critic in this common but paltry line, Dr. Priestley (even in the judgment of his enemies) would be the last man in the world who need be under any apprehension from
the

the most rigid inquisition of impertinent curiosity.

The Doctor hath been mistaken by many, who having never read his elaborate work, content themselves with the account given of it by others. That account hath frequently been partial—sometimes erroneous—and in one or two instances WILFULLY false. On the present controversy he hath had the misfortune of being misunderstood, or misrepresented beyond any other writer of rank and character in the literary world—unless, perhaps, we except the most learned and ingenious author of the “Divine Legation of Moses.” Both have fallen under the invidious imputation of scepticism: and the religious professions of both have been equally discredited—either by ignorance, which could not comprehend the tenor of arguments

that

that were not confined to the common and beaten tract of speculation and logic: or, by Envy—which, when it fails to destroy a man's claims to learning and genius, will torture its invention, and scripture too, to make his religion questionable.

Dr. Priestley hath been accused of a design the most opposite to his wishes, and that is, to subvert the doctrine of a future state. His enemies,—— for as a Presbyterian he hath many,—— and as a Socinian more —— have precipitately caught at the charge: and some of them were not destitute of that cunning and address which were just sufficient to give it the credit they desired. The swarm of atheistic libertines, who are not qualified to REASON about religion, but only to vilify it because it is a check on their views, were very eager to adopt as a truth, what his ene-
mies

mies had exhibited as an accusation. They were happy to enroll the name of PRIESTLEY in the catalogue of those heroic writers, who scorning an accommodation with religion had nobly rejected, in the greatness of their souls, both its duties and its functions; and having represented virtue as the mere creature of custom and polity, had given up a future state as the dream of superstition, or the artifice of priestcraft.

I have been often a witness to this hack-nied cant of vulgar infidelity, prefaced with the names of a Mandeville or a Toland, it lost nothing of its futility from such wretched authorities. But when the name of Dr. Priestley was introduced to give it credit, that which was ridiculous by itself became serious from its connexion. In such a case I have attempted to check the gaiety of a false
and

and forward triumph, by anticipating the design of this pamphlet:—which is principally written with a view to convince the infidel that Dr. Priestley is no partizan of his cause, no advocate for any doctrine that hath the most remote tendency to unsettle the laws or sanctions of religion: but on the contrary, that he hath exerted his best talents in fixing them on the only foundation on which they can securely stand,—and that is,—the GOSPEL OF our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose resurrection ALONE “hath begotten us again to a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

A SLIGHT

A SLIGHT SKETCH
OF THE
CONTROVERSY
BETWEEN
DR. PRIESTLEY and his OPPONENTS,
ON THE
Subject of his Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

S I R,

DR. Priestley hath revived a controversy which had slumbered for a considerable time in those shades of oblivion, to which, perhaps, you will think it might have been consigned to eternity without any great loss to true religion or sound philosophy.

His bold and repeated attacks on some doctrines which have been generally regarded, through every period of the Christian Church, as essential articles of
A faith,

faith, have drawn on him the resentment of many learned divines of the establishment, and of his own communion. That resentment indeed, hath not always been expressed in the most decent language. Some of his opponents seemed to consider him as a writer that had forfeited all claims to civility, and in the atrociousness of his heresies they found, or imagined they found, a sufficient apology for their rancour. They could not be complaisant to the man they abhorred, and many wrote as if they had never known that there was a medium between virulence and indifference, or that it was possible, or if possible, that it was proper to hold a “contest with the Devil without bringing a railing accusation.” As the Devil indeed, Dr. Priestley was treated,—but not with the gentle spirit of his celestial antagonist; and many who attempted to fix on him an infernal stigma, went very far in establishing their own claim to it. Such outrageous zealots expose the cause they profess to maintain, and lose by their fury what they might have secured by their candour.

But while I say this, to express my idea of illiberal opponents, I must acknowledge that Dr. Priestley hath, in some measure, forfeited the privilege of complaint, for HE hath sometimes
written

written as if he imagined that occasions would justify the sacrifice of urbanity to zeal. I am sorry whenever I see the disputant get the better of the gentleman; and Dr. Priestley's treatment of the SCOTCH DOCTORS, for thus he affects with an air of ill-judged contempt to call three respectable writers of the north, in the opinion of a far greater part of his unprejudiced readers, betrayed his petulance more than it exposed their system or confirmed his own.—A peevish philosopher is a ridiculous character, and a splenetic christian is something worse. A free enquirer should not grow waspish because others make use of their freedom; and a minister of christianity should never lose sight of its principal ornament, nor for a moment forget, that “pride was not made for man.”

DR. BEATTIE had rendered himself the favourite of the public; his works had a charm of elegance and ingenuity which could not fail of pleasing the taste of general readers; his poetical writings amused the fancy while they improved the heart. Dr. Priestley hath been accused of envying Dr. Beattie's popularity: But I sincerely acquit him of the charge, and they who made it were ignorant of the objects of his ambition. In truth, Dr. Priestley

considered the MARISCHAL PROFESSOR as an intruder in a walk, to which his talents were not properly adapted; and he despised the taste of the public, which was so easily gratified with the light food that Dr. Beattie had prepared for them. The man who contemned their opinion, could not be very ambitious of their applause.

The system of Hartley, required as much study as the Principia of Sir Isaac Newton. Dr. Beattie, flattered the indolence of the public, and the self-complacency of the vain and superficial, by presenting them with an easy introduction to philosophy,—a philosophy that would save the expence of thought, and teach even the ladies to be metaphysicians from their—FEELINGS!

This was the contemptuous idea which Dr. Priestley entertained of the “Essay on the Immutability of Truth.” But he expressed his contempt in language that did little honour to his breeding, nor was his language only contemptuous,—it was frequently indignant.

Dr. Beattie hath since convinced the world, that he is capable of reasoning with logical correctness. His essay on ridicule, is equally elegant and philosophical. His former work was too diffuse, and indeed

deed diffusiveness is the common error of poetical philosophers. They carry the delusive splendor of imagination into those regions where only the calm and steady light of judgment is required, and from the vigor of their feelings become positive and dogmatical on points where modesty required them to be slow and diffident, from a sense of the weakness and obscurity of the understanding.

I confess, I was never thoroughly pleased with Dr. Beattie's "Essay on Truth," even at an age when I was more apt to be imposed on by a vivid and elegant fancy; and when he affected to be witty on Mr. Hume, I never could relish the jest. "Every thing is beautiful in its season," but we should always take care to put our trifles to their true account, by putting them in their PROPER place.

There was a dignity in MR. HUME that commanded respect, at least from the literary and philosophical world, and however pernicious some of his principles might be,—and some of them certainly are, especially when pushed to the extreme of their consequences,—yet Dr. Beattie was often very unfortunate in the mode of reply which he adopted, either when his zeal inflamed his passions, or when his wit tickled his fancy.

It

It hath been confidently asserted, that Mr. Hume was stung to the heart with the poignancy of Dr. Beattie's ridicule, and that he retired smarting with the wounds which he had received from his antagonist. I suspect,—indeed, I more than suspect the truth of this assertion, I believe it to be entirely groundless: Its authority was never attested, and it would need something more than anonymous report to authenticate a story which bears every mark of improbability in the face of it. If Mr. Hume was chagrined, his mortification arose from the taste of the public, not from the strength of his opponent: He had held contention with a heavier arm, and in the consciousness of superior powers wished for a more important antagonist; but I have digressed too far from the principal object of this letter.

