

Thoughts on nature and religion. Or, an apology for the right of private judgment / maintained by Michael Servetus [i.e. P. Blair] M.D. in his answer to John Calvin. [Anon].

Contributors

Blair, Patrick, M.D., of Cork, active 1738-1780.
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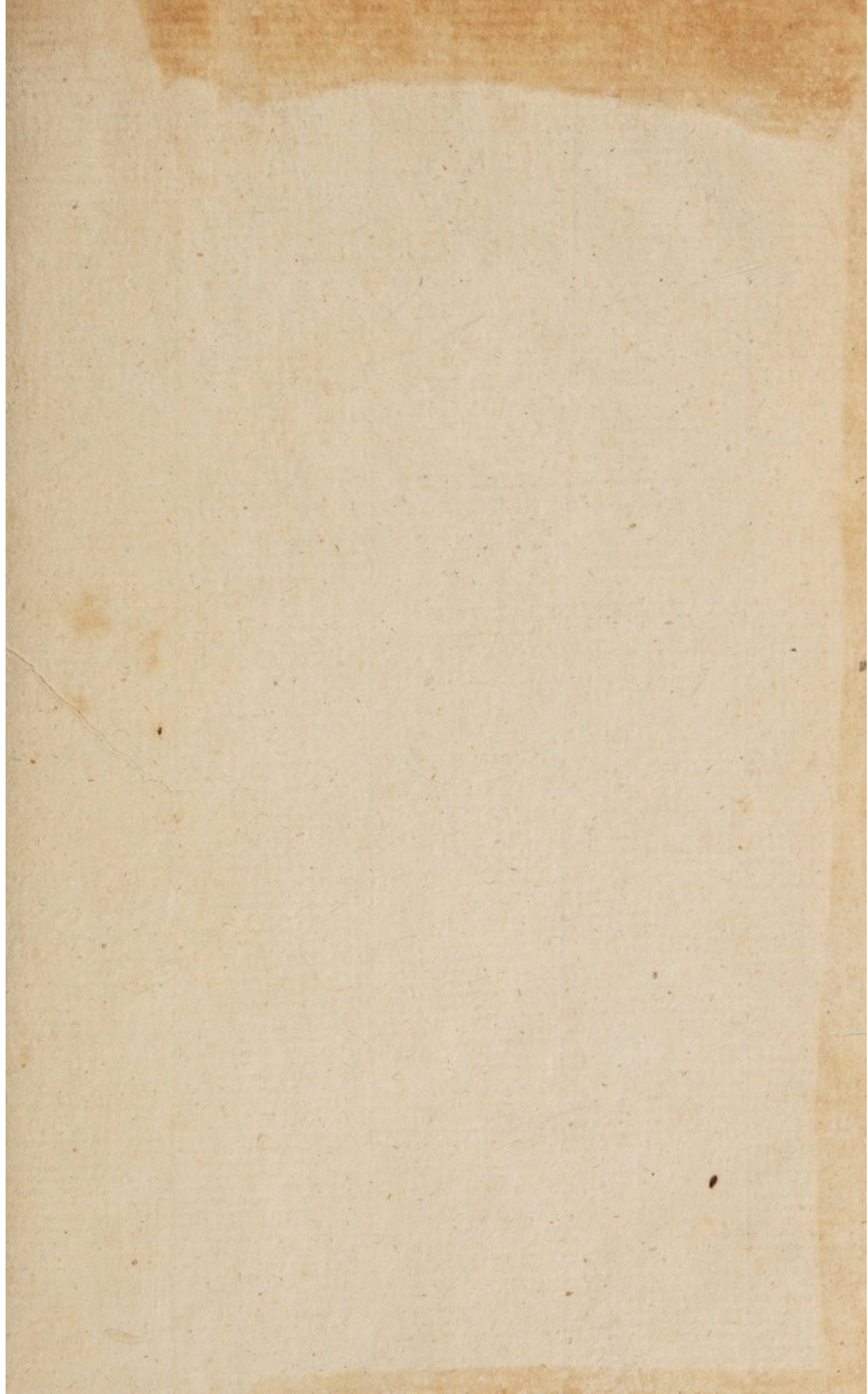



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THOUGHTS

ON

Nature and Religion.

BY

JOHN O. L. S. C. I.

AND THE RIGHT OF

Private Judgment,

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

NEW YORK:

JOHN CALVERT

THOUGHTS

ON

Nature and Religion.

OF

A

FOR THE RIGHT OF

Private Judgment.

MATTHEW

BY MICHAEL BERRYMAN M.D.

IN HIS ANSWER TO

JOHN CALWILL.

This I conclude, that after the way which they call
Hercules, to worship the God of my Fathers,
believing all things which are written in the Law,
and the Prophets: and that he has shown to me
that there shall be a Redeemer of the Jewish
people, of the just and unjust. And therefore I
exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void
of offence, towards God and towards Man.
Acts, Chap. xxi. v. 24, 25.

It is my duty to hope, that such a design
will be successful, and that the
Lord will be with me.

Printed in London

Printed by R. Baskin & Co. in the Strand

THOUGHTS
ON

Nature and Religion.

OR, AN
APOLOGY

FOR THE RIGHT OF
Private Judgment,

MAINTAINED.

By MICHAEL SERVETUS, M. D.

IN HIS ANSWER TO
JOHN CALVIN.

This I confess, that after the way which they call
Herefy, so worship I the GOD of my Fathers ;
believing all things which are written in the Law,
and the Prophets : And have hope towards God,
that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead,
both of the Just and Unjust. And herein do I
exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void
of offence, towards God and towards Man.

ACTS, Chap. xxiv. v. 14, 15, 16.

Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines,
Quos ultra, citraque, nequit consistere rectum.

HOR. Satir. lib. 1.

Virtute Tutus.

Printed by PHINEAS BAGNELL and COMPANY.

1774.

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Nature and Religion.

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AN P O O L G O Y

FOR THE RIGHT OF

Private Judgment

THE END

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THE INTRODUCTION.

WERE one to consider the various sects and opinions, which have sprung up at different times in the world, and have divided mankind into parties; and reflect with what bigotted zeal, each adheres to the system it has embraced, so as to look on others, as men to be either despised for their ignorance, or persecuted as enemies to truth; it must raise in his mind, a very disagreeable idea of human understanding. For as each party look on their own belief as the standard of truth, so do they look on all who differ from them to be wrong. To assign a cause for this selfish uncharitable way of condemning others, one is almost tempted to imagine, that conception, in different people, is not conveyed to the mind thro' the same channel, but that the ideas of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, moral and immoral, do not present themselves in the same light to all men; or that there must be some jarring in the first principles of the human understanding: for if these first principles were the same in all men, it is difficult to comprehend how such different conclusions could be drawn from them. I can only account for this, by supposing the mind to be as liable to be led astray, and as capable to be enslaved, as the body is. When the body is enslaved, an appeal to the mind makes it sensible of its fetters; and altho' it knows its condition, it is still obliged to obey: but when the

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mind is enslaved, it has no higher power to appeal to. Ignorant of its privileges, it is satisfied with its subjection, and thinks it its duty to acquiesce. Certainly all men enjoy by nature an equal liberty of thinking and determining for themselves; and if left alone until their judgments were ripe enough, they would mostly agree in sentiment. But before they attain to that age, education hath generally so byas'd their judgment, in favour of those opinions in which they have been brought up, that it becomes a slave to it's prejudice. Men implicitly rely on the truth of those tenets, which they have already embraced; they become convinced without enquiry, and being accustomed only to hear what may be said in support of the opinion of their own sect, they will not allow themselves patience to examine what may be said against it; and if any arguments should be proposed, which they cannot properly answer, prejudice will still hinder them from acknowledging their error, and for want of argument, they become angry, and have recourse to scolding and defamation, in place of reasoning; and as they cannot confute their opponents from reason, they endeavour to silence them, by throwing reflections on their private characters, and then telling the world, that such men as they have painted, must be wrong in whatever they alledge as truth. I have observed this to be the constant practice of those who persist in defence of tenets, which reason cannot support.

It is not only the privilege, but the duty of a Man, (who would judge impartially) to throw all prejudice aside. He should first examine with care, and then determine with calmness, according to the dictates of his reason; and altho' custom, passion or prejudice are apt to byas his judgment, in favour of what he would chuse should be right, yet he may be assured, that whatever is imposed on his understanding, which his
con-

conscience and reason cannot firmly support, is an act of injustice to his judgment. But if he impartially establishes his belief on the best foundation his reason can inform him of, altho' he may mistake in his conclusions, he is to be excused; he was open to conviction, and hath framed his belief agreeably to those principles, which were given by the Almighty to direct him; he hath done his duty: For as St. Paul tells us, *Every Man should be convinced in his own mind. Why dost thou judge thy Brother?* and (St. James) *there is one law giver who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another Man?*

Learning is the improvement of knowledge by comparing ideas, and from thence deducing conclusions which enlarge the understanding. Where there is no liberty allowed for the mind to examine, there can be no improvement in knowledge. Under a tyrannical government, he dares neither tell his doubts, nor even think with freedom, who is to suffer for entertaining thoughts contrary to his master's orders; who, instead of taking the trouble to inform and convince his understanding, would take the shorter method to convert him; he would punish him for disobedience. In whatever country a Man is allowed full liberty in his search after truth, there knowledge will improve, by a free enquiry, into learning: But where this liberty is denied, the mind will sink into ignorance and superstition; for as learning is the child of liberty, so is superstition that of slavery; and the less the mind is informed, the more tenacious it is of its opinions. It is the happiness of our government, that liberty is granted to every Man to improve his knowledge by a free examination; he may communicate every thought, or propose any doubt in publick, which does not interfere with the moral law, or good of society: And notwithstanding the opprobrious name of libertine or freethinker, bestow-

ed, indiscriminately by the Clergy, on all those who presume to take reason for their guide; I shall examine what I am to believe, conformable to the laws of nature, and that liberty recommended by the Christian Religion, under the indulgence which the law of the land affords me.

C H A P T E R I.

A SENSE of what is good and evil distinguishes the human from the brute creation. It is that rule imprinted on the human mind, by which we are directed to conform to certain laws, of which brutes have no conception. To speak truth, to do justice, to love mercy and shew benevolence to our fellow creatures, is what every man knows to be his duty and that to act contrary to these, must be criminal. This is an universal law; and, if we examine into the causes of the difference of opinions which prevail in the world, we shall find, that they do not arise from a denial of the law, but from a mistake in the proper sense of it; as that, which may appear agreeable to justice and mercy to the mind of one man, may, through prejudice or misinformation, appear in a different light to another. It often happens that our passions hurry us on to transgress the law, notwithstanding we acknowledge the justice of it. When Cain killed Abel, he knew he had done wrong, and endeavoured to evade a confession: his brother's sacrifice was more acceptable than his; he was provoked at this: he envied him, and envy made him kill him. Ignorance of his duty he did not alledge; for God said to him, *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? but if thou doest not well, sinnest thou at thy door.* He is here supposed perfectly ac-

quainted with the duty required and expected of him ; but because he did not act up to it, his sacrifice was not accepted, and sin lay at his door.

All animals (except in the case of parents) enjoy by nature the same independent liberty. It is as absurd to imagine one man has a natural right over another, as to suppose one horse has a natural right over another. If I see a dog commit an act of violence, I excuse him ; he wants that natural law of restraint on the mind, conscience, which orders him to abstain from violence ; therefore his committing violence is no crime in him : but if the want of this law, only, makes it no crime, it is to be supposed, were he under the dominion of this law, this act of violence would be criminal. Men are under the dominion of this law, and are therefore criminal when they transgress it.

I consider man as an intermediate being, between the angel and the brute, whose mind is endued with the dispositions of both : and these clash one with the other. The angelic, (or what is called by Moses, the likeness of God, and by Philosophers, right reason,) is that sense of duty, which nature hath stamped on the human mind, and which a man cannot obliterate or divest himself of ; it is always present with him ; it is that inward law, which his conscience tells him, God requires he should obey. The brutal part is that inclination, which disposes him to gratify every desire, which his appetites may excite. These two opposite dispositions create that war in the mind, which St. Paul speaks of, when he says, *I find that when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law of God, after the inward man ; but I find another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.*" and again, " *If we live after the flesh we shall die, but if, through the*
spirit,

spirit, we conquer the desires of the body, we shall live. To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace; for the carnal mind is at enmity with God; it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.

The Almighty in placing man in this middle state between the angel and the brute, and endowing his mind with the dispositions of both, refers him to his own behaviour in life, to entitle him either to reward or punishment hereafter: his behaviour in life is his trial, which must determine what his future state will be: *If he does well, he shall be rewarded; if he does evil, sin will lye at his door.* Absolute obedience to the divine will, or an entire neglect of it, by indulging every passion, are the two extremes between which every man doth act; and according as he approaches nearer to the one or the other, he becomes more or less virtuous or vicious. I believe the Almighty being is endued with mercy, as well as justice, and will have compassion in proportion to our infirmities: this is our hope. If our minds were only endowed with the angelic part, we could have no virtue; for where there is no temptation to break a law, there can be no merit in obeying it. Were our minds endowed only with the brutal part, we could have no vice; for where there is no law to inform our minds, there can be no transgression through disobedience: our being endowed with both makes our trial. Should a man, subject to the temptations of human frailty, so entirely conquer them, as to act agreeably only to the angelic part of his mind, he would be, in merit, above an angel: as he who resists temptations has more merit from obedience, than he who obeys, having no temptation to disobey: of this class, we have no example but one, viz. Jesus Christ. If a man acts only agreeably to the brutal part of his mind, he is below the brute, who, be-

cause he has no sense of moral obligations, has therefore no law to restrain him ; of such we see many examples. If we enquire into the causes, which tempt men to this defection, we shall find them to proceed, either from their passions, from the violence of others, or from prejudice. As to the first, when our passions, whether lust, envy, hatred, revenge, covetousness, intemperance, &c. present themselves to the mind, in too strong a light, to give time for our reason to examine, or our virtue to resist, we search after excuses for our actions ; we flatter ourselves with the thought, that God would not have endowed us with passions, and at the same time have forbid the gratification of them. We will not allow, that our being endowed with them, is only to try our virtue : we argue, that as these passions are natural, so whatever nature directs, should be obeyed. This indeed is a proper argument for brutes to use, who have no conscious rule of duty to curb their wills ; but cannot be used by men, who acknowledge an inward sense of duty, to restrain their appetites, by truth and justice.

We often observe, that men will indulge themselves in some particular vices, while they hold others in abhorrence ; and will exclaim against those who indulge passions, which their own dispositions do not tempt them to gratify. The crime in both is equal. Adultery, revenge, and oppression are as criminal as murder, theft, or perjury. The law is equally obligatory in any one part as in another ; and in the whole as in any one part. There are some men so abandoned as to disregard the whole law ; they indulge every desire, which their appetites present to their minds. They believe in no future state, and therefore admit of no tie from moral duty. Should that conscious pleasure a man perceives in his mind from doing good, or that secret reproach from doing evil, even in private, be objected as a
proof

proof of a future judgment; he answers, that these sensations arise only from the prejudice of education; maxims inculcated into the minds of children, for the convenience of society, which a man is no further obliged to conform to, than as the social laws compel him: That fortune bestows its favours indifferently on all men; that he only, who is most unconfined in his principles, has the best opportunity to make the proper use of her favours: That when a man dies, his body becomes earth, and nourishment for that, of which another man's body may be composed: That to suppose a resurrection of the body, must also suppose a re-existence of its parts; but these parts having passed thro' several bodies, each of which will have an equal title to them at the supposed resurrection; he asks, to which individual can they properly belong? He therefore denies any future resurrection, any future state of examination, or any future rewards and punishments. This argument was answered by Jesus Christ, on the question (put to him by the Sadducees) whose wife (of the seven) she should be at the resurrection, who had seven husbands on earth? he told them, they erred; for that at the resurrection, men would become beings incapable of any sensual relation; for they should be then as the angels or spirits, who are not cloathed with a material substance.