To return to Dr. Priestley.—I have been pretty conversant at my leisure hours with the controversy which this singular and enterprising writer hath drawn from the darkness of the schools, just to amuse the idly-learned for a while, till it goes to rest with the forgotten shades of Aquinas and Bradwardine. I have traced out,—I am afraid you will call me idly curious,—the progress of this gentleman's opinions, from modest doubt to a bold disbelief of the natural immortality of the human soul.

I find

I find the first free avowal of an inclination to adopt the scheme of materialism, in his animadversions on a passage in the learned Mr. Harris's *Hermes*. These animadversions were annexed to his reply to the SCOTCH DOCTORS, which did not make its appearance till the latter end of 1774.

In the first volume of his "Institutes of Rational and Revealed Religion," published in 1772, he treats, towards the conclusion, "of the future expectations of mankind," on the footing of those arguments which have been generally advanced by moral writers, to evince the high probability at least, if not absolute certainty of a state of rewards and punishments beyond the present; of the force of some of the arguments which have been commonly urged on this subject, he hesitates to pronounce a decisive opinion; but "upon the whole (says he, page 159) I cannot help thinking, that there is something in the arguments above-recited, which shew that a FUTURE life is very agreeable to the APPEARANCES of this; though I do not think them so striking as to have been sufficient of themselves to have suggested the first of idea of it."

I know not how to reconcile this declaration respecting the natural evidence of a future state,—or the
correspon-

correspondence that Dr. Priestley maintained there was between PRESENT APPEARANCES and FUTURE EVENTS; and a certain anecdote preserved in his “theological repository,” which shews that he had, at least in the private circle of his friends, totally disavowed all belief in the doctrine of immortality, on the bare evidence of reason and moral argument, several years before.

“THE THEOLOGICAL REPOSITORY,” was a periodical work of miscellaneous divinity, published in three volumes, under the immediate direction of Dr. Priestley; in the first and second volumes are two essays by that eccentric genius, JOHN BUNCLE, Esq; on the natural proofs of a future state. In these essays, reason is maintained to be sufficient of itself without any supernatural aid, to DEMONSTRATE this doctrine. In the former of these essays, (vol. I. p. 236) the author directly charges Dr. Priestley with professed scepticism in the light of nature; he informs us, that some little time before he penned his “literary memoir,” (as he calls it) “he passed an agreeable evening at Wakefield, with two dissenting ministers, viz. CLEMENS and VIGILIUS, these were the signatures by which Dr. Priestley and Mr. Turner of Wakefield, distinguished several of their ingenious
papers

papers in the repository. CLEMENS (i. e. Dr. Priestley) is so devoted to revelation (says Mr. Bunce) that he neglects the book of nature.—This grand original, implanted by the deity in his constitution, he sacrifices to the book of favour. I will not say that this is impiety against God or ingratitude to his Maker, because it appears quite otherwise to his conception. It is plain to him, to be sure, that all truth previous to revelation is needless. He thinks a first security unnecessary. But in this he hurts his heart's fond idol, Revelation.—His cry was—
 “ All-sufficient Revelation—the books—the books :
 “ —it is in them only we can learn the doctrines
 “ which accord with the attributes of the Deity :—
 “ by them only we can be screened from pernicious
 “ errors, and can be fully satisfied that immorta-
 “ lity and glory is to be the reward of those who
 “ faithfully obey the gospel. The book of nature
 “ is nothing. If that was all we had for a life
 “ everlasting, I should never think of a remove
 “ from the clods of the valley.”

This declaration surprized Mr. Bunce to such a degree, that the power of utterance was suspended ; and for a while (as he informs us) he could only, “ look up—and then—look down.”

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But recovering himself—though very gradually, from his astonishment—he broke silence—though very SOFTLY at first. However, in a short time he assumes a higher tone—begins to feel himself—talks big, like John Bunclé, Esq; and is POSITIVE—yes, he is “positive, that human reason is SUFFICIENT “ in matters of religion.” To prove so positive an assertion he appeals to Tully’s Offices :—but above all “ to the immortal works of the GOD-LIKE “ Plato.”

This PRIEST OF NATURE (for the preacher in Margaret-street hath only the secondary honour of coming after John Bunclé, Esq;) boasts, with all the self-sufficiency of another Whitefield, of the converts he hath made by the help of his infallible “ Guide to Spiritual Happiness and the Favour of “ God.” “ By reason, they were brought to “ know the true end of man.” And what more could Reason do? Why, Mr. Bunclé farther assures us, that, “ by reason they were brought to “ know the REASON of human life.” This Almighty Reason of Mr. Bunclé superseded the necessity of Divine Grace; and with it a man might be a perfect christian without christianity, for his rational “ converts acquired the whole christian temper,
“ and

“and were perfect in every divine qualification.” Can the Margaret-street preacher boast of his converts in such a high strain of panegyric? I suspect not.—But perhaps his ambition doth not point to such objects as Mr. Bunce fixed a high value on. What hath a philosopher to do with the heart—its CHRISTIAN temper and divine qualifications?” His object is the head. It is paying him no compliment to say, that his pupils are very pious souls. No. But if they are sensible and enlightened, how wise must the tutor be!

It may be thought that I have wantonly introduced a name that never was intended to shine in a metaphysical circle, with whatever brilliance it may be fitted to grace another. But those, who are ready to charge me with running out of my way for the Rev. David Williams, should be informed that he hath shewn himself to be a bit of a metaphysician, in his curious letter to Sir Geo. Saville, on “the Nature and Extent of Intellectual Liberty:” and having delivered his sentiments on the generation of thoughts, and the “formation of a moral mind,” he was led to touch, EN PASSANT, on the controversy between Priestley, Price, and Kenrick. His condescension to glance at such writers and their works

entitles him to some notice at least, in this slight sketch of the debate.

His deduction of mind from matter is original— if not in power, yet in form. “Thoughts and opinions (says he) which are designed to be of use to us in this world, originate from the senses: and are the produce of the body. They FORM, in time, A MORAL MIND; which, though the effect of matter, is itself impalpable and immaterial.”—Is this a SAVING concession, and introduced for the sake of being of BOTH sides of the question? Or, by its singularity—at least in appearance—doth he mean to shew, that he is NEITHER one thing nor the other?—“Thoughts are impalpable!” i. e. we cannot touch them with our fingers!—And what then? What is proved, or what disproved, by this profound remark?—Is not motion impalpable and immaterial? How far will either of those concessions, equally true and equally sagacious, bring us forward in the argument on the properties of matter and spirit? But after all, it is a point of the greatest indifference to Mr. Williams, as he takes care to inform us, “whether the issue be, that matter occupies the universe; or that it is spirit; or that it is neither matter nor spirit.”

I thought

I thought of dropping both these gentlemen here ; but it should be observed, that as Whitefield always took especial care to enhance the merit of his converting powers, by recording the woeful situation of his spiritual patients, Mr. Bunclé imitates him also in this notable part of his character. Mr. Bunclé's converts were reduced to the last stage of moral disease :—" they were as wild rakes as ever lived." But the most confirmed and inveterate distemper yielded to Mr. Bunclé's sovereign remedy ; for, like the advertising quack-doctor's, *PILLULA SALUTARIA*, for the scurvy, &c. &c. it " immediately penetrated " to the seat of the disorder, and dislodged the morbid matter." " But (says Mr. Bunclé) had I " given them only *TEXTS* for immortality, and laboured like a monk to make them orthodox, they " would have laughed on, and—been damned.— " *REASON* doth the work. *RATIO EST AUCTOR* " *OPERIS.*" Oh ! rare Reason !—and John Bunclé, Esquire !