When a man once establishes this principle in his mind, of no future existence, he becomes tied by no rule. As he expects neither happiness nor misery beyond this life, his interest here becomes his conscience, and his reason is dedicated to the promotion of it. It would be impossible to account for the actions of some men, but on this supposition. Such a man is of the utmost danger to society; for society cannot be supported, but on a supposition, that in every man's mind, there is some tie, some inward law,

law, that will oblige him to tell truth, even against his interest: in him there is none. No society therefore allows the open profession of such tenets; he who thinks thus, must conceal his thoughts.

Besides sensual desires, pride and vanity lead the mind into gross errors. Pride is the conceit of a merit, superior to others, arising either from birth, riches, station of life, or a supposed superior excellence, either in the body or mind of a person, which makes him despise those of a lower order, as below him in merit. He takes the lot assigned him, as his proper right, independent of Providence. It is the most foolish, the most ridiculous of all passions. He does not consider, that before he came into life, he was nothing; he had neither merit nor option to claim any particular station in the creation; that whatever station a person is placed in, or according to whatever endowments his mind possesses superior to others, his Maker will require a suitable return from him. The potter, of the same clay maketh one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour; of the same lump he maketh both. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, *why hast thou made me thus?* What the potter requires is, that each vessel should execute the purpose for which it was made. Thus if a man is born to power, God requires he should see justice done to those, over whom he hath appointed him: if he is born to riches, his Maker, who hath entrusted him with means to relieve the distressed, requires he should assist those who want his help: if with superior strength, he is to assist the weak. Each person is to perform his part agreeably to those powers with which he is endowed by his maker; but if he employs those endowments to other purposes than those for which they were conferred, he abuses his trust. If he is tyrannical, avaricious, if he despises, deceives or distresses others:
if

if he compels them to be subservient to his will, his superior station in life becomes not his merit, but his curse, and will be his condemnation. He has converted to the gratification of his own passions, what was entrusted to him, for the assistance of others. Jeremiah says, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, the mighty man in his strength, or the rich man in his riches; but the Lord saith, let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he knoweth me, who exercise judgment, loving kindness and righteousness on the earth.*

As the imagination of superior excellence from an accidental station in life, makes the foolish man proud: so doth the conceit of the mind's superior knowledge, make the wise man vain. It was vanity in philosophers which produced so many different sects and systems. Each sect conceived their wisdom sufficient to penetrate into the Divine councils; they judged of the wisdom of the Divinity, by their own capacities; and concluded, that in giving laws to nature, God must have acted after their imaginations; and that what they thought best, must have been the rule he acted by. But the more we search into nature the more we discover our folly; and later discoveries have successively shewn their mistakes. It was at first imagined that the earth was a wide extended plain; but it was afterwards found, that the sun did not shine in the same direction, on the same day of the year, on places removed further north or south; they concluded from thence, that the earth could not be a plain, but must be round. It continued for a long time an uncontested belief, that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that the whole expanded firmament whirled round it, in four and twenty hours. This has been also exploded of late years, as a supposition unnecessary to have recourse to, and inconsistent with
pro-

probability ; as the same appearances would happen in the heavens, were the earth to move round its axis in that time, as if all the heavenly bodies should roll round the earth. The following system was then adopted, viz. that the earth turned round on its axis in twenty-four hours, whence day and night ; that it moved round the sun in a year's time, whence the different appearances of the stars, at different times of the year ; that this motion was in a plane, not at right angles to its axis, whence the different seasons of the year. At first, the belief of this was judged, not only wrong, but wicked. Gallileo, (not much above a century ago,) was put into the inquisition for asserting this. At present every one thinks as Gallileo did.

Descartes thought the planets were carried round the sun, suspended in fluids, like corks swimming in water. These streams, he called vortices.

Sir Isaac Newton shewed, that there was no occasion for such complicated machinery to account for their motions ; but that the gravity they were at first endowed with, the distance they were placed at from the sun, and the motion originally communicated to them, (provided they moved in vacuo) sufficiently accounted for the order observed by the planets : that those three powers, being in exact proportion one to the other, was what kept their courses regular. As this is the most simple system, so it is the most agreeable to what we conceive nature to be directed by. The tides are supposed to be occasioned by a compound cause, viz. the diurnal rotation of the earth round its axis, and the monthly rotation of the earth and moon, round their common centre.

The nature of the sun is too obscure for the vanity of philosophers to attempt to explain : we even know not, whether the continual expence of light and heat has at all diminished its power. The length of human
life

life is too short to enable men to make experiments to determine this. There is however one circumstance, which would incline us to think that the heat of the sun is not so great at present as it was formerly. There are some countries, such as the Orkneys and Shetland, where the cold is too intense to allow trees to grow at present; yet, from the stumps and roots of trees found there, it is evident these places were formerly overrun with woods. But vanity is a vice not peculiar to the wise; for among the lowest, the most ignorant class of men, we find those who pride themselves in knowing, and maintain themselves by shewing, that in the most trifling, the most insignificant endowments they excell others. Jugglers and ropedancers are evidences of this.

Honour is a species of vanity esteemed a virtue in the world: it bears in some things a near resemblance to honesty; but on examination, they are easily distinguished. The principles of an honest man arise from a fear of offending God; those of a man of honour, from a fear of lessening the esteem which other men entertain of him. Fear is the motive which spurs on both to their respective purposes; and, altho' they have different ends in view, they often produce the same effect. Honesty proceeds from a fear of offending God by being unjust; honour proceeds from a fear of lessening one's esteem with men. Honesty is just in all things; honour is so also in small matters; it scorns to be unjust in trifles; but for the increase of worldly power and dignity, it will not hesitate to throw justice aside. Honour will not steal, but it will rob. Julius Cæsar was a man of the least honesty, and of the greatest honour of any man in the world: he scorned to resent private injuries: Cicero tells us, that these were the only things he forgot. Yet he overturned the laws of his country, destroyed liberty, and made
both

both it and the rest of the world his slaves : but he took care, that they, whom he had reduced to that state, should observe strict justice to one another. This we observe to be the general practice of usurpers. The Romans, in their conquests, destroyed all those who would not submit to be their slaves ; but for those who did submit, they instituted laws, to oblige them to behave with justice to one another. Simple honesty is held by the world to be a cowardly, or at best a negative virtue. It is always on the defensive, like one clad in armour, which it dares at no time throw off. But honour is held a brave, a daring quality, which scorns danger ; it is made to rule and command ; and will punish any one who dares to dispute its will, or question its integrity. A man of honour must be supposed incapable of doing wrong ; yet a man of honour will lie with his friend's wife, he will bastardize his estate, and put the husband afterwards to death, if he presumes to tell him, he did wrong. He dares no more refuse a fine woman, who is willing to be debauched, (altho' his friend's wife) than a challenge from a man to fight him. His reputation is his conscience : his concern is not, what he knows himself to be, but what the world dare say of him ; to their opinion he is a slave. This made Alexander exclaim, *how much fatigue do I undergo to gain the esteem of the Athenians!* A man of honour will undergo as much in support of his reputation and dignity, as a man of honesty can for his conscience ; he will die for it ; be his engagements right or wrong, no future information can disengage him from his promise ; he has pawned his honour to perform it, and cannot forfeit it. A man of honour is more bound by that, than by his oath, or any moral obligation. In a late public trial, the judges were applyed to in these words,

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Gentlemen, I appeal to your oath, or, what is more, I appeal to your honour.

The next cause which induces men to deviate from truth, is violence, or that compulsion which tyrants use over the minds of their subjects. Nebuchadnezzar was a tyrant, and exacted obedience from the minds, as well as from the bodies of his subjects. He made an image, and ordered all men to worship it, under the penalty of being thrown into the fire. The Roman pontiffs have done the same. Henry the eighth did the same : in short all tyrants exact the same implicit conformity from the minds, as in the actions of their subjects. Violence, altho' coloured over with the specious name of ambition, and dignified with the title of glory, is most opposite to natural justice, and most destructive to society, and to the human race of any other passion. The Almighty created all men innocent, and equally free, and requires they should continue so. Nothing but self-defence can authorize one man to hurt another, and deprive him of liberty. When a man throws his innocence aside, and by force or craft enslaves another, he throws aside all regard to justice and conscience. He must either suppose there is no God, who observes his actions, and can penetrate into his mind ; or that God doth not require an observance of his laws from those, whom he hath endowed with superior strength, either of body or mind, to compell or circumvent others ; he must institute a new religion, more agreeable to his designs than that built on conscience. By natural justice, it is an absurd position, that when a man, by force or craft, brings another into subjection, and deprives him of his liberty, that it should be deemed a crime in that other, to endeavour to recover his liberty : yet nothing is more common, than to claim a legal dominion, from the right of conquest ; and to punish as cri-

criminal those, who endeavour to throw off this yoke. As this system of duty is quite different from the liberty, which nature hath given every man a right to ; tyrants who rob mankind of their natural right, are therefore obliged, in support of their authority, to change both the object of worship, and system of duty. Thus in the old world, violence was immediately followed by a change in the object of worship ; from the true God to the host of Heaven, to the Sun, Moon, and Stars. Nothing makes the human mind degenerate so much as slavery ; men in that state will sacrifice their reason to their safety, they are too much taken up in observing the will of their masters, to examine into the propriety of the orders they receive, or think with liberty for themselves ; when the punishment for disobedience is the forfeiture of their lives. The great, the beneficent effects of the sun and moon were perceived by every one ; by them nature seemed regulated : and men were made to believe, that these visible objects, were the beings to whom they owed their existence. To the stars they attributed the different destinies of men ; that according as they shewed themselves at their birth, so were their lives and fortunes ordained to be afterwards. From this arose astrology, a prejudice not yet rooted out of weak minds. These are the means which tyrants use, the maxims they inculcate, to keep their subjects in obedience ; for as the Stars had predestinated them to rule ; they told their subjects it was highly impious in them to withstand the decrees of fate, by contradicting them. Men thus forced to give up their reason, were easily led into greater absurdities. Men of renown, whose names tradition had handed down, as inventors of arts, became to be considered as Gods, who had come to reside on earth for some time, for the instruction of mankind Hence that multiplicity of Gods they worshipped.

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For it is the policy of a tyrant, to crush every attempt towards freedom of thought or judgment, in the minds of his subjects : his business is to keep them in ignorance, and the more absurdities he can bring them to believe, the stronger hold he has of their wills, and the more certain he is of their obedience. Upon this is founded that maxim of the clergy ; *It is dangerous, for the laity to know much.* On a liberty of enquiry depends learning, and it was a great oversight in Leo the tenth, to encourage it by promoting printing. The Turkish Mufti was wiser : he found that printing promoted learning, and learning made men inquisitive : he therefore suppressed all printing in the Turkish dominions. I would not be thought to infer from this, that such an unbounded liberty is allowable, as that there should be no subordination among men : were every man to adhere strictly to the observance of truth before God, and justice and mercy towards his fellow creatures, there would be no occasion for subordination. Isaiah's words would then come to pass, *The wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ly down with the kid, and the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord.* But as that is not the present state of mankind, where attempts from fraud and violence, render it necessary for men, for mutual defence and protection, to enter into societies, the better to protect themselves, either against foreign enemies, or domestic frauds, they were obliged to institute laws, which every one willing to be a member of that society, engaged to observe, under the penalties then specified. But to have these laws properly executed, it was necessary to delegate the judicial and executive power, into the hands of some particular men, of whose justice they had a good opinion, and whose example might induce others, more readily to conform to the laws. Or if an invasion from a foreign enemy, obliged them

to join in mutual defence ; in this time of danger it was necessary, to invest some individuals, of wisdom and fortitude, with power to direct and command them ; that the repelling the common enemy might be executed with most efficacy and dispatch. This could not be done, were every one of the society to give his opinion, before any resolution was carried into execution. But these magistrates and commanders, had this trust conferred on them, merely from the choice of the people. The society still kept a power in themselves, to degrade or punish them, if they made a wrong use of the power committed to them ; or did not properly answer the purposes, for which they were entrusted with that power. These commanders never claimed this preference from natural right : they owed it to the choice of the people, and were as much under the laws of the society, as any other member of it. This is what constitutes a free state, and in this manner doth it differ from a tyrannical one.

C H A P T E R II.

THE third and principal cause of error, which keeps the mind most firmly in bondage, is prejudice, or a persuasion of a thing being true which is false; it is a habit of belief instilled into us, before we are able to judge for ourselves, and becomes so confirmed through time, that we are unwilling to change our belief on any future information: for should reason afterwards object to it; rather than change our opinions, we are apt to think our reason not rightly informed; and continue to believe, contrary to conviction. Persuasion and conviction differ in this; one is a belief of the truth of a thing asserted, from the good opinion we have of the knowledge and sincerity of him who reports it. Conviction is the belief of a thing, not from the testimony of others, but in consequence of self evident principles. There are certain axioms in morals, as well as in physics, universally assented to by the human mind; the knowledge of which arises altogether from nature. The belief in mysteries and historical relations, we may be persuaded to admit of, but they do not admit of conviction. On the other hand, the truth of a proposition in Euclid is built on conviction; the mind is no way byas'd by opinion, or led astray by prejudice; it refers to nothing for a proof, but what the mind allows as self-evident.

When violence had obliged men, for mutual defence, to form themselves into societies, it was found necessary, first to institute laws, by which the society should be governed, and then to invest some particular men with power to enforce the execution of these laws. But it was soon found, that some of

those who took the advantage of public protection from foreign enemies, did not observe justice to one another. They therefore decreed punishments for such as transgressed the laws. But altho' the dread of punishment might deter men from open crimes, yet secret ones could not be judged of, where an open proof was wanting; and where no witness or circumstance appeared sufficient to detect the crime, the judges were obliged to appeal to the criminal himself: They exacted an oath, an appeal to the Divine power, and made him imprecate the wrath of God on himself and his children, if what he then averred, was not truth. But in order to make men observe their oaths, they must first be made to understand the nature of one, and what they were to expect if they swore falsely. Thus religion became necessary for government, in order to enforce good morals in the minds of the ignorant, for without it society could not subsist. Truth is a duty we owe to God, and justice that which we owe to men. No society can subsist, whose laws are not built on these two principles. It is necessary for that purpose, that men should believe, that the divine Being would certainly judge all men, and as certainly punish such who swore falsely. To convince men of this, their instructors appealed to their own minds, where every one might perceive a conscious sense of what was good and evil; and thereby be convinced that this inward principle was given, to direct them in their duty; that as this inward law was impressed, for them to observe; so if they would not observe it, they would certainly be punished by God for disobedience. And in order to keep up in the minds of the people, a terror of offending the Divine power, to whom the innermost secrets of hearts were known; it was found necessary to appoint some men from among them, of approved morals and knowledge, whose sole business

it should be, to shew the necessity men were under, to observe good morals; if they would escape the punishments which God would inflict on those who acted otherwise. And the better to enable those teachers to dedicate their whole time to this so necessary purpose, they were exempted from all other care or burthen of the state; and supplied by the community, with all the necessaries of life, without any labour of their own. Thus were the clergy instituted by civil power, for civil purposes. This institution was certainly both wise and necessary; and had it continued uncorrupted, and directed only for those purposes, for which it was instituted, mankind would have been both good men and good citizens. The office of a teacher begets, in the minds of those taught, an awe towards his person, and a deference to what he says. This made the vulgar place confidence in the knowledge and integrity of those, whose time and care were solely devoted to their instruction. The ignorance and avocations of the vulgar, allowed them neither leisure nor inclination, to examine what they were desired to believe, and if at any time their priests told them what did not coincide with their reason or apprehension, they imputed it, rather to their own ignorance, than to any mistake in their teachers; for they could not be supposed to understand those matters so well as they, whose sole business it was to study them: So they received as truth, and conceived as duty, whatever they were desired to believe. The clergy having got this ascendancy over the minds of the people, took advantage of their credulity, and instead of improving the understanding of the people, they modeled their belief. They told the vulgar, that their understanding was too weak to judge, and therefore incapable to direct them, in what was right or wrong: that what they might conceive to be the dictates of reason
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and conscience, was no further to be trusted to, than where information from them did not direct them otherwise; that by the office they held, they were substitutes of the Divinity, who had, in an especial manner, appointed them to make known to men what his will was; that it was impious in the laity to take on themselves to judge of what God had directed, and that a crime against his ministers, was equally punishable, as a crime against himself.