In the third volume of the Repository, published in the year 1771, there is a paper signed *PACIFICUS*, and entitled " Observations on the evidence of a future state, from the light of nature." The author enters into a general examination of the *MORAL* arguments

guments for a future state, and attempts to prove, that without the aid of revelation they are too weak and indecisive to be depended on. He strongly insists on the necessity of man's being just such a creature as he is—of his being endowed with all his present powers and faculties, to fit him to support his station in THIS life, and to qualify him to discharge the essential duties of it, independent of a future. Man hath not a REDUNDANCY of powers, even on the supposition of his being only made for the present sphere of existence. “ Those powers (says Pacificus) which constitute man a subject of moral government, and distinguish him from mere animal beings, are but suitable to that state of existence in which he is here ; and are absolutely necessary to enable him to act that superior part on earth which Providence hath allotted him.” After examining the nature of man, and finding him in possession of no superfluous gift or faculty, he draws this conclusion, that a divine revelation was necessary to authenticate the great doctrine of a future state : and that our obligations to the gospel are enhanced from a consideration of the weakness of the human understanding, in investigating a truth which enters so deeply into our interests, and is the source of the divinest consolation to the virtuous.

The writer of this essay had the honour—but others will give it a less flattering name—of preceding Dr. Priestley, in publicly maintaining an argument which hath since been extended to a length that probably PACIFICUS little thought of: and hath involved in it disputes, which, if he be indeed a PEACEABLE man, he as little wished for.

It was not till the year 1774 that Dr. Priestley publicly avowed his disbelief of such an immaterial principle as the soul hath been generally supposed to be. In the “preliminary essays” to his edition of “Hartley’s Theory of the Human Mind,” published in 1775, he asserts without hesitation or reserve, that “man is not compounded of matter and spirit; “but totally and simply a system of material mechanism; and that there would be no hope of surviving the grave, if we were not assured of it by “the positive declarations of the holy scriptures.”

This bold position was received—just as the Doctor conjectured it would, and probably wished it might be received. One thing happened in consequence of it that was sufficient to irritate the meekest philosopher: for though the weakness of an opponent may excite contempt, yet the malignity of his design will justly provoke indignation.

What

What I refer to was an advertisement in several of the publick papers, announcing a reply in the London Review, by one JAMES SETON, to the obnoxious position in the Doctor's Essays. The advertisement, by a mutilated and unfair quotation, was artfully fabricated to leave the most injurious impression on the minds of the public; for it insinuated, and almost asserted, that Dr. Priestley had finished his theological career—commenced an infidel of the most profligate sect—and relinquished all belief in a future state. Nothing could be more false and invidious: and the forgers of this scandalous libel were publicly confronted and exposed, first in a letter addressed to Seton in several of the London papers, by a friend of Dr. Priestley's, and afterwards by the Doctor himself.

His more furious and relentless enemies indeed endeavoured to revive this ill impression, by the same scandalous method of presenting a mutilated paragraph that had been adopted by the advertiser of Seton's Remarks; and that virulent writer, Shebbeare, in all the native bitterness of his soul, traduced Dr. Priestley as an infidel, and almost an atheist! He absurdly appealed to a paragraph to make good his allegation; which, considered in its obvious and
connected

connected meaning, and fairly interpreted, disproves the charge. This NOTORIOUS writer aimed at merriment as well as invective: and punned, in a strain worthy of his wit, on what Dr. Priestley called "The SCHEME of Revelation." By SCHEME he meant SYSTEM, copy or delineation. But Shebbeare, with his own politics running in his head, would insist upon it, that "scheme meant BUBBLE." Shebbeare's province is abuse, but he must needs quit his sphere, and rush into one that ill-suited his talents. But he wished to revive the old sport, as far as his influence and abilities would carry him: and though "bonds and imprisonment" were not in his power, yet he was willing to make the most of what was left him; and had recourse "to cruel mockings," as the last refuge for spleen and ill-will.

But Shebbeare considered that there is such a thing as laughing DEFENSIVELY as well as offensively; and that as a man of spirit, and an ambidextrous man too, his credit called on him to make reprisals. Indeed he hath yet, even at this time of life, a long reckoning on the score of ridicule to be accounted for on his side, before matters can be bal-

lanced between him and the public—especially since the satyric touch of M'Greggor, hath

“TICKLED the tatter'd fragments of his ear.”

Let him laugh then. No one who hath a relish for ridicule would wish to deny him the privilege, especially when it is considered that his wit and his reasoning have an equal tendency to make his readers merry.

But, jesting apart, all the spite—for that is the best name both for his wit and his reasoning—of this envenomed old Jacobite, was levelled against Priestley's politics, not against his infidelity. Shebbeare would most heartily have forgiven the atheist; but he could not forgive the republican presbyterian: and, in the true spirit of that craft by which he gets his bread, he would have embraced the pupil of Bolingbroke. But “hard words and hanging”—for the friend of Price.

The first writer that entered into a regular and systematical examination of Dr. Priestley's hypothesis, was a Mr. JOSEPH BERINGTON. His “Letters on Materialism” were addressed to the Doctor: and by a pompous and flattering inscription he laid a tax on the CIVILITY of his antagonist, which he had the mortification to find was repaid with a very sparing hand;

hand: and, by complimenting that strength which he was going to contend with, he either expressed his fear, or acknowledged his presumption.

This writer, who certainly rates his metaphysical skill at a prodigious price, was perpetually the sport of the London Reviewers: and indeed I know no finer game that can be started in the literary chace, than a metaphysical animal that runs to earth; and, slumbering in obscurity, dreams of the PROFOUND. So much for Mr. Jos. Berington.—But I had like to have forgotten his “Immaterialism Delineated: or, A View of the First Principles of Things:”—by which you may see just as far into those first principles, as by Jacob Behmen’s “Rising Sun,” which reveals all the secrets of “the dark, light, eternal, and temporary world.” I had nearly forgotten this wonderful work, which, I am positive, deserves to be as much remembered as his Letter to Dr. Fordyce, in which he gives a view of the principles of popery, and demonstrates with his usual perspicuity, that it is not delusive in its nature and persecuting in its spirit, as some wrong-headed protestants have been weak enough to represent it, but, on the contrary, that it is the fairest copy—yea the very original of that “wisdom which cometh

“ down from above, which is first pure and then
 “ peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of
 “ good fruits, without partiality, and without hy-
 “ pocrisy.”

Hail holy Light! offspring of Heaven first-born!
 and hail, oh! Berington, for singing so melodiously
 to the praise and glory of it.

As I have consecrated thy metaphysics to the
 “ Rising Sun” of Jacob Behmen; I will consecrate
 thy theology to the “ Falling Star” of THE REVE-
 LATIONS.