When a man throws off his own reason, as insufficient to direct him; and in its place adopts the opinion or will of another, that man becomes the slave of that other; he is no more to be considered as a rational creature, but as clay in the hands of a potter, to be moulded into whatever shape, and appointed for whatever use, he pleases. The clergy having obtained this dominion over the minds of the people, took every proper method to improve and support their authority: they discouraged all free enquiry into the nature of the Deity, and the worship proper to be paid him: they divided him into different beings, and assigned to each his particular office, and proper worship. The natural and original moral law was thrown aside, as too painful for men of strong passions to be bound by; and in its place, men were directed the performance of certain ceremonies, vows and sacrifices, as an equivalent for sin. This new system pleased the people, who could, by these means, both worship the Gods and indulge their own desires; they greedily embraced it: The method of appeasing the Deity was thus made easy. The religion of nature required neither vows, sacrifice, nor penance; and what that is, Isaiah tells us very plainly, *Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear unto the law of your God: bring me no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of*
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assemblies, I cannot away with: it is an iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth." And Micah saith "*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, or the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul? The Lord hath shewed, what he requires of thee; do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.* This then is the only sacrifice acceptable to God.

Sacrifices originally were eucharistical; an acknowledgement or thanks-giving for mercies shewn, as were those of Cain, Abel, and Noah. Propitiatory sacrifices took their rise from a wrong conception of what would please the Deity, viz. that he was capable to be bribed or flattered, and that the offering sacrifices or punishing themselves, would be accepted as an equivalent for offences. Their vows were a bargain with the Deity, that if he granted their requests, they would recompence him by sacrifice, or please him by punishing themselves. Pythagoras offered an eucharistical sacrifice of an hundred oxen, for being able to prove the properties of a right angled triangle. Jephtha offered a propitiatory one; he vowed, that provided God would give him victory, he would sacrifice the first he should meet with, coming out of his house on his return. The King of Moab in the same manner sacrificed his son, which (the Jewish writers say) was accepted; and the same God, who conducted the armies of Israel, on this, changed sides and gave victory to Moab, *and there was great indignation against Israel.* The Priests of Baal, when they could not prevail on him to shew his God-head by prayers, thought they might do it by penance; they cut themselves with knives. 'Tis a strange idea, men entertain of the Deity, to think, that sacrifices can add to his felicity, or that punishing ourselves

in time of trouble, should avert his anger for crimes committed before. I believe repentance is a prevailing sacrifice, but it should proceed from a sense of our crimes, not of our danger. This delusion prevails more or less, as learning and liberty of thinking is more or less encouraged. Among the Grecian and Roman philosophers, some came back, in a great measure, to the original religion of nature; they ridiculed the impostures of the priests. Socrates was put to death for doing so; and Cato was surprised, that when two priests met, they did not laugh at one another. In the time of Jesus Christ, men had, in a great measure, recovered from this delusion: Learning prevailed; and men were laid so open to conviction, that christianity made great progress among the Heathens, notwithstanding the persecutions it suffered. But the irruptions of the Northern nations, and afterwards of the Saracens, destroyed all learning; and men became again immersed in ignorance: they were deserted by civil government, and their care and thoughts were employed entirely in self preservation. In this state of Anarchy, they had none to apply to but their clergy for advice. This trust and confidence, the clergy improved to the advancement of their own power: They followed the same maxims, as the Heathen priests had done, and in order to gain proselytes, or rather subjects, they made the transition easy from Paganism to christianity: it was subjects more than converts they wanted: They therefore, to induce men more readily to conform, introduced rites and ceremonies similar to the pagan worship; they divided the God-head into three, to answer the three brothers, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto; and introduced images instead of idols. But altho' christianity was a religion of liberty, they ordered the laity not to search into it, lest they should know their liberty.

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However there were some parts of the scriptures, which they took care should be known, viz. that Christ had said, *Whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted; and whosever sins ye retain, they shall be retained*; and that the gates of heaven were open and shut at their command. When men were induced to believe, that their future happiness or misery depended on the will of the clergy, they paid an implicit obedience, in all things, to their orders: they commanded the world, and disposed of kingdoms at their pleasure. The kingdom of Christ was not a kingdom of this world, but theirs was; they used his religion for other purposes than he did. No sense of conscience, of right or wrong, durst be objected to their orders: they relied altogether on the ignorance, and established prejudice of the vulgar, to support their authority; and extended their arrogance to such unreasonable lengths, as induced men at last to enquire and examine, by what authority, they ordered, as religious duties, what seemed so inconsistent with natural reason. When ever prejudice yields so far, as to allow a doubt in the mind, and any free enquiry to be made, it loses its dominion: Error cannot support itself long, if not protected by ignorance: Prejudice without this support, turns weak by degrees; and at last vanishes. The more men examined the scriptures and the precepts of Jesus Christ, the more they found their reason had been led astray, and their judgment imposed on. As learning increased, and freedom of thought was allowed, ignorance and superstition lost ground: When men's belief was pushed too far, the bubble broke, and they came back to a reference to those original laws, conscience and reason, as the real judges to which only they ought to appeal to inform the mind and direct the belief in the doctrine of Christ.

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Some others there were, who would not take the trouble of an examination ; but, accustomed only to view religion in the manner prescribed by the clergy, looked on their supposition of a divinity, as inconsistent with reason ; as that the divine Being should delegate his power to wicked and immoral men, to distribute eternal rewards and punishments, according as best suited their purposes, or worldly interests ; merely because such men were Priests. The justice of a God, they conceived to be irreconcilable to the immoral lives of those who claimed this power. They therefore threw off, as false altogether, any supposition of a God, or Divine Providence. Leo the tenth said, he was certain there was neither a God nor a Providence ; for if there were, he never would have placed him at the head of his church. The same consideration hath raised in Turkey a set of Atheists, who call themselves *Muſerim*, or we have the secret. Mahomet Effendi died a martyr to this opinion ; he said, his regard for truth obliged him to think so ; for if there were such a being as a God, he would not have allowed him to live, who was a scorner and dispenser of his Divine Essence.

If atheism prevails any where in the christian world, it must be at Rome, where the immoral lives of the clergy, the power they assume from their office, and the means they use to attain to these offices, are so inconsistent with the idea of an all just, omnipotent and omnipresent being, by whose wisdom and providence, the world should be directed, that they conclude all religion to be a forgery, and that there can be neither God nor Providence to direct the world.

Thus far is prejudice capable to lead the mind astray, and thence we may see what fatal errors it may incline us to entertain, and what wrong actions
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it may induce us to commit. I shall therefore throw aside all evidence, built merely on the assertion of others; and consider things only as my reason supports my belief. I disregard the censure of the clergy, I look on my reason and conscience to be implanted in me by God, for to direct my judgment; and that they are to be the witnesses, to give evidence at the last day, of my thoughts and actions while on earth. I look on it as blasphemy, to put this evidence of God, in competition with the assertions of men. And I am convinced that I shall be acquitted or condemned, as I shall be found to have acted agreeable or disagreeable to their admonition, and that it will not be accepted, as an excuse for my transgressions, that a diffidence of my own judgment, induced me to throw aside these monitors implanted in me by God, and in their place to have adopted the opinions of fallible men.

C H A P T E R III.

ALL ideas of things external, are conveyed to us by our senses ; and the propriety of these ideas are afterwards examined by our reason. When I look up on the Heavens, the sun, moon and stars, and that immense expanded space occupied by them ; when I consider that each of these fixed stars may probably be such a sun as ours, surrounded with planets, inhabited worlds, as ours is ; when I stretch my imagination to that infinite unbounded space beyond the most distant star we can observe, which, in all probability, is filled with other stars or suns illuminating an infinity of different worlds ; I must admire the omnipotence of that Being which made them. If I turn my thoughts to this our Globe, that small portion of the universe allotted to us, and examine the methods, which nature follows in its various operations ; if I consider the return of the seasons, so necessary for vegetation ; if I look on the animal and vegetable world, and examine their organs, by which life is carried on in them ; how the form and disposition of each, is exactly suited to its element, to its climate and nourishment ; it raises in my mind some idea of that infinite wisdom, by which they are so disposed.

I find vegetables are the ultimate support of animals. The earth is the common mother of all vegetables : it affords nourishment for every plant : the same earth produces what is salutary and poisonous. According as the moisture extracted from it, is differently modified by the organs of the seed, so doth the vegetable contract different qualities from the same soil ; the organs of each converting the imbibed moisture, into juices of the nature of the plant.

plant. It is not the soil which alters the nature of a plant ; for altho' different plants are produced in different climates, yet if an artificial climate is made in any place, similar to a foreign one, the plants of that foreign climate, will grow in that artificial one. In each, rain-water is converted into the proper solid substance of the plant, and produces its peculiar fruit. Both vegetables and animals, left to nature, have their stated time of life ; they have their infancy, their maturity, shed their seed, and die in their stated time. The return of the seasons directs the operations of nature in the vegetable world, and in a great many of the animal. All animals have a will, a choice, a thinking faculty in them, each after its kind : They search for their nourishment ; they are capable of pain and pleasure ; they avoid danger ; they defend themselves when attacked, and endeavour to offend their enemies. In all of them, infancy and innocence go together : as they increase in age and strength, so do their minds enlarge, and put on that disposition peculiar to their species. When their body is in its greatest vigour, their thinking faculty, or natural disposition, is in its greatest strength ; as they grow old and decrepit, their thinking faculty diminishes in proportion ; and they become stupid or insensible at last.

As the different modifications in the seed of vegetables, make their shape and qualities different, so, in the animal creation, doth the different modification in the brain, give them different degrees of knowledge, dispositions and passions. The orders and operations of the Creator, are too intricate and extensive, for the human mind to comprehend ; and the only method we have to attain to knowledge, is by observing and following nature in our search after truth. A man who pursues this method may be right, but he who proceeds to judgment, without observ-

observing it, will find himself mistaken in his pursuits.

It has been long a dispute, at what time the world began: the vanity of some nations has made them stretch back their progenitors to an immense time: I shall examine the probability of their pretensions, by the following principles. All animals receive their nourishment immediately or ultimately from vegetables, and all vegetables receive theirs from the mould on the surface of the earth. But I observe that earth alone will not produce vegetables: moisture and heat must be joined with it: without rain the earth would produce nothing; I conclude from thence, that rain must have been from the beginning. But I observe that rain does more than merely moisten the earth; there is an overplus that is carried off to the sea by the rivers, and constantly takes along with it, some of that mould on which it falls. This occasions a continual waste of the earth, and must at last, carry along with it every particle capable of being moved by it. The sea must rise in proportion to the earth so washed into it; and the earth become lower in the same proportion to what is carried off from it by rain. Nothing but rocks will at last remain. Vegetation must cease for want of earth; and the animal world must become extinct for want of nourishment. Besides the waste made by rain, we find, in the vegetative parts of the earth, a constant disposition to petrification. The shapes and substances observed in many rocks and stones, shew that these rocks and stones were formerly in a soft state, capable of affording nourishment to vegetables, which they cannot do now. The continuation of this conversion is another cause, why vegetation must cease in time. Nothing capable of waste can be eternal; so that there must have been a time, when this waste, or, in other words, when the world began:

began : and this waste is, by observation, too great to allow the beginning of it, to be so far back as the the Egyptian, the Chaldaic or Chinese reports make it.

When we receive the knowledge of things past by tradition only ; and when that tradition differs among different nations, as to point of time ; we must judge of the truth of their different assertions by analogy. If the accounts we have of some parts of the world, as set down by historians, give us a just description of the state these parts were in, a thousand years ago ; and compare it with that, in which we find them at present ; we may judge somewhat of the waste committed on the land, and how much the sea has risen, during that time. The Campania of Rome was in the time of the Sabins, and long afterwards, a healthful and well inhabited country. Since that, the surface of the sea has risen so high, as to make it a desolate, unhealthy bog ; there is not now a sufficient fall, to drain off the waters. In the time of the Romans, we read of no ditches employed, to keep out the sea from the low grounds of Holland. Goodwin Sands were formerly an arable, well inhabited country, until the sea, by degrees, overflowed it. What was formerly the pavement of Rome, is now twenty feet below the surface of the Tyber. Carthage, formerly the greatest sea port in the world, is now under water. Where Memphis the metropolis of Egypt stood, is now the channel of the Nile. The vast quantities of trees found in bogs, shew that these were woods formerly, which are now covered over by the mould, washed down from the neighbouring higher grounds. We ourselves observe, that houses built in flat seaport towns, are obliged every thirty or forty years, to be raised in their foundation, to prevent their being overflowed by the tides. It has been alledged by
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some, that altho' the sea gains on the land in some places, yet the land gains from the sea in others; as there are many seaports (formerly good harbours for shipping) which are now choked up; and the land carried out much beyond them. This circumstance never happens, but in the mouths of rivers, where the mould brought down by them from the land, is allowed to subside; for when the force which carried it down is taken off, it stops and forms a heap: this is the occasion of bars in the mouths of rivers. From these circumstances we may form some judgment, how far back a proportionate waste will allow us to go, to fix a time when this waste began: and I believe it would be difficult, by this analysis, to carry the beginning of it, further back than Moses has done; I therefore take his account to be the justest, as it comes nearest to what we observe in nature.

I believe that Moses gave a just account of what happened in the beginning of time; he is at least the author I shall follow; but that what he wrote, is justly handed down to us by translators, I do not believe: for altho' the Hebrews, before their captivity, were debarred, by their constitution, from a free intercourse with other nations, and might, for so long, preserve their language pure; yet from their conquest and captivity by the Babylonians, they were ever after, more or less under the dominion of other nations; and their language must have been corrupted by their intercourse with them. The laws prescribed by these different conquerors, necessarily introduced words and phrases, different from that original language in which Moses expressed himself. Their language would, by this means, change from what it had been. The idioms belonging to words of uncertain meaning, are only judged of, from a probability of what they might signify, agreeably to the sense of
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the context. That the translators of the Hebrew have sometimes misinterpreted words, may be known by one quite ignorant of that language. It is said (Ezekiel, Chap. 29th, verse 10th) *I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene, even unto the borders of Ethiophia.* This translation is plainly absurd; Syenè is a frontier town between Egypt and Ethiophia, so that what they translate Ethiophia, should be Arabia; which is the opposite border of Egypt to the tower of Syenè. Wherefore any incongruity, which I may find in Moses's account of the creation, I shall impute to a mistake in the translators, and substitute what I think ought rationally to have been his meaning.