DR. KENRICK addressed several letters to Dr. Priest-
 ley in the London Review, on the subject of the pe-
 netrability of matter. He was impatient to be no-
 ticed by a writer of Dr. Priestley’s distinguished
 name, and felt his neglect too pungently for his
 pride to conceal the mortification it had given him.
 The matter in debate between these two doctors was
 a mere metaphysical trifle. Dr. Priestley attributed
 the solidity of bodies to certain powers of attraction
 and repulsion:—Dr. Kenrick, to expansion and mo-
 tion. Both denied the impenetrability of matter, in
 the strict sense of that word. Both admitted that cer-
 tain physical powers, give them what name you
 please, answer all the purposes for which matter hath
 been

been generally considered as a solid and impenetrable substance. Both go on this principle—if matter is impenetrable, it cannot, according to the Newtonian hypothesis, be divisible *AD INFINITUM*. You must come to an indivisible monad at last—a certain portion of matter, without extension and without parts: of consequence the whole material universe is but a compound and aggregate of infinite myriads of these unextended atoms. I say *UNEXTENDED*—for so they must be in their original, simple, and unconnected state. Extension and division then can only be predicated of them in their combined and united state. In other words: two unextended monads become, by union, a certain portion of extended matter!

I much question whether Dr. Kenrick would have ransacked the disquisitions purposely with a view to cavil at some supposed inaccuracies in that work, if Dr. Priestley had not piqued his pride by some contemptuous expressions relating to *ANONYMOUS* and *PERIODICAL* publications. As the London Review was mentioned just before, Kenrick considered that work as included in a particular manner, in the reflection, and he was “feelingly alive” to the reputation of every thing in which he was concerned,

as author, editor, translator, or what not. Dr. Priestley declared, even in spite of Dr. Kenrick's hostile pretensions, that he could not consider him in the light of an adversary; and that the difference between them was so trifling, that nothing but Kenrick's importunity could have tempted him to a reply. Indeed it must be evident to every person that hath read the London Review, that its ingenious editor hath exerted all his talents, and displayed all his native shrewdness, in order to support and illustrate Dr. Priestley's general system. I speak indeed of his metaphysical, not of his theological system: for Kenrick is a mirror of orthodoxy, and having "sucked in irresistible grace with his mother's milk,"* he claims a sort of hereditary right in all its precious privileges and immunities.

A writer who called himself a CHRISTIAN addressed some letters to Dr. Hawkesworth, in consequence of some expressions in his preface to the Voyages round the World which favoured of fatalism. For ought I know to the contrary, this writer may be deserving of the character he hath assumed: but it doth not follow, that, because he can declaim like a preacher, he can argue like a philosopher; nor

* See the Appendix to the fourth volume of the London Review.

nor that because he is tolerably well versed in the EXOTERICS of the vulgar, he should know any thing at all of the ESOTERICS of the schools.

This author, who could not see that a general providence must include particulars, or be the result and sum total of all its distinct parts, attacked Dr. Hawkesworth before he understood him; and hath since repeated the same piece of folly, in replying to Dr. Priestley before he had studied his principles or comprehended his design.

This poor CHRISTIAN's imagination is distressed with most frightful ideas, when he contemplates on the pernicious, yea BLOODY tendency of Dr. Priestley's opinions. In his view they sanctify the most atrocious villainies. They encourage the libertine in seducing his neighbour's wife and his neighbour's daughter: and having described the scruples of the fair one, he supposes that nothing more is required to overcome them than to make her a convert to Dr. Priestley: for when the libertine sees the moment when tenderness begins to hold a struggle with fear, it may only be necessary to introduce Dr. Priestley with his disquisitions in his hands, and, to the comfort of the libertine, the contest will, in all probability, be soon at an end. In this critical moment
—for

—for our GOOD CHRISTIAN seems to be an EXPERIENCED MAN—he hath instructed the libertine in the art of making the name of Dr. Priestley the pander of seduction; and then pathetically concludes, “that
 “ if the lady unhappily should have any dependence
 “ on Dr. Priestley’s judgment must we not confess
 “ that her danger would be imminent !”—Who but this CHRISTIAN could have connected metaphysics and gallantry : Priestley and Ovid !

I called this writer a GOOD CHRISTIAN; but it is upon the charitable supposition of his being a very IGNORANT MAN. If he be not ignorant, I shall question his goodness : for any man of common understanding must have clearly discerned Dr. Priestley’s meaning in a certain obnoxious paragraph; and a christian of common goodness would not have wilfully misrepresented it, to double the odium of popular reproach. “ It is Dr. Priestley’s DECLAR-
 “ ED OPINION (says this writer) that his mind is no
 “ more in his body than it is in the moon.”—I give this writer his choice—a want of understanding or a want of truth. He hath here asserted a gross and palpable falsity. I leave it to him to accept of the only alternative that is in the power of Charity itself to offer him.

This

THIS DECLARED OPINION of Dr. Priestley respects not HIS OWN hypothesis (as this writer would make his readers believe) but solely respects those metaphysicians, who, by refining on spirit, deprive it of all possible RELATION to matter. For how can we conceive that a local relation should subsist between substances that have not one single property in common with each other? Are they united by a third? Of what nature and quality is this middle link between matter and spirit? Is it a compound of both? Or is it neither? These questions will return and be endless:—notwithstanding a much keener philosopher than the Christian hath, with infinite wit and humour, exposed the absurdity “of chopping thoughts into mince-meat:” and having “examined materialism,” and that too “philosophically,” he hath “asserted the immateriality of the soul;” yea moreover he hath “proved” it too “on philosophical principles”—as the title-page of his book assures us. Yes, Sir, the above questions will return, in spite of all Mr. WHITEHEAD’S philosophy:—yea, even in spite of his wit and humour too!

DR. HORSLEY was such an antagonist as Dr. Priestley was not ashamed to hold a debate with:

nor did he think it beneath his literary eminence to reply even to a SERMON, when it appeared to be chiefly levelled against his “Essay on Philosophical Necessity.”

Necessity and materialism are essential parts of the same system : and to adopt the one independent of the other would answer no end but what might have answered more easily and more effectually by uniting them in one view, and considering them as correspondent links of one great chain. Dr. Horsley rejected both the one and the other : and in a very sensible and liberal discourse, preached at St. Paul’s (April 17, 1778), maintained that QUALIFIED doctrine which hath been generally espoused by the Arminians ; and which, in order to avoid the extremes of Calvin and Socinius, would unite the freedom of the human will with the certainty of divine prescience ; and the accountableness of man with the agency of Providence. If these seeming opposites can be united ; or made clearly to appear so, by any mode of argument, it would save many vexatious disputes. We should no longer be troubled with trifling distinctions which have little meaning, or perplexing ones which are unintelligible.—But alas ! in attempting to reconcile those apparent contradictions,

tions, all these idle or intricate distinctions chiefly make their appearance: and Dr. Priestley still triumphs—at least in the uniformity and simplicity of his system. The opposite system is composed of heterogeneous parts, which ill accord together, and seem rather to destroy each other. The scheme of Arminius is vague and indeterminate in its objects, and is obliged to shift its arguments from side to side, according to the different calls of free-will and foreknowledge. Sometimes the Divine Being, retired within the temple of his holiness, sits more as a spectator than a director of human events. At other times he is obliged to interfere, to prevent that confusion which would otherwise ensue from the suspension of his agency. But it is such a cautious interference, that one would imagine, according to this hypothesis, that the Divine Being was more solicitous to keep clear of the imputation of tempting his creatures, than to have the sole government and direction of their conduct. To me this looks like a maiming of providence, nor do I know any objection that is brought against the opposite scheme, which doth not ultimately fall on this. At best, it only SAVES APPEARANCES; and I confess I see no medium between the doctrine of Epicurus, which

excludes the Deity from the immediate government of the world, and the doctrine of the Necessarians, which, on the authority of the scriptures, makes him ALL IN ALL.