C H A P T E R IV.

Of the CREATION.

MOSES acquaints us, that the creation of the world took up the space of six days ; after which it was left to the direction of nature. He says, *In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, that the earth was without form and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.* By the earth's being without form and void, I understand, that it was endowed with no other quality besides substance and extension ; and by darkness being upon the face of the deep, I understand that matter was at absolute rest. The first act of the divine power on matter is thus expressed, *The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters,* or on the confused mixed Chaos. By this I conceive is meant, the first institution of nature, when matter was divided into fluid and solid particles, and each particle was endowed with its peculiar qualities, either with regard to itself, or what it might acquire by being in conjunction with others. Mutual attraction, every particle was more or less endowed with ; these between whom it was strongest constituted the solid part of the earth, of such an irregular shape as their proximity might induce them to put on ; and gravity, which operated on the whole mass of matter, formed the whole into a globe.

The first day's work is, *Let there be light and there was light, and the evening and the morning were the first day.* As light is here put as the *Antithesis* to what was before called *darkness being on the face of the deep,* or absolute rest ; I must conceive that by *light* is meant motion as the first day's

day's work. It is the earth's turning round its axis, which makes the day; and I believe, that the first act after the institution of nature, was to put the earth in motion. It is the rotation of the globe round its axis, and not light and darkness which constitutes the day. Any point on the surface of the earth, from its leaving its opposition to a point in the heavens, until it returns to it, that space of time it takes up to perform this, is called the day: The receding from that point, until it comes to an opposite point in the heavens, is called by Moses the evening; and when by the continued rotation, it comes opposite to the point it first left; he calls that space of time the morning: he therefore puts the evening before the morning. Immediately on the earth's being made to turn round, there must have followed a separation of the elements. The earth's turning round its axis, created a new power, centrifugal force, which counteracts gravity, or a tendency to the centre. This centrifugal force, would act with greatest power, on the lightest particles: Those it would throw off to the greatest distance. The air as the lightest, was therefore thrown off at the greatest distance; the dry land appeared, and the sea took up the place left in the interstices of it. Water, altho' specifically heavier than air, is still capable of being expanded by heat, so as to make it become lighter than air. It will then mount up, until the cold makes it of equal gravity with the air, and there it will form clouds. This suspension by evaporation is what I conceive to be meant by the firmament's dividing the waters from the waters. What is the exact difference between water and air, I cannot determine, but they are certainly capable of mixing and uniting, one with the other, according as they are affected by heat or cold. There is a heat in the earth independent of what is communicated by the sun; if it were not

so, the bottom of the sea would be always frozen, and the deeper we would dig in the earth, the colder we should find it; but the reverse of this is true. It is not the division of matter into smaller parts, which alters its gravity: A grain of gold, or any other substance, sustaining no other alteration than division, is of the same specific gravity, whether it be single, or joined to a million of others. In like manner a drop of water, if not expanded or rarified by heat, would never rise and mix with a lighter element. We know of no fluids, or matter capable of being made liquid by heat, even gold, but will evaporate or become lighter than air, and so long as the heat acts upon them with sufficient force, they will continue to rise in it; but when this heat ceases, these rarified particles will collapse, and recover their specific gravity.

As extreme heat makes water rise, and mix with air; so doth extreme cold make air condense and mix with water. Thus water frozen, swims on the top, from the air being mixed with it; but on melting, it throws off this air, and returns to its natural gravity. A stone locked up in the earth by the frost, is in contact with the earth about it; but on a succeeding thaw, the earth will be found to have receded; the shape of the stone is preserved in the mould, but the space it occupied during the frost, is greatly enlarged; the air incorporated with the water by the frost, has now separated and gone off, and the particles of earth and water, which surrounded it, are come into a closer contact. When the common roads have been frozen, and a thaw follows, the ground is covered with a froth, like soap suds; the air is then disengaged from the water, but still shews, by the bubbles on the surface, from whence it came last. Extreme heat makes
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water become as air, and extreme cold so condenses the air, as to make it mix with water.

The elements being disposed into their proper places, the next work is the creation of vegetables. *God created every plant of the field, and every herb before it grew; he placed them in the ground and said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself.* The vegetables being planted, the sun, and moon, are next created, or rather shew themselves on the fourth day, *to give light to the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, and to be for signs and for seasons, for days and years; the sun to rule the day, and the moon the night.* It is evident from this, that before the creation of the sun, it was not light and darkness which made the day and night; so that what is called *light* on the first day's work, cannot mean what we commonly understand by it. It is subjoined, *He created the stars also.* What are here called stars, Moses explains in the beginning of the second chapter, *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.* By what is called *The host of heaven* is not meant, the fixed stars, but the planets or wandering stars, which men afterwards adored, when they fell off from the worship of the true God; For it is natural and necessary to suppose, that the whole solar system was created at the same time. As the fixed stars had no concern with our world, it was not Moses's business to say any thing of them in his history.

The immediate consequence of the heat of the sun, was to exhale the moisture, and warm the surface of the ground; this brought on vegetation. It is said, *God had not yet caused it to rain, but there went up a mist, which watered the whole face of the ground.* When vegetables were provided, God proceeded

to create animals. On the fifth day, he said, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly, and fowl that may fly on the earth, every one after its kind.* On the sixth day terrestrial animals are created, beasts, cattle, and every thing that creepeth on the earth, after their kind.

There is a beautiful propriety and harmony, in this account of the creation. In the beginning matter lay at rest, in a mixed, irregular mass, without shape or relation. Then nature was instituted. *The spirit of God, moved on the face of the deep.* Each particle had its peculiar qualities assigned to it, and ranged into its proper class. They formed themselves into a globe by one universal quality, viz. gravity: Some unite, adhere, and form a solid part or land, others continue fluid, but of different gravity. In this state, the earth is set in motion, by wheeling round its axis; on which follows a separation of the elements; these, according as they are affected by gravity and centrifugal force, occupied different spaces, at a greater or smaller distance from the center. The adhesion of the solid parts would not allow them to move; the centrifugal force could only act upon the fluids; and the air, as the lightest, would be thrown off to the circumference of the sphere. By the recession of the air, the waters were gathered together, they filled up the space left by the air, and the dry land appeared, rising out of the waters; on which vegetables, the food for animals, are created and implanted. The sun is next created, whose heat exhaling the moisture, brought on vegetation.

The next act was the creation of fishes and fowls, their elements being the first prepared to receive them. On the sixth day, terrestrial animals were created, their food being previously provided; as the vegetables had been three days implanted and increas-

increased. The last part of the creation was man; to whom God gave dominion over all other creatures. and afterwards created a companion for him, out of part of himself, the more to unite them in love and friendship. The name he gave them both was Adam. *Male and female created he them, and called their name Adam**. These God distinguished above all his other creatures, for he created them after his own likeness; he endowed them with faculties superior to all others, he imprinted on their minds, a sense of moral duties to direct them, which he had communicated to none others of his creatures; he let them know, there were other ties on their minds besides the gratification of their passions; he endowed them with conscience to be their law, and reason to direct them in the execution of it. After finishing the creation, and leaving nature to carry it on, God is said to have *rested the seventh day*. This expression of the historian is used to accommodate the work of the Almighty, to the idea of human labour; for labour and fatigue are not applicable to God: It was meant to serve as an order for man, to dedicate the seventh part of his time particularly, to the worship of God, and the contemplation of his power. And here, I think, is a strong presumption of the truth of the Mosaic account; as no other reason can be given, for the division of time into weeks, so universally used from the earliest ages.

When God created man male and female, he gave them a conditional command by which they might be enabled to continue in the happy state in which they then were. What these orders were, and how they came to forfeit that happiness, by disobedience, is represented under the allegory of a garden, into which he had put them, with liberty to eat of the

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fruit

* Gen. chap. v. ver. 2.

fruit of every tree, except one which grew in the middle of it. Of that they are forbid to taste; that if they abstained from that fruit, they should never die; but that if they disobeyed him, by eating of that fruit, they should be subject to death as other animals were. What is called a *garden*, I take to mean the human mind, endowed with all its rational faculties and natural desires: by the *river which watered the garden*, and afterwards divided into four branches, is meant conscience, or the moral law of duty, commonly divided into the four cardinal virtues: by the *tree of life* is signified innocence, that first state in which they were when created: by the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, is signified carnal desires: by the *serpent, which tempted them*, is meant lust: by the *angel with the flaming sword*, is meant remorse and shame; and by the *coat of skins*, with which their nakedness was covered after their transgression, is meant that natural covering of the private parts, which grows in both sexes at the age of puberty, when carnal desires first enter the mind.

It has been long an enquiry, where a local paradise could be situated, to correspond to that extreme happiness which Adam enjoyed in it; to the description of these strange trees which grew in it; and to the rivers which watered it: And what species of serpent that could be, by whom Eve was seduced, whose speech even occasioned no surprize, and who not only held conversation with her, but had also such insinuating art, as to lead her into disobedience by specious pretences. It is certain that neither geography, nor natural history inform us, of any such trees, of any such rivers, or of any such serpents. Neither do we know of any fruit, the eating of which would enlarge the understanding, or abash it into shame or remorse. And if such a serpent did then exist, as enjoyed the faculties of
speech

speech and reason, there are none such to be found now; altho' the curse denounced against it, tends neither to destroy the species, nor divest it of its speech or rational faculties. The account which Moses has hitherto given of the creation, is not only rational but probable. But if we take this relation of paradise, and the fall of man, in a literal sense, neither probability, nor reason will support it. It is beyond any rational supposition. If on the other hand, we interpret it in an allegorical sense, we find a rational probability run thorough the whole, and a close connection in all the parts of the relation. 1st. The word *serpent*, as used in scripture, is not confined to signify always an animal; it is used frequently to signify, either the devil, or these wicked suggestions and dispositions which prompt men to act contrary to the law of God. Thus our Saviour calls the scribes and pharisees *Serpents and a generation of Vipers*; thus Isaiah says, *The Lord with a great sword would punish Leviathan, that great that crooked serpent.* 2d. The word גחל Gharum, that quality by which the serpent is enabled to seduce Eve, and which our translators have made to signify subtilty or cunning, properly signifies naked, as may appear in many passages, particularly in the immediate preceding verse, where גחלם Gharumim, signifies *They were naked.* 3d. Nakedness is the phrase, constantly used by Moses and the prophets, to signify the private parts, or the passion of concupiscence. If according to this allegorical meaning, we interpret what Moses has related, it will turn out thus.---Our first parents while in paradise, *were naked and were not ashamed*; † they were forbid to have carnal knowledge of each other, and so long as they abstained from it, they continued in a state of innocence. They
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were happy in knowing no evil, and could form no conception, of what the gratification of their carnal desires would produce. But when Eve's appetites seduced her, and she prevailed on Adam to satisfy her desires, then they certainly attained to a knowledge, of which they had no conception before : but this gratification produced both shame and remorse. They first covered these parts, the instruments of disobedience (as they were more particularly ashamed of them) and then hid themselves. When called to appear before God, they said, they hid themselves, being ashamed of being naked. On which they were asked, who told you, ye were naked? how come ye to know that ye are so? have ye done that which ye were forbid to do? On this follows their excuse. Adam said, he was overpersuaded by his wife; and Eve said, she was seduced by her carnal appetites. In this light I look on Eve's conversation with the serpent to be a contest in her own mind; whether she should comply with what her passions excited her to, or refrain from it, in obedience to the command of God. She was in that state of mind which St. Paul thus describes, *There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.* ||

As I am persuaded that Moses's account of the fall of man is thus allegorical, as such I shall consider it.

When God placed the man and woman together, and endowed them with superior knowledge to his other creatures, he gave them but one prohibitory command: all the other animals were to propagate by copulation, and die. God said, that if they abstained from this, they should live for ever. To eat of the tree of life, is meant to continue in innocence; and in this state they continued for some time. It is said,

said, *They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.* But lust, or the serpent, the most subtle beast of the field, (the strongest passion capable to seduce them) began to operate in the mind of Eve. She urged with herself, that she was allowed to amuse herself with every other desire besides this; that she had been told, if she gratified her desires in that passion, she should die; *we may eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden, but if we eat of the fruit of that tree, which is in the middle of the garden, or even touch it, we shall die.* She was not to entertain the least thought of gratifying that passion. But the Serpent said, *Ye shall not surely die, and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave it to her husband and he did eat;* that is, when she perceived in herself, that violent desire to gratify her lust, which promised her some great unknown pleasure, and when this expectation was confirmed, by the seeming extasy, she observed in other animals in copulation, who nevertheless still remained alive; lust got the better of her obedience, and she persuaded her husband to gratify her; who was too weak to resist her solicitations. It was no sooner over, than they repented, and were ashamed of what they had done; they covered these parts, the means of disobedience; they made themselves aprons of fig leaves to conceal them. Next follows an account of their punishment; they became subject to death. As the obeying their lust brought on population, death became necessary. The passion which provoked them to disobedience, is cursed above all other passions: and lust shews itself in the human race, in viler shapes, than in any other animals. To the woman he said. *I will greatly multiply thy sorrows*
and

and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And to Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded, thou shouldest not eat; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: Thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

The punishment here inflicted is altogether relative to the crime committed; the pains of labour are more violent in woman than in any other female; and whereas all other animals are provided with food, without any forced toil or labour to themselves, man alone must labour for his, in the sweat of his brows; and to encrease that labour, the earth is cursed on his account; and instead of yielding freely what was proper for his nourishment, noxious herbs, or such as he could not feed on, should grow up, along with others. When Adam was made acquainted with his punishment, he, for the first time, became sensible of some of the disagreeable passions, the consequence of it; he looked on his wife as the cause of it, and seems to have given her a name in anger; he called her, *חַוָּה Hava*, a word derived from *Havan*, which signifies the act of copulation; because (as Moses modestly expresses it,) she was the mother of all living; and to that particular part of her, which she hid, he gave the name *פֶּתַח petah*, which in Hebrew is the root signifying to seduce or over persuade. They then lost that serenity of mind, that innocence which they had before; and in its place, remorse and shame took possession of their thoughts, and was an impenetrable bar to their enjoying it again. Moses

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represents this, by a Cherubim placed with a flaming sword, to hinder them from re-entering Paradise and eating of the tree of life, or returning again into the state of innocence. They were banished from the state of innocence. Analagous to this expression of the tree of knowledge is that phrase, constantly used by Moses; for wherever copulation is meant, it is expressed by a *man knowing a woman*. In the first verse of the next chapter, Moses says, *Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain*, the production of their first transgression.

By population, was introduced emulation, from whence all the immoral vices. Pride, ambition, malice, envy or hatred could not exist, while man was alone; he had no one else to compare himself to, and of consequence no opportunity to excite these passions; but when by population the species multiplied, each individual reflected on his own state, by comparing himself to his fellow. Self-love threw him out of his innocence. He was directed more by his passions than by his duty to God; this made him hate those he envied; envy produced malice, and malice produced revenge, revenge was followed by shame, and shame by hypocrisy. Adam soon saw the consequence of his crime; his eldest son killed his brother, and used hypocrisy to conceal the murder.

I believe circumcision, and the sacrificing whatever opened the matrix, was afterwards instituted among the Hebrews, in commemoration of, and as some atonement for the first transgression of Adam and Eve, (a religious ceremony, for which I can assign no other reason or beginning.) Eve had alledged, the Serpent had tempted her; or the desire she was endowed with by nature, was the cause of her disobedience: she was unable to resist it. To this she is answered by God, as speaking to the serpent or lust, *I will put enmity between thee and the*

the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. This seems to allude to some future descendant of the woman, whom lust should not be able to corrupt; by whose example, others should be debarr'd from alledging their strength of passion, as an excuse for not conforming to the duty required.

There seems one objection to this supposition of the fall of man, viz. chap. 1. ver. 27, 28. *He created them male and female, he blessed them and said, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it;* therefore this order must be previous to their fall, yea even to their being put into the garden of Eden. But if this proves any thing, it proves too much; it proves that man was created male and female, before Eve; the cause and manner of whose creation, we are told of in the second chapter; and by which it appears, there was some considerable space of time, between the creation of Adam and Eve. If the antecedence of place, proves the antecedence of time; man and woman were created before Eve. If Eve was the woman first created, then the second chapter is only an explanation of what was related in the first. If it is an explanation only, we must think, that when God says, it is not meet for man to be alone, that the woman was not then created. He says I will make a help meet for him; and he brought to Adam every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to view them, and to give them names; and whatever names he gave them, they were called by; and after examining all the creatures brought before him, there was not found a companion meet for man: *So God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, &c.* By this it appears that the man was created some considerable time before the woman; that after his creation, it was enquired into by examination, whether any of the animals already

already created, was a fit companion for him ; that after viewing them, and considering their different dispositions, he gave them names according to these dispositions ; but as none of them was found a proper companion for him, God proceeded to a new creation of one, who should be a proper companion : and to make him look on this newly created being, as one he should have a greater regard to than others, he made her out of part of himself ; *he caused a deep sleep to fall on him, and took one of his ribs, &c.* From the creation of the woman, the history is uniformly continued thro' the second, third, and fourth chapters. The third gives an account of their transgression and banishment from Paradise ; and the fourth chapter begins thus, (as in the old translation,) *Afterwards the man knew Eve his wife, who conceived and bare Cain.* This cannot well admit of any other sense, than, that after what was related in the preceding chapter, Adam had carnal knowledge of his wife ; upon which she conceived and bare Cain. So I see no reason to think, that the order to increase and multiply was given, till after the fall. As population encreased, Adam saw his children degenerate from that purity of morals he had instructed them in ; he saw one of his sons murder another ; we are told, he was one hundred and thirty years old when that happened ; his descendants by this time, must have been considerably multiplied ; and the next son after this murder was Seth. It is probable that this murder, and the degeneracy he observed in his other children, made him more particularly careful in the instruction he gave Seth, his new born son. It is said he begat him in his own likeness, after his own image. Adam, originally instructed by the Almighty in his moral obligations, took more particular care to inculcate these precepts into the mind of Seth, of which he found his other children de-

deficient : and this son is said more particularly to have obeyed him, both in his own behaviour, and the precepts he delivered to his family. It may seem strange that mankind should so quickly apostatise and forsake the worship of the true God, the invisible creator of all things ; and in his stead to worship these visible objects the sun, moon, and stars, while Adam, originally instructed by God himself, remained with them for above nine hundred years, and was certainly as willing, as able to instruct his children in the proper object of worship. But it must be observed that this apostacy began and prevailed only among the children of Cain, who had no opportunity of being instructed by Adam. Mankind were divided into two sects, called *the sons of God* (those who kept with and followed the precepts of Adam,) and *the sons of men*, or the posterity of Cain, who had no communication with the others. When Cain, for the murder of his brother, was condemned to be a fugitive and vagabond on the earth, horror and dread took such possession of his mind, that he was afraid lest every one who met him should kill him. But God who reserves vengeance to himself, denounced a curse against any one, who should kill Cain, and set a mark on him, that he might be known by. What that mark was, we are not told : it is probable, that it was that expression in the countenance and behaviour, which despair and a preying conscious guilt generally produces. He therefore fled from his father and all society, to a distant part of the earth, that he might not be seen of men : He went and dwelt in the land of Nod. His children, thus disunited from the rest of men, could receive no instruction from Adam ; and, it is probable, Cain would not instruct them in the knowledge and precepts of that offended God, who had thus marked him out as a criminal, lest they also should

should upbraid him; and be tempted to inflict that punishment, to shun which, he had fled from all society. His posterity, deprived of all information of the true God, formed their ideas from their senses; and the most glorious objects their senses presented to them, were those of the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, them therefore they worshipped. To form a just idea of an invisible, omnipotent and omniscient God, merely from the strength of natural reason and reflection, requires the penetration of a philosopher, and few have attained to that knowledge; I take this to have been the origin of Zabaism among Cain's posterity. But it seems they did not stop at this, for even so early as the third generation, great men assumed divine honours to themselves; for in the last verse of the fourth chapter, it is said, *Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord.* The children of Adam, being thus divided into two different sects, are distinguished by the historian, under the appellations of *the sons of God and the sons of men.*

These two sects of people, kept themselves, for some time, distinct from one another; but at last, the same temptation, which induced Adam to commit his first transgression, induced them to mix and become one people. *The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; they took them wives of all that they chose. Then God's anger arose against all mankind; and the Lord said, my spirit shall not always strive with man; that the wickedness of man was great on the earth; that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually; for the whole earth was corrupt, and filled with violence; for that all flesh had corrupted their ways; nor was there any man found on the earth righteous, besides Noah.* What next follows in the history, is that remarkable judgment inflicted, for this their universal defection.

C H A P T E R V.

Of the FLOOD.

THE account which Moses has given, that a flood of waters, destroyed mankind, is confirmed by the testimony of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Indians and Chinese; so that no doubt remains of such a circumstance having happened. But how to account for its natural cause, or for the quantity of water that could effect it, has been long the subject of conjecture; and many different hypotheses have been formed, and many suppositions made, to render it possible. Some have imagined that it was done by the approach of a comet, in the atmosphere of whose tail, the earth was involved; Others, that what formed the land before the flood, was only a crust, which broke and sunk down at the flood, unto the abyss below; Others have thought, that the centre of gravity must have successively changed in the earth, and so have occasioned a successive inundation over the different parts of it: but each of these suppositions is liable to unanswerable objections. There is one circumstance (hitherto not adverted to) which, without any additional water, or any great alteration in nature, would necessarily overwhelm that part of the world, which, in all probability, could only be inhabited before the flood. It has been, and I think with reason supposed, that before the flood, the axis of the earth was perpendicular to the plane of the Ecliptic; by which disposition, it would constantly move in one direction, during its annual course round the sun. The earth was at first designed for the habitation of two people only, who would find sufficient support from the natural productions

ductions of vegetables, without any labour of their own; as every herb, and the fruit of every tree was food for them. If this was the state of the antediluvian world, there could be no variety of seasons, of summer and winter, seed time and harvest, heat and cold, as was instituted after the flood. The earth must have enjoyed a continual equinox, the sun must have been always vertical to one line on the globe; a sameness must have reigned in every part of it throughout the year, according to its latitude; and the habitable world would have been confined to that space, which is within twenty or thirty degrees of that line, to which the sun was vertical, or (what may be now called) the space between the tropics. As the natural state of man was to be naked, and the use of cloaths was invented to defend them from the rigour of the cold, it may be reasonably supposed, that mankind would continue, while they could, in that climate, which did not require the use of them. It was only immediately before the flood, when mankind, too confined for want of room in the warm climate they were accustomed to, were obliged to take up with a colder one, that Jabal invented tents to defend them from the weather. Had mankind before the flood, been dispersed into cold climates, the use of tents would have occur'd, long before Jabal's time.

If the habitable world was confined to within five and twenty, or thirty degrees of the equator; and the intent of the flood was to destroy mankind; the overflowing that part of the earth only, would have executed that purpose, and this would certainly come to pass, by a very small alteration in the course of nature.

At the creation, the different elements assumed each its particular place, as gravity, attraction or centrifugal force affected it: and the disposition of

the whole, would be in proportion to that force, which each of these powers exercised, in conjunction with the others. But if afterwards, the force of either of these three powers, were either encreased or diminished, while the others continued unalter'd, the former effect of their united force must be also altered; and the earth would assume a shape, agreeable to the united force of these powers thus altered. The earth turns round its axis in twenty four hours, and I believe it did the same before the flood; if at the flood, the Almighty Power should make this circumvolution to be performed in less time, suppose in twenty three hours, the centrifugal force would be encreased in proportion; and every element, capable of being affected by it, would fly off further from the centre, towards the circumference of the circle; and, instead of a globular form, the earth would assume a spheroidal, or turnep shape; the waters near the poles would sink, and flow towards the Equator: this must occasion the waters to rise, and cover all the lands near the Equator, the then only inhabited part of the world. As the effect of centrifugal power is to counteract gravitation, all the lighter parts, such as the air or firmament, would be expanded, and fly off to a greater distance from the earth; and thereby become incapable of suspending the evaporated moisture: the waters contained in the clouds must then fall to the earth; or it would rain, while any watry particles were left in the firmament. As the same cause, which gathered the waters together near the Equator, was what occasioned it to rain, so these two effects must be produced at the same time; and we are told by Moses, that they happened on the same day: he says, *On the seventeenth day of the second month, the same day, were all the fountains of the great deep broke up, and the windows of heaven were opened;* that

that the waters continued to encrease, and the rain continued to pour down, until the waters rose to fifteen cubits above the land, and the tops of all the hills were covered; so that every thing perished in the flood, besides what was preserved in the ark. Upon this encreased motion of the earth round its axis, the flux of waters from the poles towards the Equator, would, like the torrent of a river, carry every thing moveable along with it. But when this additional velocity was stopped, by the time of the circumvolution being again prolonged to its former length, the additional centrifugal force would cease, and the waters would return towards the poles with the same velocity, as they had formerly flowed towards the Equator; and in like manner carry along with them, whatever was moveable by the torrent. But it cannot be supposed that the earth, sand, and marine substances, thus drove on during the encrease of the flood, would, on its decrease, be carried back and deposited, exactly in the same places from whence they were taken. Rocks, and such parts of the earth, whose adhesion was too strong to allow them to be forced and carried off, would, both on the flux and reflux of the waters, stop these moveable substances, which must there be collected, would rise into heaps and form mountains, where none were before; and this is verified by the quantities of shells and other marine substances, found in different strata in mountains and other places, to which the sea seems now, never to have had any access. As this convulsion, which nature suffered at the flood, must have, in a great measure, changed the shape and surface of the land; it seems idle to assign situations to places before the flood, by any similitude to places now on the earth.

When Adam and Eve were created, they were put together to try their obedience, and were endowed

dowed with such *Stamina vitæ*, as, had they observed the order given them, might have preserved life, until the end of time; and even after their transgression, when population made death necessary, we find their children possessed of such strong stamina, as prolonged their lives to near a thousand years.

Some people have from thence taken upon them to make a calculation, of what number mankind might have consisted, at the time of the flood; they have considered their longævity as so many additional numbers to mankind; they supposed none died, but by the natural death of old age, and that procreation began as early, and was carried on as quickly, as at present. On these suppositions they have made their numbers to amount to above a hundred thousand millions, a number of which the present world could not support the fiftieth part, altho' the curse of sterility was taken off. But to make a probable conjecture of their numbers, the following considerations must be attended to; Animal life, like a tide, is either constantly advancing, by certain periods, to its perfection (its *Ἀκμὴ*) or descending by similar stages to its dissolution. It never stands still, or is the same to-day, as it was yesterday. And these different periods or stages, are always at certain stated times, or distances from each other, in proportion to the natural length of life. Puberty, or that time of life, at which animals begin to propagate their species, is always in proportion to the length which nature hath assigned them, before old age puts an end to life: The longer the natural life of an animal is, the later it is, before the age of puberty begins; and the shorter their natural life is, the sooner doth it show itself. It is that period, when the arteries are extended, nearly, to the utmost length, to which the force of the heart can stretch them. And before this
period

period, the animal must encrease in stature continually. With the present state of mankind, the common extent of life is seventy or eighty years, and their age of puberty is about seventeen or eighteen. The natural life of an antedeluvian extended to above nine hundred years, and the different periods of their lives must have been at a proportionate distance from each other; and we accordingly find none of them to have had children before the age of sixty-five; and but two, who had them so early. If this was their age of puberty, they must have increased in stature and bulk, until that age.

Moses tells us, that in those days there were giants on the earth; and if nature observed the same rule at that time, which she doth now, none but giants (with respect to us,) could have been on the earth in those days. And for the same reason, the time which mothers took to suckle their children, must have been longer than is now necessary; so that neither could women have connubial commerce so soon after delivery, nor could these children so soon arrive at the age of puberty as they do now, and of consequence procreation could not be carried on so quickly, as it is at present. Besides these natural causes, which made population slower, there was another, which would contribute more than any thing else, to destroy mankind, and lessen their numbers, viz. that universal violence with which the earth is said to have been filled, and corrupted. By violence I can understand nothing else, but universal rapine, wars and bloodshed. When the morals of men are so corrupted, as to throw off all regard to justice, and to gratify their desires by whatever means they can attain to the end they propose; the different interests and passions of men will set them at war one with another. And they had then an extraordinary temptation to do it. The size of man was large,

and would require a proportionate quantity of nourishment to support it; the earth was cursed, and would not produce its fruits without great labour, and the habitable part was confined to little more, than what is now between the tropics. During the infancy of the world, that warm climate was sufficient to support its inhabitants, without tempting them to plunder one another; but when mankind had increased, and filled up that space, their numbers would oblige them, either to go to new settlements, or to rob their neighbours of their possessions. Any new settlement they could fix on, would be in a colder, worse, and more barren climate than where they came from; there their labour would be greater; the decrease of the heat of the sun, would make the fruit of their labour come slower to perfection, and the success of it would be rendered much more precarious. Jabal, the inventor of tents, seems to have lived on the borders of these inhospitable climates; for the vegetable productions of the earth were not what he cultivated. *He was the father of those who keep cattle*, or whose livelihood was by flocks. Under these circumstances men were tempted to invade the possessions of others. Nothing but superior force would oblige a man to give up his possessions to a robber: this produced that universal violence, which men committed, one against another; and the most powerful and successful invaders, would be (as in our days) accounted the greatest men: and Moses tells us, that there were then *men of great renown on the Earth*. These considerations oblige me to think, that at the time of the flood, the earth could not be so populous, as these calculators have supposed.

After the flood, the axis of the earth was made, as it now does, to incline three and twenty degrees on the plane of the Ecliptic, so that the sun, instead of

of being always vertical to one line on the globe, traversed, during the year, seven and forty degrees on the meridian. By this the habitable world was enlarged; by this, the curse of sterility was taken off (as the different parts of the earth was fertilized by the successive return of the heat of the sun) and by this, the year was divided into different seasons. God said, *While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* At the same time that the habitable world is enlarged, the curse of sterility taken off, and the age of man shortened to a hundred and twenty years, Noah is ordered to multiply and replenish the earth. The duty required of man, by the second covenant made with Noah, is not such as was formerly required of Adam; For God said, *That the imaginations of man's heart were evil from his youth;* therefore the chief law given, was to abstain from violence and shedding man's blood (that crime for which the former inhabitants of the earth had been destroyed) He said, *At the hand of every man, at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man;* so that no affinity might protect a murderer. This is the first command given to man after the flood; and this makes the first law of society.