There is something noble and exalted in the idea, that “God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” And on this, as well as on the contrary system, I perceive the indissoluble connection of the MEANS with the END. It was the purpose of God which connected them by fixed ties, and adjusted MORAL causes and effects with as much certainty as NATURAL ones. In a constitution so ordered and settled, vice must infallibly produce punishment, and virtue will not lose its reward: and hence we more clearly see the admirable propriety of the apostle’s allusion, when he assures us, that “what a man soweth, that he shall also reap.”

DR. PRICE chose the same side of the argument with Dr. Horsley—or nearly so—and both had one object in view in maintaining it: and that was, to vindicate the moral attributes of the Deity in constituting man an ACCOUNTABLE being, or in treating him, at least, AS SUCH; which neither of these learned and ingenious divines could conceive of, without considering free-will as a fundamental principle,

cept, and free agency as the result of it. This position was maintained by Dr. Price with his usual strength of reasoning: and I was sorry that a philosopher of his eminence should put such a slight on his understanding as to recur to his passions in an argument that could receive no possible assistance from them. Dr. Price should have left it to such tumid declaimers as the CHRISTIAN above mentioned, to talk of the bias that his PRIDE had laid on his mind, in adopting a system that flattered the dignity of man.—This language would become such a writer infinitely better than the author of the “Review of the Principles of Morals.”

Dr. Priestley had stript man of what his learned correspondent had ever been taught to regard as his capital perfection. To be reduced to an organized structure of matter and motion, divested of an immaterial and self-determining power, shocked all the ideas which the latter had ever maintained of the distinguishing characteristics of human nature: and his passions, but particularly his pride, as he acknowledgeth, joined issue with his understanding to reprobate this degrading view of it. An harangue formed on these principles might suit Dr. Colin Milne, and greatly edify a popular audience. But
Dr.

Dr. Price should have reflected on his own character: and considered too that he was not preaching, but reasoning on the coolest subject with the acutest logician of the age.

A sensible and genteel writer, who calls himself PHILALETHES RUSTICANS, joined the numerous opposers of Dr. Priestley: and in his dedication to the Doctor shrewdly glances at the panegyric with which the two friendly disputants mutually complimented one another. For, notwithstanding the HAUTEUR with which Dr. Priestley hath carried himself towards antagonists of considerable name, he hath his moments of complaisance, yea and of flattery too: and though he hath pleaded for—I was going to say—ACRIMONY, in conducting a debate, lest attention should grow languid, and the combatants be left to dose over their own blunted weapons, yet Dr. Price hath been so fortunate as to escape the sharpness of his anger, and the keener poignancy of his contempt. In the partial eye of friendship Dr. Price is one of the wisest of philosophers, though his philosophy is irrational; and the best of Christians, though his Christianity is absurd. The compliment is returned by Dr. Price “in full measure—pressed down, and running over:” and Dr. Priestley’s
moral

moral constitution is declared to be so vigorous, that he can “DRINK POISON and be THE BETTER FOR IT!”

Philalethes falls into a very great mistake when he represents Dr. Priestley as courting tameness in controversy. TAMENESS! he needed it not: and was the last man in the world to solicit it. As for the privilege of wit, for which Philalethes is an advocate, Dr. Priestley would have saved him the trouble of bringing his voucher from Horace. True wit carries its own testimonial with it: but good sense and decorum should always consider what subjects it will properly suit, and what rank it ought to hold in an argument. Wit is a delusive thing; and a man who is too forward to raise a laugh at the expence of others, should take care lest himself should become the subject of it.

With regard to the pre-existence of Christ, which is one object of this author's reflections on the doctrine of materialism, I cannot avoid remarking, that it is strongly affected by the hypothesis which considers man as an uniform system of matter. But tho' Arianism hath every thing to fear from it:—and Bishop Fowler's conjecture is entirely overthrown by it, yet the orthodox Trinitarians need be under no sort of apprehension from it: for the doctrine of the
trinity

trinity can be demonstrated with equal clearness, as well on this hypothesis as on any other.

I have not had the pleasure of reading DR. DUNCAN'S Remarks on the "Disquisitions." I most readily give them credit for ingenuity and politeness: and though it doth not follow that a good poet should be a profound metaphysician, yet I doubt not but Dr. Duncan reasons sensibly on the subject he hath chosen; and I expect to be pleased, if I should not be convinced, by the excellent author of the "Essay on Happiness."

This gentleman hath published, together with his Remarks on Dr. Priestley, a MS. of the late MR. ANDREW BAXTER, of Scotland, on the MORAL proof of a future state, independent of the doctrine of immateriality. The latter seems to have been the favourite topic of this truly good man; and his two volumes on that subject have been much read and admired. Dr. Warburton passed on them the highest encomiums: and many appealed to them as authorities of equal weight in metaphysics with the PRINCIPIA in philosophy.

Mr. Baxter's heart was so much set on this darling principle of immateriality, that he complained very bitterly of the bad tendency of the opposite doctrine,

doctrine, which compliments that * DEAD INERT THING called Matter with the power of thought and intelligence, under any form or modification whatever. This complaint was made in his last illness, and he seems happy in the thought of his soon getting rid of so grievous an incumbrance on the mind, and soaring into the immortal regions of pure spirit. All these complaints and hopes were expressed in a letter to the celebrated John Wilkes ;—who was a metaphysician, I find, about thirty or forty years ago :—but his attention hath been since so entirely divided between politics and the “ fruit-shop ” that it is no wonder the world hath forgotten his former character.

I cannot help observing to you, that though Mr. Baxter speaks so slightly of his own body, as an inert thing, yet he advises Mr. Wilkes to take great care of his, for the sake of his WIFE !

* * * * *

* A learned Divine of the last age speaks in the same contemptuous strain of the body : and calls it “ a vast, spongy, dull, earthly, lump and substance, without any life or spirit : but the soul (says he) is a contract, and strong and indivisible, divine and lively, essence and spirit, being that in the body that God is in the world, TOTA IN TOTO ; giving life, and motion, and vigour, to all its parts : MINIMUM MAXIMI MAJUS MAXIMO MINIMI.”—Excellent !—

JONES OF THE HEART, p. II.

E

—But

—But—Who is this “Son of Thunder” that presses
on the rear of Priestley’s antagonists,

Staring tremendous with a threat’ning eye,

Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry?