As the natural length of human life was now shortened, so the age of puberty came on earlier in life. Sem was a hundred years old when he begat Arphaxad, two years after the flood; but Arphaxad was only five and thirty years old, when he begat Salah.

It has been questioned, whether the ark, (whose dimensions are specified by Moses) was capable to contain all the animals said to be preserved in it, along with their food and water. Celsus ridicules it, as too small; but it ought to be adverted to, that a cubit, the measure by which it was built, is a relative measure; it was according to the size of what men then were,

when the construction of it was ordered ; and altho' the size of men, by which Noah took the cubit, was larger than it is now, from their longevity, yet we have no reason to suppose that the size of other animals, which were preserved in it, was any larger then, than it is now.

What particular mountain the ark rested on, is not material to know ; whether it was a high or a low one. Upon the recession of the waters, Noah came down from the ark and sacrificed, in acknowledgement of the mercies shewn him in his preservation. In proportion to their increase, they went to seek for new habitations, until they came to a fertile plain, the land of Shinar (supposed to be Mesopotamia) Hitherto they had been few in number, and were directed and governed by Noah and his sons ; but now being increased to such a multitude, as to make it impossible for those only, to judge and direct them, they proposed to establish some political government ; which, without applying to their fathers, they imagined, might so unite them, as that nothing could destroy their concord and government. This is expressed by Moses, by *their building a city and tower, whose top should reach to Heaven, to make themselves a name, when they should be scattered abroad on the face of the earth* ; but that God, who would have men governed by the laws of natural duty only, was displeased at this. Our translation says, that he confounded their language, so that they could not understand one the other, on which, the name of the place was called *Babel*, or confusion.

What is here translated *language*, properly signifies *lip* ; and is as applicable to the expression of sentiment, as to the sound of words. Difference in opinion would hinder them as effectually, from coming to any final resolution, as their not understanding what one another said. I do not think a miracle is ever employed,

ployed, when the same effect may be brought about by natural causes : an obstinate difference in sentiment, would as effectually break off their consultations, and frustrate their intentions, as a confusion of languages ; besides it is evident, no such new formation of languages ever happened : for the old Eastern languages, have, all of them, the Hebrew for their root ; and the variety, which afterwards ensued, may be supposed, at first only different dialects, which, in process of time, degenerated into different languages. Had their design been, by this high tower, to protect themselves from another flood, they never would have built it on a plain ; nor was that their reason, for they said, they did it, lest they should be scattered abroad on the earth.

In consequence of this disagreement, they who dissented from this proposal, separated themselves from the others, to find out new habitations ; and they who agreed to the proposal, staid where they were, and formed a certain model of government. The chief of these was Nimrod, who put himself at their head, and the first government we have any account of, is said to be in these plains of Shinar, over which Nimrod reigned. What happened afterwards in the Mosaic account of the world, is confined to Abraham and his progeny ; so I shall not follow it further.---I have thus far given my sentiments on the Mosaic account of the creation ; and should now go on to enquire what was the duty originally required by the Almighty, of man to perform, from the natural knowledge he had endowed his mind with. But before I do this, I shall enquire somewhat into the nature of the human mind, of which I cannot help entertaining thoughts, different from what are commonly received among men.

C H A P T E R VI.

Of the S O U L.

IT is an opinion, almost universally received, that man consists of two distinct parts, quite different from each other, viz. the soul and the body; that the soul is that part which directs, and the body the instrument acted upon, and put in motion by the soul; that one is perishable, and the other not; that death is only a separation of the soul, or directing part, from the body or instrument employed; that the soul is immortal, but the body perishable. This hypothesis, altho' universally received, I think liable to many objections. It seems to me contrary to *reason*, to *observation* and to *revealed religion*. The vanity of schoolmen hath made them determine this by the following syllogism—Mere matter cannot think; the body is mere matter, therefore the body cannot think: Man thinks, therefore he must be endowed with something besides his body, to enable him to think, and that something else, or soul, which enables him to think, must be immaterial. Spirits cannot decay, therefore the spirit, or soul of man, must be immortal. I allow that matter, abstracted from every other quality besides substance and extention, cannot think; it would be as the earth was before nature was instituted; but we know of no such matter. The organs of both animals and vegetables are so modified, as to separate juices, each proper to itself, after its kind. The same earth, moistened by rain, will produce vegetables different from, yea opposite to one another: and the same food given to different animals, will equally nourish them. It is therefore

therefore the different modification of the nourishment, by the organs which receive it, that constitutes this difference in their natures and qualities. But to follow the schoolmen in their own way : I must ask how comes it, that my body is put in motion by my soul? They answer, it is by the influx of the animal spirits into the different muscles. If these spirits are matter, they cannot be impelled by what is immaterial. Mere matter must be dislodged and put in motion, by other matter pressing on it, to compel it to leave its place. A spirit is immaterial, and cannot press upon it, or oblige it to change its place. If my will were a spirit, it therefore could not act on my body, so as to put it in motion ; but my body is put in motion by my will, therefore my will is not a spirit. If my will or thinking faculty be not a spirit, it must be a circumstance attending my body, and must be perishable with it, whenever it ceases to perform the functions of life. I observe a gradation in all organic bodies, from the meanest plant to the wisest man : the sensible plant will shrink when hurt ; some animals do little more. The chief difference between a vegetable and an animal is this ; the one is stationary or permanent ; the roots, by which it receives nourishment, are fixed and without ; in the place where the seed falls, there must it remain, for there it must be nourished. Animals are locomotive ; the roots by which they are nourished are within them ; they must search for, and choose their food ; they are unconnected altogether with the place where they get their nourishment ; they receive it by the mouth and prepare it in the stomach, and their guts act the part of roots ; they separate what is proper for nourishment, and discharge what is not. I know of no animal but what has a will, a sense of pleasure and pain : many of them have an evident judgment.

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They compare ideas together, and fix upon that resolution, most probable to bring about the end proposed. The cunning of the fox, the caution of the hare, the watchfulness and fidelity of the dog, the care of mothers to defend their young, their attacking other animals, from whom they dread offence to their young, show their judgment, which is only a less degree of the human. Have all animals immortal souls? They have all a mind or faculty of thinking and judging, and by the schoolmen's account must have an equal right to an immortal director, as the human species; but they don't alledge this. It is the vanity of men only, which makes them deny what they cannot comprehend. They cannot comprehend how matter should think; they therefore deny it the power of thought, and have joined a spirit or immortal part to the body, to perform thought, and inforce it to action. The question is not made clearer by this supposition, nor the solution nearer; it only makes way for another question; how can objects, applied to the senses, affect this spirit? The figure of an object painted on the retina, or the effluvia striking the nostrils, can make no impression on a spirit; for this is altogether done by the application of matter to matter. It all comes to this question, show, how matter can either affect, or be affected by, what is immaterial; but this they have never attempted to do. We have numberless instances of men, who, from being endowed with the most profound knowledge, penetration and learning, so as to seem, even to surpass human capacity, have been afterwards so altered by diseases, as to become below brutes in their mental faculties, altho' at the same time they continue possessed of their natural ones in great strength and vigour. What has become of their soul at this time? Where doth it show its
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existence? If an alteration in the body is capable to make this alteration in the soul; for the same reason, a dissolution of the body must also make a dissolution of the soul. There are many operations in nature which we cannot account for. The magnet, Electricity, and many other things, show us effects we cannot account for: are we therefore to deny them? or say they are directed by a spirit? It seems to me, that to say *matter*, which ever way modified, cannot think, is to set bounds to Almighty Power. It is nonsense; every thing is possible to him, which does not imply a contradiction. To account for the modification of matter in the growth of vegetables, or thought in brute animals, is as far above the comprehension of the human mind, as to account for thought and will in themselves. It is certain, that judgment is in a greater degree of perfection in the human race, than in any other animal; but that this superior perfection must be owing to the attendance of an extraordinary being, as a soul or immortal spirit, is not necessary.

Secondly. I shall enquire what information, observation gives us on this head. It would have conduced a great deal to illustrate this, had it been determined, what is the nature of this immortal spirit, this incomprehensible being, which attends and directs the body. For want of such information, I am obliged to understand a spirit in this light: It is an intellectual being, without substance or parts; who enjoys at all times, an uninterrupted power of thought, without being affected by matter, so as to add to, or take from its intellectual power of judging. Thought in it is an intrinsic knowledge, a quality which retains its force without fatigue or decay; experience may make it wiser, but never weaker; for whatever is capable of becoming weaker in its faculties,
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may at last lose them altogether, and become non-existent or mortal: and a spirit without its intellectual faculties is nothing. Let us compare this idea of a spirit with the human mind. There are none so little conversant with human nature, as not to have observed, that as children advance in years, they advance in judgment; their first ideas are those of pleasure and pain; next is joined memory, and afterwards reason; whence proceeds judgment, composed both of memory and reason: Also, that when the body has attained to its utmost growth and strength, the mind is then in its utmost vigour; that when old age has wore out the body, so doth the mind lose its faculties, and become foolish. But a knowledge of the animal oeconomy has enabled us to carry our observations further, and with more certainty; it has pointed out the particular organs of the body, whence proceed life and thought. These are found to be the brain, as divided into two parts; from them are sent forth the nerves, these instruments thro' which, all sensation and action are communicated to the judgment by the senses, and through them, by the will, to the muscles of the body.

If we examine man physically, and begin with his conception, and follow him thro' the different stages, from the origin of life to natural death; it will appear in the following light: When the *Semina maris et feminae* are at the same time thrown into the womb, and conception follows, the embryo is nourished in a vegetative way, by receiving its nourishment, by an [external root from the mother, by vessels which carry and return the blood from her to the child: by these, the parts of the child form, and enlarge themselves to that state which enables it to execute its own functions. The first action of animal life is, from the cerebellum to the heart; this brings on a contraction of the heart: the mechanism
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of which, occasions an alternate contraction and dilatation in it; and the *foetus* does then become an animal. In animals the brain is the organ, or residence of life and thought; it is divided into two parts, viz. the cerebellum and cerebrum; the cerebellum is solid, its function is to be in continual action; from it are sent these nerves, which go to the parts which are the immediate instruments of life, whose action cannot cease, but death must ensue. The cerebrum is not solid; it has several cavities; it is the seat of thought, memory, judgment and sensation; it cannot bear continual action; it is capable of being tired, and becomes unable to continue its functions; its operations must be sometimes suspended, and allowed rest to recover its strength: circumstances quite incompatible with the idea of spirit.

When by circulation and nourishment, the cerebrum is so enlarged, as to be able to execute any of its functions, the *foetus* shows the beginning of thought by voluntary motion. This period is commonly called the mother's being quick. It continues after this to be nourished in the womb, until its parts are sufficiently formed, and the mind endowed with such instinctive faculties, as to enable it to live without the root, or immediate communication with the mother: the connexion is then dissolved, it is thrust out from the mother, and demands nourishment by the mouth. The mind is then in that degree of strength, which shows its desires to what pleases it, and uneasiness to what offends it.

As it is the action of the cerebellum which gives motion to the heart; so long as the strength of the heart, in impelling the blood thro' the arteries, is superior to their resistance, so long will these vessels continue to extend themselves further; so long will the body continue to enlarge and expand; so long

will the cerebrum continue to enlarge and dilate itself; and so long will the strength of the mind continue to encrease. And as the body acquires its utmost degree of strength, so doth the mind, its utmost degree of vigour. And when the extremities of the arteries, are removed to such a distance from the heart, or impelling power, as makes their resistance equal to the impelling force of the heart, the vessels then cannot be further extended; the body ceases to grow longer; these two powers become in equilibrio; the vessels retain their extension, the heart cannot force them further; the body has arrived at its full growth, and the judgment to its utmost vigour. When by age the vessels become rigid, so that the force of the heart is insufficient to keep up a strong circulation in the extreme arteries, their elastic power makes them contract, the body turns weaker, and the mind less vigorous; it becomes diffident and cautious; it consults experience and observation to assist the judgment. As age advances, judgment and memory gradually decay; the senses are blunted; and as the body approaches, thro' age, to dissolution; so doth the mind sink into idiotism. Thus, in a natural progress, doth the body and mind proceed in equal stages, from the beginning to their utmost strength, and from thence descend again to their dissolution; in which course, the strength of the mind depends altogether on the state of the body. But observation has carried us still further, it enables us to determine what are the particular organs which are the seat of life, and what are those of judgment, independent one of the other: for as life seldom goes on, in one equal uninterrupted state, the vital faculties may be entire, and yet the judgment be weakened; as in the case of drunkenness, madness, a stroke of an apoplexy, fevers, fractures or contusions of the skull, &c; where the heart

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continues its strength, but judgment and memory are both lost. At other times, from a failure in the action of the heart, or executive power of the cerebellum, a person faints and dies, while his memory and judgment continue strong to the last. While the cerebellum performs its function, the heart will propel the blood through the arteries, and the person may continue vigorous, altho', at the same time, in a great measure deprived of his judgment, from any cause which hurts the cerebrum. In like manner, if the cerebrum is in a sound state, and the cerebellum hurt; the person dies in a full enjoyment of his judgment and recollection: So that the faculty of thought depends entirely on the cerebrum, and that of life, on the cerebellum. From observation I must therefore conclude, that thought and judgment is not a spirit distinct from, but only a circumstance attending matter particularly modified; and that the cerebrum is that matter thus modified. Was it otherwise, I cannot reconcile to my reason, how an apoplexy, a palsy, drunkenness, a fracture of the skull or old age should deprive a spirit of its faculties; for a spirit can receive no change in its faculties, by the application of matter. It therefore must be inferred from observation, that matter may be so modified, as to become endued with such intellectual powers, as to make it approach near to spirit. The author of the psalms, in contemplating the Divine Power, in his formation of the human mind, and endowing it with wisdom, superior to all his other works on earth, breaks out in these words, *When I behold the heavens the work of thy hands, what is man that thou art mindful of him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels (or spirits) and crowned him with glory and worship.* It seems from this, that he did not think the human mind was in itself a spirit, otherwise he would not

have called it lower than one ; but only that God had made it approach near to one.

Thirdly. The idea of an immortal spirit, distinct, yet directing and commanding the body, is contrary to that doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. The basis of christianity is an assurance, that, at the end of the world, all the human race shall be raised from the dead to receive judgment, according to their works while on earth ; and at that time of appearance, that their bodies, which were mortal, will be changed into immortal spirits, Mark, chap. xii. and 24. *Jesus said unto them, you are deceived, you know not the scriptures, neither the power of God, for when men shall rise from the dead, they shall be as the Angels or spirits in heaven.*

The Sadducees designed, in an ironical manner, to expose the supposition of a future existence after death, by asking whose wife she should be at the resurrection, who had seven husbands, while on earth. This question was built on a supposition, that the resurrection spoke of by Christ, was to be a re-existence of the body, when mankind would reassume the same relation to one another, as they possessed on earth ; but he told them they were mistaken, and deceived themselves by this supposition ; that they did not conceive how far the power of God extended ; which was such, as would change that body which we possess here, into a spiritual one ; and that men at the resurrection would become such beings, as the angels are, who are incapable of any such relationship as husband and wife.

Hence it follows, that before that solemn day of judgment, men are not as angels or spirits ; and that this immortality doth not commence until that time : they to whom he spoke, did not conceive how a resurrection of the body could be, or future judgment without it : he therefore told them, they knew not
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the power of God. Paul in the 1st. Corinth. chap. 15, has attempted to explain this. *How say some among you, there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead; then is Christ not risen, and they who are asleep in Christ are perished; but now Christ is risen from the dead, and is made the first fruits of them that slept. But some will say, how are the dead raised up? And with what body come they forth: Oh fool! That which thou sowest, is not that body which shall be, but God giveth it a body at pleasure. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, so also at the resurrection of the dead, the body that is sown in corruption, is raised in incorruption; it is sown a natural body, and it is raised a spiritual body; howbeit that was not first made, which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly; and when this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Here is not supposed a separation, but a change of a body into a spirit; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible: Or that altho' some may be alive when that general day of judgment comes; yet they shall all undergo the same change, from a corruptible to an incorruptible body, both the living and the dead: and that the spiritual body does not commence until this general change at the resurrection; that it makes no part of the earthly body, or any way joined to it; he speaks of the spiritual body, as a future circumstance to befall us; So also shall we bear the image of the heavenly. If this spi-*

ritual body existed immediately after death, and was then judged, there would be no future, or general judgment, nor any occasion for it; yet Jesus Christ, in many places, refers the rewards and punishments, to this future day of judgment, when every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof. Paul says, *If there is to be no resurrection, then they who are dead are perished; and if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable.* For without a resurrection, we can have no future expectation, no further existence: We here undergo pain and misery, without any hope of reward; we become annihilated. But if the mind or intellectual part is not suspended by death, the man cannot be said to be perished without a resurrection. A resurrection must signify a re-existence of something, which betwixt death and this period, did not exist: And both Christ and the Apostles have declared plainly, that this re-existence is not to be a bodily one, or composed of matter; but one after the manner of Angels or spirits. What is it then, that is to commence at the resurrection? if it is not a body, it must be a spirit. But if the soul or mind is only a circumstance attending life, then the extent of thought in one animal above another, or in one man above another, must be owing, merely to the modification of the brain being more exquisite in one animal, or in one man, than in another; and upon this supposition, all the difficulties which arise, in accounting for the different degrees of knowledge in different animals, or in different individuals of the same species, and in the same individual at different times of life, or affected with different diseases, vanish.

It has been believed by mankind since the beginning of time, that there will be a future existence, and judgment pronounced after death, and certainly

ly with great justice thought so. The secret horror, with which our minds reproach us, when we do a bad action, (tho' entirely unknown to the world) and the secret pleasure it gives us, when we do a good one, without looking for applause or reward from men, convinces me that a time will come for all men to be judged, to be rewarded or punished for what they do here on earth. Before Christ, it was believed, that this future judgment was, on death, immediately passed on the soul or intellectual part, which death did not destroy, but only separate from the body : hence came their notions of Elysian fields, Tartarus and the infernal judges. Christianity does not countenance any such opinion, as a separation of the soul from the body at death ; it says plainly, that the dead will rest in their graves until the resurrection, when man is to be converted into a spirit, and judged at the last day, each according to his works done in this life. Both Pagans and Christians believe in a future state ; they differ only as to the manner and time of its commencing. How this change is to be wrought, I cannot conceive ; but if I denied it, from my ignorance, I should deny the power of God. It is above my capacity to comprehend what a spirit is ; I can form no idea of it ; yet I am certain such beings may be, for the Almighty power exists, the first cause ; and I am also certain that his existence cannot be circumscribed by a body or shape. And if such beings as spirits do exist, I cannot see why an infinite gradation of such, may not exist also, down to the capacity of animated matter. It is impossible for a man to comprehend how he himself is formed ; yet it is evident his origin is a secretion by a gland, from the common mass of blood, produced from food taken into the stomach. Solomon and Sir Isaac Newton were the production of what their fathers eat. This is an operation in nature, beyond

the human mind to conceive; yet he would be accounted a madman who denied it.

On these considerations I think, that the mind or soul dies with the body; and continues in the state of death, until the divine power shall, at the last general day, or time of judgment, change it into a spirit. It is agreeable to reason, to observation, and to the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles. It seems to me absurd, to suppose a general day of judgment at the end of the world, and at the same time, a previous judgment immediately on death. One set of Christians have endeavoured to remove this absurdity, by supposing an intermediate state, betwixt death and judgment; and have assigned purgatory, as a place of residence for the souls of men, before the general day of judgment. But this notion has been broached by men, for lucrative purposes; to enrich themselves and deceive the ignorant; who ought to be told, that the christian doctrine assures us, that there is no forgiveness without repentance, and that there is no repentance after death; that we then return to the earth from whence we were taken. *Dust we are and into dust shall we return*, until it pleases the Almighty, to raise us at the day of judgment, by changing these our earthly bodies into spiritual ones: for to suppose rewards and punishments are immediately assigned to men after death, is to suppose justice to be executed, before judgment is pronounced. There is to be one general day of judgment at the end of the world, when rewards and punishments will be assigned, according to every man's deserts; *when every hidden thing will come to light*.

Among men, punishment before judgment is unjust and absurd; how much more so in that Being, whose attributes are justice and mercy.

From what I have said in another place, I believe there was certainly a time when this world began : and if I may be allowed to suppose, what was before this period, I see no absurdity in thinking, that many worlds might have preceded ours, in succession to one another ; whose inhabitants might be endowed as we are, who had been tried and judged, as we shall be. I cannot think that the all just Being would have created any one, either to eternal happiness or misery, without some previous act of their own, to deserve these rewards or punishments. We believe in good and bad spirits, angels and devils. I am apt to believe that these are Beings, to whom, on some former trial, these rewards and punishments have been adjudged ; and that, at the day of judgment, we shall be converted into such, according to our merits here on earth.

The supposition of the souls being distinct from the body, and to exist after death, involves a Christian in an hypothesis he is not aware of ; which is, that at the resurrection, man will have two souls ; for by the information of Christ and his apostles, he must believe, that, at the resurrection, this earthly corruptible body will be changed into a spiritual one, *for corruption cannot inherit incorruption* ; that at the day of judgment, *the sea and the grave will deliver up their dead*, in order to undergo this change ; and that our not conceiving how this can be done, our Saviour tells us, is owing entirely to our ignorance of the power of God. St. Paul, in explaining this, tells us, *that the body which dies, or is sown a corruptible body, shall, at the resurrection, be changed into an incorruptible, or spiritual one*. As those passages show this spiritual change must happen at the resurrection ; the other spirit or soul, which suffered no change on death, must make a second soul at the resurrection.

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I shall conclude this chapter, with observing, that as there is to be a resurrection of the just and unjust, when all men shall be judged, each according to the deeds done in the body ; it no way concerns our salvation or condemnation, whether we believe, that the soul is immortal, and only separated from the body by death ; or that the human mind dies with the body, which, at the resurrection, is to re-exist, and put on the nature of a spirit, and from that time become immortal. Deut. xxix, v. 29, *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those which are revealed, belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may obey all the words of the law.* Our Saviour after his resurrection, told his disciples, that it does not belong to us to enquire after those things, which the Father hath been pleased to conceal, and I should not have spoken on this subject at all, had not that gross abuse which hath crept into Christianity, viz. purgatory, and prayers to dead men, obliged me to speak of it, and shew the false foundation, which that delusion is grounded upon.

C H A P T E R VII.

Of R E L I G I O N;

Or, those D U T I E S required of M A N by G O D.

I Have given my reasons, for supposing that this our earth, neither has been, nor can continue for ever; that its beginning must have been from a limited time; and its disposition, the work of an Omnipotent Power; that the Creator hath appointed animals into different classes; and endowed each with a different proportion, or degree of reason and judgment; that the human race is distinguished, by such superior endowments, as that something more is required from this superiority, than what is exacted of brutes. If I believe in the existence of a supreme Being, I must also believe that I ought to obey him. I cannot imagine that divine justice would require obedience, without informing me, what are these laws, which he requires I should obey. It is impossible for the human mind to comprehend what God is; that is an idea, too great to be circumscribed by our conception. Yet, from what we are enabled to form, it is impossible to separate truth and justice from that idea, or that he will require a duty from man, which he has not endowed him with knowledge of, and capacity to perform. Human laws, made for the good and convenience of society, may be imposed on a multitude under subjection, by verbal or written orders, although the multitude are left ignorant of the motives, for which these laws were enacted; they are bound to obey them, or quit that society. But laws given by God to man, must be such as every one, as a man, must be acquainted with;
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for in the sight of God all men are equal, and make but one society ; and these laws must be equally impressed on his mind, as the knowledge of his existence : to suppose otherwise, is to suppose the Almighty capable of injustice.

I shall consider religion, first as a man, and then as a christian. As a man, I find the only beings on earth subject to religious obligations, are the human species ; and that they alone, are endowed with conscience and reason. The justification, or condemnation of one brought to judgment, must be determined from his conforming, or not conforming, to some known law or rule of acting. There is no rule of acting, which subjects a man to judgment, and excuses the brute, but that endowment which the human mind possesses, and the brutes do not. This therefore must be the law, by which man is to be tried : his conscience is supposed to tell him his obligation, and his reason the manner, in which he is to execute it. If then I want to know the duty which God requires of me, I must examine what are these laws, he has not only imprinted on my mind, but also, by universal confession, what are required of all others to conform to. This universal assent to what is our duty, is called *conscience*, or the religion of nature ; which tells me, I am to lead a life of humility to my maker, and be resigned to his will ; to observe truth, justice, mercy and benevolence to all mankind ; and to make no other use of my dominion, over that part of the creation, which he has put under me, than what my necessities, or use of life require : that altho' my station in the class of beings, gives me a privilege to demand their service, it gives me none, to divert myself with their pain : We and they are made of the same materials (*clay*), and are both at an infinite distance from that Being who made us. The whole
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information, which my conscience gives me as duty, seems comprehended in these ; and that if I think or act, either beyond, or not up to them, I transgress the law of God. But altho' conscience (or the idea of right and wrong,) is the same in all men, yet reason which is to explain and apply this rule, *conscience*, is not equal in all men : our reason is often led astray by ignorance, by passion or prejudice ; from whence different opinions, or ways of worship have sprung up. Some few think that the Almighty is able, of himself to direct the world, and will require of no man a further conformity to his will, than as his conscience has informed him, what that will is ; while the major part of the world think, that God has been deficient in his information, and that his omissions must be supplied ; that the observance of bodily ceremonies, and the belief of certain tenets, neither intrusted to conscience, nor comprehended by reason, are necessary, if men would be acceptable to God ; that he requires their assistance to explain and enforce his will. In consequence of this, they declare their wisdom to be the wisdom of God ; and out of zeal to serve him, think it their duty to exterminate every opinion, which supposes God may be worshipped, in a manner different from their imaginations ; and conclude, that all men should be destroyed as wicked, who dissent from them ; and altho' neither reason, conscience, nor scripture tell them, they have a right to judge their brother, they think, that by persecuting such as differ from them, they do God service. They will not trust the Almighty with vengeance, or delay punishment until the day of judgment, but will serve God, whether he will or not, in the manner, they judge most proper, he should be served.—Were the Almighty as ignorant of my thoughts as men are, who can only judge of what passes in the mind by external signals, I should think

think myself obliged to show the sincerity of my worship, by such rites and ceremonies, as fasts, penance, sacrifices, bending the knees, &c. but he who knows my most secret thoughts, needs no external signals, to inform him of my intentions; he requires to be worshipped, in spirit and in truth. Hypocrisy cannot deceive him; it may add to my crime, but cannot take away from his knowledge. Ceremonies have tended more, to deceive the understanding and lead it astray, than instruct it. Men who think it a religious duty to observe them, are apt to neglect the weightier matters of the law. The Jewish prophets are constantly upbraiding them with this neglect. Jeremiah says, *Trust not in lying words; the church or temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord is this: Amend your ways and judge uprightly between man and man; oppress not the stranger, the fatherless nor the widow; shed not innocent blood, nor worship strange gods. What have I to do with the multitude of your sacrifices? who hath required them of your hands? I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them, concerning sacrifices and burnt offerings: But this I commanded them, that they obey my voice, (or that inward law implanted in their mind to direct them.)* And Isaiah, Chap. 58. *They say, wherefore have we fasted? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou regardest us not? Behold in the days of your fast, you find pleasure. You fast for strife and debate; to bow down the head like a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes under you; will you call this a fast acceptable to me? The fast I require is, to loosen the bond of wickedness, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, &c. Shall you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal; and then come and stand before me in this house, and say, we are delivered, notwithstanding these abominations? What, is my house become a den of robbers? or in*
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modern words, will your going to church excuse your wicked actions? does the observance of ceremonies and external rites, give you a privilege to commit iniquity? *Therefore, saith the Lord, my fury shall be poured out against this place to destroy it.*

When the Jews accused the disciples of Christ, of a breach of the ceremonial law of Moses, by plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath, he told them, that if they knew the meaning of these words of the prophet Hosea, *I require mercy and not sacrifice, they would not have condemned the innocent*: and he desires them to learn it. When Job is tempted by his wife, and wrongfully accused by his friends, he, in his justification, recounts his behaviour, in the different scenes, wherein men may be supposed to trespass; and cannot find one instance, to accuse himself of sin: he indeed wonders at his afflictions, and in this surprize, wishes his adversary had wrote a book, which might more amply acquaint him of his duty; that he would examine it with a greedy attention, to discover wherein he had (unknowingly) offended; but not in all the crimes, either supposed by himself or his accusers, does the neglect of external rites and ceremonies ever enter their thoughts. Their whole reasoning is employed, in his asserting, and their doubting his conformity to the moral duties.