Oh! it is the mighty “VINDICATOR OF THE
“CHURCH OF ENGLAND.” It is the “Defender of
“the visible Church of Christ, as established by the
“legislative authority of this realm: in answer to
“all objections which have been offered by dissidents
“of every denomination.”—Let this Hero of the
Articles—this Terror of the DISSIDENTS, bring up
his forces and close in with the enemy. Let him
call for “a Halter” in aid of the Church; and talk
of pains and penalties, and DUNGEONS and state-
licencers, with as flippant a tongue and as unembar-
rassed a countenance as if he had but just awoke
after a sleep of a hundred years, and thought himself
by the side of Parker or L’Estrange—let him ad-
vance, and brandish his flaming sword o’er Priest-
ley’s devoted head. Alas! this dreadful champion,
who is ready to burst with the zeal of the church,
can do nothing but BRANDISH it!—for unless the
magistrate will direct the blow, this man of might
will spend his strength for nought “and so fight as
“one who beateth the air!” For this kind and
truly

truly Christian help our militant faint (as he cannot fight as he could wish) is reduced to the melancholy necessity of praying: and he particularly calls on the Archbishop of Canterbury to second his pious and benevolent request, that the weakness of the church may be strengthened by the power of the state, and the sword of the spirit assisted by the sword of the law.

As for this writer's metaphysics, they are perfectly correspondent with his divinity: and, together with his politics, they form a TRIO of correspondent attributes.

Spirit of Intolerance! which had'st long been
 "hears'd and quietly inhum'd; why hast thou
 "burst thy cearments? why revisit'st thou the
 "glimpses of the moon—making night hideous?"—
 Return to thy OWN PLACE:—to the gloomy bosom
 of him from whence thou issued'st—nor ever more
 let him "ope his ponderous jaws to cast thee out
 "again."

Thus, Sir, I have given you a slight historical sketch of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and his antagonists; and intermixed it with such remarks as naturally offered themselves, without being biased by the prejudices of either party. I shall

now endeavour to give you the sum of the whole controversy.

You will readily perceive, that the point in debate between this learned divine and his more sober and rational opponents, is NOT, Whether man is an accountable and immortal creature: but the true question is this, WHEREIN consists the accountability and immortality of man, and where are we to seek for the proof and evidence of it?

The ESSENTIAL part of this great doctrine is by no means affected by the question: nor indeed any part of it that in the least tends to influence the conduct of human life. The point that is questioned and controverted by Dr. Priestley, and which indeed hath been the only object of debate with those who have distinguished his meaning, is a mere matter of doubtful disputation, and is everlastingly embarrassed and perplexed with subtle refinements which arise from conjecture and terminate in uncertainty.

Dr. Priestley flatters himself, that by annihilating the SOLIDITY of matter, and reducing it to the powers of attraction and repulsion acting within concentric spheres, he hath overcome one capital objection to the hypothesis which supposes that matter may be endued with the principle of intelligence.

Mr.

Mr. Lock maintained, that there is nothing absurd or contradictory in the supposition. He conceived it very possible that a certain power of generating thought might be superadded to the other properties of matter: though he was not willing to grant that this HAD actually taken place—at least in the human system. But in granting its possibility, or denying its absurdity, he hath drawn on himself very severe reflections from the bigots to immaterialism. And on the other hand, his concession hath been joyfully caught at and industriously improved by the abettors of the opposite system. His name gave it great weight: and notwithstanding authority hath long been discarded, (though Lord Monboddø hath with much learning, and little modesty, attempted to revive all its tyranny in the name of the stagyrite) yet writers on metaphysics, of almost every class, have been ambitious to adduce his testimony, in confirmation of their principles.

Granting that the power of thinking MAY be superadded to the other properties of matter, prepared the way for a supposition that such a power HATH actually been communicated to some organized systems. Many have not been backward to grant the truth of this hypothesis, when limited to brutes:

but

but their partiality to their own species, and their exalted ideas of the noble and distinguishing privileges of that almost angelic being, Man, have effectually hindered them from carrying their argument to the natural extent of its consequences. In their idea, brutes are wholly material, yet man must in some respects be immaterial: though the conclusions from what they call First Principles—i. e. Propositions taken for granted, are as applicable to the latter as to the former. Grant it possible, that the lowest degree of intelligence may be the effect of an organized system of matter, and the acute metaphysician will find little difficulty in proving, that the highest exertions of genius, and the most enlarged stretch of understanding, may possibly be the result of a material structure. This may be adapted to receive impressions from the external world—to arrange and combine them—to analyze and review them—and from this operation, depending entirely on the nature and disposition of that structure, to produce all that the world is astonished at in a Newton, or charmed with in a Shakspeare.

Divines and metaphysicians have much tormented one another about the seat of ideas and perceptions. Where—where are they lodged? In the pure abstracted

stracted mind? Materialists appeal to physical observations and experiments to disprove the last supposition. They shrewdly ask—"When the spirit departs from the body, WHAT doth it carry with it? a bare CAPACITY of receiving new notices in a new state of existence? or is it impressed with old ones received by the organs of sense in the present? A blow on the head, a concussion of the brain, or some violent disorder that hath occasioned a kind of revolution in the whole system, hath frequently destroyed all the stores of knowledge which the mind had treasured up by a long and laboured course of study: and to recover them it hath been obliged to begin anew with the very elements of science, and pursue by a gradual process what it had lost almost of a sudden. Now the materialist will naturally ask—If the original stock of ideas was absolutely LOST? If not lost, WHERE was it secreted? Was it folded up in some invisible retreat of the mind; and if not recovered by the same means by which it was first acquired, would the mind, freed from the dull pressure of flesh and blood, have produced it by some spontaneous effort of ITS OWN, independent of all corporeal or mechanical assistance? If this should be too absurd a supposition for even the warmest votary of
im-

immaterialism to grant, his opponent will ask him, Of what singular benefit immortality would be to a human being, that was divested of a consciousness of identity? And how, says he, shall I know that I am the self-same person in a future state that I was in the present, without memory and recollection? And what is memory but the reviewing of certain ideas communicated to me by the organs of sense? The destruction of memory (which is generally allowed to reside in the brain and to be dependent on its state) would be to all intents and purposes the same, in its effects and consequences, as an annihilation of being to any individual in the universe.— A materialist would reject, as a position without proof, the common hold to which gentlemen of the opposite side of the argument are generally obliged to have recourse, when pushed with spirit by the preceding questions, viz. that the material organs are nothing more than UNCONSCIOUS VEHICLES of intelligence. But this is the very point in debate, if lifted to the bottom: and all the difficulties which are adduced in the former questions, equally return to affect the present assertion.

But to return, for it is not my business to argue, but to state arguments; I cannot avoid confessing to
 you,

you, that I do not imagine that the hypothesis of Boscovich, on the penetrability of matter, on which Dr. Priestley lays so much stress, will carry the materialist very far in support of his speculations. I can as well conceive of an impenetrable substance endued with a power of perception as a penetrable one. Attraction and repulsion, considered MERELY AS SUCH, are as different from intelligence, as the most gross and inert particle of matter. Boscovich's hypothesis will not essentially assist the materialist, if he attempts to prove from it the incorruptibility of matter; for in the same sense matter was always supposed to be incorruptible; Sir Isaac Newton, whose conjectures have been respected like demonstrations, thought it probable that the ultimate particles of which bodies were composed were so hard, that "no ordinary power could divide what God himself made ONE in the first creation;" and he concludes, "that the changes in corporeal things are to be placed only in the various separations and new associations and motions of these PERMANENT PARTICLES." Newton's Optics, p. 375.

Dr. Priestley, however, was sufficiently sensible of the uncertainty of the ground to which this reasoning would lead him, and he confidently rejected

it, because he had a "more sure and certain hope" of a future state on the authority of the scriptures. He saw that a resurrection was by no means inconsistent with those principles of philosophy, but he disdained to take hold of the reed when the oak was within his reach. He professeth in the most unequivocal language, his thorough belief of a future state ON CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. You may ask me, what those principles are? The answer is by no means difficult. He is persuaded that the being who created man at first, and supports him through life in the exercise of those powers which are essential to his state as a moral and intelligent agent, can restore and invigorate his frame after death, and carry on his existence in a future state with all that CONSCIOUSNESS OF IDENTITY which will be necessary to the conferring of rewards and infliction of punishment. Here, you see, the matter is referred to the omnipotence of the Deity. He who bestowed life can continue it in any form, or extend it to any duration. But the question is, WILL he prolong the existence of man beyond the period of it on earth? Yes, he will.—But how are we certain of it? By the evidence—the positive, unequivocal evidence of divine revelation. On this ROCK Dr. Priestley professeth

feffeth—and I believe with great sincerity, notwithstanding the malignant insinuation of a certain adversary, who measured the consciences of others by his own—Yes, Sir, on the secure foundation of the everlasting gospel he professeth to build his hopes. He is persuaded that the declarations of holy writ respecting a final resurrection proceeded from the God of Truth, who hath power to effect what his goodness hath revealed.

In placing the argument entirely on this footing, Dr. Priestley might plead some respectable authorities—if authorities were needed to give it either force or credit. The venerable and sagacious SHERLOCK, though he acknowledges that there was ORIGINALLY implanted in man some general, though indistinct sense of a future state, yet always speaks either with suspicion or with contempt of the reasons which philosophy hath invented under the pretence of establishing the doctrine on the footing of nature, independent of revelation. He considered theologians as very idly employed, when they grafted the speculations of metaphysics on the authoritative declarations of the scriptures. It was like having recourse to a taper, to add to the light of the sun at noon-day. I will transcribe his own words: “Go

“ to the villages, and tell the ploughmen, that if
 “ they sin, yet their bodies shall sleep in peace; no
 “ material, no sensible fire shall ever reach them:
 “ but there is SOMETHING within them, purely in-
 “ tellectual, which shall suffer to eternity.” You
 will hardly find that they have enough of the intel-
 lectual to comprehend your meaning. Now natural
 religion is founded on the sense of nature, that is,
 upon the common apprehensions of mankind: and
 therefore, abstracted, metaphysical notions, beat out
 upon the anvil of the schools, can never support na-
 tural religion, nor make any part of it.

“ In THIS point then Nature seems to be lame,
 and not able to SUPPORT the hopes of immortality
 which she gives to all her children. The expectation
 of the vulgar, that they shall live again and be the
 same flesh and blood which now they are, is justifi-
 able on no principles of reason or nature. What is
 there in the whole compass of beings which yields a
 similitude of dust and ashes rising up again in regu-
 lar bodies and to perpetual immortality? On the
 OTHER side, that the intellectual soul should be the
 whole man, how justifiable soever it may be in other
 respects, yet 'tis NOT the common sense of nature,
 and therefore most certainly no part of natural reli-
 gion.”

gion." In the conclusion of this excellent discourse the ingenious and worthy prelate refers the hope of a resurrection to the will and power of the Creator. His POWER indeed we may learn from nature: but his will, in this point, can only be ascertained from revelation. " THIS (says the bishop) hath restored religion, which had hardly one sound foot to stand on, and made our faith and our reason consistent, which were before at too great distance. Nature indeed taught us to hope for immortality, but it was IN SPITE OF SENSE AND EXPERIENCE, till the great Prince of our peace appeared, who brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

The learned Dodwell carried his doubts of the natural evidence of a future state still farther: and was permitted, without incurring the invidious charge of scepticism, to write in direct opposition to it. Why should Dr. Priestley be denied the same liberty? Their objects indeed are different: but the ground of their arguments is the same. Mr. Dodwell wished to pay an extraordinary compliment to the virtue of baptism administered by the hands of a QUALIFIED priest: Dr. Priestley, though he may admit the metaphysical premises of this learned writer, yet would be very averse to his theological conclusions.

He

He writes (he would tell you) not to countenance the pride of a non-juring episcopacy, but to support the prerogatives of the gospel.

Dr. LAW, the present Bishop of Carlisle, hath said every thing which the profoundest penetration could suggest, and the deepest researches into the holy scriptures could illustrate, in order to defend the main principle on which the capital hinge of this controversy turns.

Amongst the Dissenters, Dr. TAYLOR of Norwich and Mr. HALLET of Exeter have thrown their learning into the same scale:—the one in a letter, published by the Bishop of Carlisle, at the conclusion of his very celebrated work on the doctrine of a separate state:—the other in a most ingenious dissertation on the natural evidence of immortality, published with his other learned and curious miscellanies.

I have produced these names (to which I might add many more) to convince you that Dr. Priestley stands not single in the argument. He may have varied the form of it: but the original ground was occupied before him: and that too by men, who were zealously concerned to support the interest of Christianity; and thought—how far their fancies in this respect might impose on their judgments, it would

would be rash to determine—but at least they thought they were discharging a debt of duty and gratitude by maintaining, that “BECAUSE Christ liveth we shall live also.”

I grant it is not easy for us at present to determine how far the natural light of reason, independent of divine revelation, might carry us in the investigation of these important points. Accustomed as we have always been to certainty in them, we are under no necessity of bewildering ourselves in the intricate labyrinths of metaphysical speculations. The sun hath burst from the clouds and fully enlightened us: so that in examining our own minds, we cannot easily distinguish between the natural dictates of reason and those sublime sentiments which we draw from a higher and purer source of intelligence, and by early culture and education are so instilled into the mind as to appear almost inseparable from its very nature. As then the mind must necessarily be under the strong influence of preconceived opinions, it cannot easily trace those arguments which reason alone would have dictated, or distinguish the sentiments which would have arisen from intuition and natural reflection from those which education hath suggested and enforced.

In an enquiry of this nature we should proceed with great caution, and admit nothing as a reason, the source of which is not evident to any one whose common sense leads him to reflect with care and discernment.

We observe then a great variety in the abilities of different men. We observe the same variety take place in the brutal world. In many circumstances we see brutes excel mankind in sagacity. In some circumstances, and amongst some animals, we discern not only instinctive sagacity, but a degree of reason and reflection improved, as in the human breast, by tuition and experience. If these reflections occur to any one unenlightened by revelation, he will most probably conclude, that both men and brutes possess a principle, though not equally improved nor equally improvable, yet of the same general quality. He sees that this principle is most intimately connected with life. He sees its existence ONLY as it is connected with organized parts: and will have little reason to conclude that it will survive the dissolution of those parts, or that it can exist independent of its original organization, and preserve its IDENTITY and encrease its powers as well without it as it did with it. Such a natural enquirer will

will observe, that nothing can be known of the nature and properties of the soul but from its effects; and these effects are to be traced up to corporeal sensations; for what are called INTERNAL senses are nothing but the result of organical impressions; and the most abstract ideas of the mind may be all traced up to the same source. They are nothing but the combination of simple preceptions, and owe their existence to the organs of sense, exercised on the material world. If from these lights he reasons with coolness and precision, he can only conclude that life is a certain disposition or modification of matter; but that it is by no means clear in WHAT that modification consists; for we have no conception of any principle that can act separately from it, and therefore cannot arrive to any conclusions relating to its future existence.

The principle of self-preservation, so essential to the ends of our present existence, will of itself account for our wishes to have life extended beyond the common period of existence on earth. And if a person reflects on the general mortality of the human species—if he hath formed pleasing connections in life; and particularly if he is lamenting the death of some endeared friend, he will readily carry his views to a future state, if he hath any apprehension of such a state. The desire of renewing the pleasures

of social intercourse will strongly prepossess his mind in favour of it; and his affections will make him wish for what his reason would scarcely permit him to hope. A strong persuasion arising merely from passion and desire, may be mistaken for a more rational principle; and that which owed its foundation to self-love may be supposed to have its seat in the most deliberate judgment, and be the settled dictate of the best grounded conviction.

But if a man, instead of indulging himself in reflections which arise from his passions, reasons with coolness, he will find cause to suspect the truth of his fond and flattering conclusions. He will see that the object of his attachment was the body, as animated by an intelligent principle. Both may be equally subject to dissolution; or at least be so much changed as to retain little of their forms, and less of their original connections, habits, and principles; so that if they really exist in a future life it may be only as every other portion of material substance may exist:—for there is SOMETHING in matter that is unperishable, and can only be annihilated by the power which created it.

If this mere student of nature should attend his beloved friend in the last moments, and endeavour to smooth the pillow of death by these tender offices which friendship dictates, his doubts will be strengthened,

strengthened, and he will with mingled affection and respect fix his eyes on that object whose every look and word seem to speak an eternal farewell.

Let us attend as naturalists the last moments of one of our fellow-motals, and collect from our observation made at that awful period, what is the probability of the soul's surviving the body after a separation hath taken place. The first attack of sickness frequently debilitates its powers. The memory fails. The powers of discernment are destroyed. Manly resolution sinks into abject timidity; and the quickest perceptions are lost in absolute indifference. The eyes are vacant and listless. The words interrupted by incapacity, or scattered by delirium. The disease increases, and every faculty sinks with the body. Tho' indeed the principle of intelligence seems at times to rouse with renewed vigour, and display marks of the quickest discernment; tho' the pride of philosophy might be ready to think that the light which sometimes breaks in on the departing spirit with peculiar radiance is but the distant glance of an eternal day:—the “effulgence of the bright essence increate,” and communicated to the soul as to some congenial principle to inspire it with sentiments and anticipations worthy its origin, and preparatory to its end;—as if that end were incomplete in the present contracted sphere of existence

tence, and it required immortality to expand the involved powers of the soul, and reveal those high and distinguishing attributes of man which assimilate him to divinity itself.

“Men would be angels ; angels would be gods.”

Those surprising effects of the mind which are sometimes observed to take place towards the close of life, are not more extraordinary than those exertions of the animal functions which are frequently observed at the same crisis. The struggles of the dying have exhibited strength that greatly surpassed the power of health ; and both body and mind sink the faster for these exertions. The one falls into a total inactivity, and in the eye of nature the other shares the same fate.

But where death drops its awful curtain on the drama of life ; and to human view the great actor in it is buried in darkness for ever ; there the gospel sheds the rays of lively hope, and unfolds the prospects of a blessed immortality.

The author of the “ Letters on Materialism,” confesseth that he hath no doubt of Dr. Priestley’s THEOLOGICAL belief of a future state ;” that is, his belief of it, AS a christian ; or in other words, BECAUSE he is a christian. Then why this vehement outcry ? Why should christians be angry with a man because he believes the doctrine of immortality,
only

only on the sure footing of a divine and express revelation? Let us leave it to the Deists to discover it in the best manner they are able, by the tedious and uncertain investigations of physical powers and metaphysical essences—and that equivocal SOMETHING which soars above all distinction, and is only introduced for convenience-sake to unite the extremes of both. Christians are by no means interested in the event of such obscure debates as these; because, let the issue of them be what it will—let matter or spirit get the better of the argument—a man who believes the scriptures is under no necessity of looking any further for the proof of the doctrine. For to ask one plain question, what have the numerous writers in defence of divine revelation been all this while employed about, if they ARE yet under a necessity of proving the doctrine of a future state independently of it?

The evidences of the truth of christianity and the natural evidences of a future state, proceed on different grounds, and rest their support on very different proofs. The former are built on positive, determinate, historical facts, about which the SENSES of capable and disinterested judges were immediately and explicitly concerned. But the mere natural evidence of a future state can boast of no support that bears any resemblance to human facts or events that
are

are subjected to the cognizance of the senses. On the footing of revelation only do we see a future state realized or reduced to a matter of fact. And thus the Apostles argues, "If Christ be not risen ye are yet in your Sins, and those also who have fallen asleep in Jesus are perished."—"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

The certain revelation of a future state seems to be the ultimate object of the christian religion in general: and in particular of the death and resurrection of our Saviour. Whatever he might have declared or transacted while living, and how warmly soever he might have appeared to have been interested in the success of his doctrines, yet he could not have given satisfactory proof even of HIS OWN belief of a future and immortal state, unless he had actually died in the full expectation of it. And after all, it would have wanted the certainty of a matter of fact TO US if he had not fulfilled ^{his} own prediction by rising from the dead. His death was an evidence of HIS OWN firm persuasion of the truths which he preached; his resurrection confirmed them AS TRUTHS TO US; he was convinced of them and therefore died; he rose from the grave that we might believe. Hence we see the reason and propriety of the Apostle's triumph: It is Christ that died: yea rather that is risen again:" *q. d.* "We glory in his death as the
great

great sacrifice of the world; but we raise our songs to a greater height when we contemplate on his resurrection. This attested the efficacy of his death and gave the cross all its merit: this dispels the horrors of the grave and brings life and immortality to light."

An Enthusiast might die with exultation in the belief of the most extravagant follies; and the pride of an impostor might affect tranquility even in the struggles of death. But the grave would bring the raptures of the one and shroud the ostentation of the other. But though Jesus died he rose again; in this there could be no deception: to effect this, was beyond the fancies of the enthusiast; beyond the artifices of the impostor. He who gave death its power, could alone defeat its triumphs. He who "was delivered for our offences was raised again for our justification."

Then farewell the obscure speculation of metaphysics. They embarrass me no more. The mere philosopher may indulge them if he pleaseth; and if he can gain any amusement or any satisfaction from them I envy him not. He purchaseth it at a rate too dear for me; and placeth his hopes on what I should regard as the most insecure foundation.

But do not think me the enemy of science because I consider it as ill applied in the investigation of a
subject

subject so much beyond its reach. Let it operate in its own sphere, and by a patient research into those natural objects which fall more immediately under the scrutiny of the senses, enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge. I hail her progress, and wish I could add a laurel to her brow. But let her not presume to trespass on the hallowed enclosures of heaven's own—immediate messenger. Her feeble taper may light the curious philosophic eye thro' nature's walks. But it is the full unclouded sun of the everlasting gospel that can alone with safety guide the doubting mind of man thro' the paths of religion to the world of immortality.

The dove sent from the ark of reason and philosophy wanders o'er a boundless expanse—a dreary waste of unfathomable waters. Fatigued with its fruitless excursions it returns:—but brings no olive branch to ME. Thanks be to the immortal redeemer of the world, I receive this pledge of peace from a higher region. I press it to my trembling heart: and methinks it gains fresh verdure while I bedew it with the mingled tears of gratitude and penitence.

NEC TROS NEC TYRIUS.

F I N I S.