Among the heathens, of clear judgment and unbiassed conscience, all religion is said to consist in observing a humble reverence to the Gods, and a strict conformity to the moral duties; that neither pleasure nor pain, threats nor promises, hopes nor fears, should induce men to deviate from that internal rule, *right reason*. Jesus Christ told the Jews, he was not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them: And when they told him, that, by the law of Moses, a man might divorce his wife on any cause of dislike, he answered,
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that altho' Moses, for the hardness of their hearts, or perverse dispositions, was obliged to allow them this liberty, yet the law was not so from the beginning, or by the law of nature, which he came to fulfil. Paul says, *When they, who have not the law, do by nature, the things contained in the law, they are a law unto themselves; their conscience bearing witness, accusing or excusing their thoughts at that day, when God shall judge the secrets of hearts.* My conscience is then the evidence by which I am to be tried; it is the monitor within me, which tells me what is right or wrong. My reason tells me, that the Divine Being is not to be imposed on, that he requires the worship of the mind, and not of the body: Rites and ceremonies regard the body only; and are therefore no part of the worship he requires. That being, who knows my most secret thoughts, requires no expletive by outward show. Jeremiah, speaking of those, who in future times, were to be obedient to the law of conscience, says, *In those days, they shall no longer say, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge; but every man shall die for his own iniquity. The covenant which I shall make with them, is this; I will put my law in their minds, and in their hearts will I write it; they shall no more teach every man his brother, nor every man his neighbour, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest; and if they obey this covenant, I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.* To remember sins no more, signifies a previous commission of sins, which, on repentance and amendment, were to be forgiven. This passage comes nearer to the assurance given by Jesus Christ, than any other in the Jewish prophets; it implies a promise of forgiveness of sins, on repentance and amendment.

amendment of life. This is what natural reason (merely) does not give us any cause to hope for : that only tells us, *that if we do good, we shall be rewarded, but if we do evil, we shall be punished.*

With respect to religious duties, the religion of Christ differs no more from that of nature, than the root of a tree does from its branches ; the fruit produced is the same ; for christianity doth not alter, but explain the law of nature.—A strict observance of moral duties constitutes natural religion : Christ says, be innocent and all virtue follows of course. In the Mosaic Allegory, innocence is called the tree of life : and if we pursue the allegory, it will come out thus ; The fruit of the tree (which Adam was required to feed on) is the execution of our duty ; the branches signifies a knowledge of what these duties are, which are to influence and direct our actions ; The body of the tree signifies a good conscience, which presents these duties to our mind ; and the root is innocence, from whence they all proceed, and on which they all depend. Jesus Christ commonly makes use of allegories to express his doctrine, and to convey his instructions to the world : he says, *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This can admit of no other, than an allegorical interpretation : Innocence can be represented by nothing so properly, as by a new born child. It means, that if a man does not reduce his desires and appetites, to that innocence, as of a new born child, he will not be accepted of by God. *Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* Nothing can be agreeable to good morals, which is not innocent. Whatever God requires of man, must be agreeable to innocence ; the precepts of God are all built on it. It is the simplest rule that can be given, and the most discernable ; men may

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be much easier mistaken in what they think virtuous, than in what is innocent. Wisdom, directed by conscience and curbed by innocence, is that state of mind, to which the supreme Being, in his covenant with man, has promised the great reward of a future happiness in his presence. The sole caution given by Christ to his disciples, when he sent them abroad to teach the world, was, *Be ye wise as serpents and innocent as doves*. Wisdom is the particular gift of God, and is distributed to man in different proportions; but a sense of conscience and knowledge of innocence, is given to all men, and by these they are directed to apply their wisdom in their designs and actions. This is represented in the parable, by a prince giving money to his servants, to trade with during his absence: on calling them to an account on his return, each, who had improved his stock, is rewarded accordingly; but he who did not improve it is condemned. Solomon says, *God made man upright, but he hath found out many inventions*. God introduced man into life in a state of innocence, but leaving him afterwards to the direction of his own will, he left that state. God, saith the son of Sirach, *hath set before man, life and death; and whether him liketh, shall be given him*. Natural religion acquaints man, that according to his conformity to the moral law, he will be either rewarded or punished, but here it stops; it goes no further; here it leaves him.—By transgressing a law, a man becomes subject to the penalties of it, and none can pardon the trespass, but the same power, by which the law was enacted. The religion of nature gives us no room to think, that repentance for crimes, will procure pardon from God: by it, they who transgress the law have no hope; but are left under the dreadful expectation of judgment and condemnation. Jesus came and told mankind, that on a sincere repentance

ance and amendment of life (by returning to that state of innocence they had left) God would accept of their submission, pardon their past faults, and receive them again into favour: and to show that he spoke by authority, he confirmed it by miracles. Miracles are a trespass on the laws of nature. The laws of nature are the laws of God, and no power can alter them, but the power that instituted them: therefore when a miracle is wrought, and brought as an evidence to an assertion, to which our reason can neither assent or dissent; if we are convinced of the reality of the miracle, we must also be convinced of the sufficiency of the evidence. Natural reason gives us no right to expect forgiveness of crimes; but neither does it oblige us to think, that God will not pardon those, who, on a sincere repentance, return again to their duty. The idea we have of this mercy confirms this hope. Conscience and reason are the stamp of God on the human mind, and if it shall please him to give us further information, it will not be in contradiction to his former laws; for God cannot contradict himself: But pardon, on repentance and a subsequent amendment of life, does not contradict his former laws; we have reason therefore, on such evidence to believe it.

The gospel Jesus preached, reduces religion to the greatest simplicity; it requires no learning to separate virtue from vice, by intricate distinctions; but may be comprehended by the weakest judgment. God made man innocent, when he brought him into life; he requires he should continue so, while in it. This is the whole duty of man. He who conforms to this, has not sinned; he wants no pardon. Jesus in the first part of his sermon on the mount, pronounces such particularly blessed, who conform to it; whom no revilings nor persecution can make to de-

part from innocence. In the other part of his sermon, he shews wherein men are generally mistaken in their thoughts of good and evil; he says, he is not come to destroy or alter the law, but to fulfil and explain it. But that the law, which says, *Thou shalt not murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness; that men should honour their parents, and love their neighbours*, extends much farther than what is implied, by the actual commission of what is forbid, or the bare omission of what is expressed; for that except our righteousness exceeds this, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. *It is said, thou shalt not murder; but I say unto you, whoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, or, in contempt of his ignorance, shall upbraid him with being a fool, commits a breach of the law; for to upbraid a man for natural ignorance, is to accuse God who made him.* In like manner he goes thro' the whole law, and shows that it is the intention of the mind, and not the actual commission of any fact only, that makes a thing criminal before God; that if our neighbour offends us, we are not to revenge ourselves; but we are to leave both judgment and vengeance to God; that what befalls an innocent man, is by his permission; even *a hair of your heads shall not fall to the ground without it: Vengeance belongs to God, who will reward every man according to his works, whether they be good or evil. Ye have heard it said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil: take not upon you, to avenge yourselves of those who hurt you; do good to those that hate you and pray for those that despitefully use you: for if you only love and assist those, who love and assist you, what merit have you? What reward can you expect? This is that state of innocence, he requires sinners to return to, which if they do, they will obtain forgiveness: Were their sins as*
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red as scarlet, they should be blotted out, and become as white as snow. There is one sin excepted, and which he declares shall not be forgiven, either in this world or in the next; viz. *the sin against the Holy Ghost*: and what this is, we may gather from the following passage. (John, Chap. 14, verse 26.) *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall come; he shall teach you all things, and* (chap. 15, verse 26.) *When the Comforter shall come, whom I will send from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me.* The sin against the Holy Ghost, is then a rebellion, or disobedience to an order communicated directly from God to man: none but the prophets, inspired by God, seem to be liable to this sin. Thus Jonah's disobedience to the divine commands, comes nearest to the sin against the Holy Ghost, of any instance in the old testament; but as his disobedience did not arise from perverseness, but from terror, he was first stopt in his flight by a remarkable punishment; and then pardoned on his repentance, and conforming to the orders he first received. But in the Acts, it is said, (chap. 6. verse 3.) *Chuse out from among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* So that the Holy Ghost does not always signify that spirit of truth, which can only be had by inspiration from God; but that which springs from a thorough conviction and knowledge of the duties which God requires of man. Hypocrisy, or a deceitful ostentation in the observance of religious ceremonies, in order to be taken notice of by men, is a crime he accuses the Pharisees of; and which he often and particularly warns his disciples against. He compares such to sepulchral monuments, which are ornamented without, but full of corruption within. This is a denying the omniscient power of God, whom they would thus impose on; he says,

verily they have their reward. They use the show of religion, to deceive men, and avail themselves of their belief, for vain purposes.

In order to make men conceive his doctrine, he explains the institution of life and purport of religion; that God created mankind to become, at the end of the world, immortal Beings; that he gave them rules to walk by; which, according as they observed, should entitle them either to a state of happiness or misery, in that eternity; that their life here, was only a state of trial, which left them to the freedom of their own will, and by obedience or disobedience, by their conforming or not conforming to these laws he had laid open to their minds, they were to chuse, which state they would inherit hereafter. He set before man, life and death, and which ever he chose should be given him. That at the end of the world, all men should be judged according to their actions in this life, and be rewarded or punished suitably; that their own conscience and reason, (now their monitors) would then be their accusers or excusers, the chief witnesses either to justify or condemn them; but, that rewards and punishments are not distributed here. *Do you think, that they, on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were greater sinners than all others? I tell you, no.*—That riches, grandeur, or long life, were no particular signs of favour from God; on the contrary, that the great and opulent were in more danger of condemnation than others; their station tempting them to employ that power entrusted, more to their own vanity and satisfaction in life, than to the ends for which it was given them. *A man cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon;* and he who dedicates his mind to riches and ambition, can claim no reward at the day of judgment, for his actions on earth; that it is as difficult for a camel to go thro' the

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the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ; that length of days, in general, is so little essential to eternal happiness, or so seldom employed in a strict conformity to the divine law, that the kingdom of heaven is chiefly composed of those, whose short lives had not rendered subject to temptation. *Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is composed the kingdom of heaven.* This doctrine he sent his disciples abroad to publish ; which office the clergy now assume : and what is required of those who do assume it, I shall next examine, both from the prophets, and from Jesus Christ, and his apostles.

C H A P T E R VIII.

Of the Office of a CLERGYMAN.

THE office of a clergyman is, in the old testament, typified by a watchman or shepherd; in the new, by that of a prince sending his servants abroad to invite men to come to a feast. In the book of Ezekiel are these words, *If the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him a watchman; if he seeth the sword come, and bloweth the trumpet and warneth the people, he that will not be warned, his blood shall be on his own head, and he that receiveth warning, shall save his own life: But if the watchman blow not the trumpet, and if the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them; his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman; therefore hear my word and give warning: And if you do not admonish the wicked of his wickedness, that he may live; that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.* (Chap. 34.) *As I live, saith the Lord, because my flock is spoiled, and the shepherds fed themselves, and not my sheep; therefore I come against the shepherds, and will require my sheep at their hands.* Jesus Christ speaking to his disciples says, *Ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt shall lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot.*

Peter (1st Epis. chap. 5th) says, *feed the flock of God, which dependeth on you; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not as tho' ye were lords, over God's heritage; but that*
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ye may be examples to the flock. Jesus constantly illustrates his doctrine by metaphors, and compares the duty of his disciples, to an invitation to a supper, by the servant of a great man. This parable is twice made use of. The people invited refuse to come; he therefore orders his servants to invite all the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind; and on the table not being full, he commands his servants to go the high ways and hedges, and *compel them* to come to the feast. The meaning of the parable is, that when the Jews, among whom the gospel was first preached, refused to listen to it, he sent his disciples abroad in the world to preach it to other nations; and directed them, that they were not to confine themselves to such only, who were willing to be instructed; but that they should take pains, and use their utmost endeavours to convince men of their errors, that they might amend their lives. The propriety of the parable lies in this; conviction is to the mind, what compulsion is to the body; neither depend on the will: but it would be absurd to apply those means to one, which belong altogether to the other. I might as well lift a burden by thinking of it, as make a man learned by blows. If I want to convince a man of a proposition in Euclid, I must apply to his reason; and show him, that the properties asserted, are the necessary consequences of the figure supposed. It is a certain truth, that the three angles of a plain triangle are equal to two right ones. But if I would compel a man to believe this, I must demonstrate, from principles which he himself allows to be true, that which ever way the angles are inclined, yet when joined together, they are constantly equal to two right ones: and when his mind is thus informed, he is compelled to believe it. This is the compulsion meant in the metaphor; altho' bad men, for the vilest purposes, have substituted blows

blows and tortures, to compel the mind to believe, what it cannot be convinced of by reason, and adduce their authority for doing so, from this parable. In the other parable in Mathew, the servants are ordered to go to the high ways, and gather together, as many as they found, both good and bad, and bring them to the feast. When the prince afterwards, surveying his guests, observed one who had not a wedding garment on, him he ordered to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness. To this the kingdom of Heaven is compared; and which, if taken in a literal sense, is a most unjust sentence. The invitation was to gather all those, both good and bad, that could be found in the high ways, without regard to their dress or cloaths. But if by compulsion is meant conviction, the sentence is just. By the wedding garment is meant a life conformable to a man's conviction, and the guest is punished for hypocrisy, or acting contrary to his conviction. Paul says, "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries."

C H A P T E R IX.

Of the MESSIAH.

THE excuse made by our first parents, for not conforming to the divine law, was, that the feelings of their passions were too strong; and had therefore yielded to a temptation, which they were unable to resist: but God, to show he had laid no restraint on them, which they might not have conformed to, told them, that one should descend from them, whom no temptation should make deviate from his obedience, and thereby take off that excuse, the strength of passion, which they alledged could not be resisted. This descendant was by the report of the prophets, to come by the line of Abraham, Jesse, &c. “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” What manner of man this was to be, is thus described by Isaiah, “There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, a branch shall grow out of his roots; the spirit of the Lord shall be upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove, with equity, the meek of the earth: he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked: Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins; he shall stand for an ensign to the people; and to it shall the Gentiles seek (or repair.) Behold my servant, saith the Lord, whom I uphold as mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit
“ upon

“ upon him ; he shall bring forth judgment unto
 “ truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, until
 “ he hath set judgment on the earth, and the isles
 “ shall wait for his law. Thus saith the lord, to him
 “ whom man despiseth, to him whom the nations
 “ abhor, in an acceptable time have I heard thee,
 “ in the day of salvation have I helped thee ; I will
 “ preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant to the
 “ people, to establish the earth ; that thou mayest say
 “ to the prisoners, go forth ; and to them who are
 “ in darkness, show yourselves. I the Lord, have
 “ called thee to righteousness. I will hold thy hand,
 “ and give thee for a covenant to the people, and
 “ for a light to the Gentiles.” The prophet intro-
 duces the Messiah, as in existence, speaking after this
 manner, “ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, be-
 “ cause the Lord hath anointed me, to preach good
 “ tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind
 “ up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the
 “ captives, and the opening of the prison to them
 “ that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year
 “ of the Lord, and to comfort all that mourn ; to
 “ give beauty for ashes, and oil of joy for mourning.
 “ Listen O ye isles unto me, and harken ye people
 “ from afar : The Lord hath called me from the
 “ womb, he hath made my mouth like a sharp
 “ sword, and said unto me, thou art my servant, in
 “ whom I shall be glorified : and now saith the Lord,
 “ who hath formed me from the womb, to be his
 “ servant (to bring Jacob again unto him,) altho’
 “ Israel be not gathered, (or will not hearken to my
 “ voice,) yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the
 “ Lord. He hath given me the tongue of the learn-
 “ ed, that I may know how to speak a word in
 “ season, to him that is weary. He hath opened
 “ mine ears ; I was not rebellious, neither turned
 “ back : I gave my back to the smiters, and my
 “ cheeks

“ cheeks to him that plucked off the hair: I hid
“ not my face from shame and spitting.”

The obedience of the Messiah was to be tried to the utmost extent, that his example might take off all excuse from sinners. “ Thus saith the Lord, I
“ will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he
“ shall be as a glorious throne in his father’s house.
“ And on that day, shall the nail which is fastened
“ in a sure place, be removed, be cut down, and
“ fall; and the burden which was upon it, shall be
“ cut off; for the Lord hath spoken it.” And
(Zechar. 11) “ If ye think fit, give me my price,
“ and if not, forbear; and they weighed out for
“ my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord
“ said, cast it unto the potter; a goodly price,
“ that I was prized at, of them. And I took the
“ thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the
“ potter, in the house of the Lord.” (Chap. 13.)
“ And one shall say unto him, what are these wounds
“ in thy hands? Then he shall answer, those with
“ which I was wounded in the house of my friends.
“ Awake, O sword against my shepherd, against the
“ man that is my fellow, saith the Lord; smite the
“ shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”

The Messiah was to suffer death with entire resignation. His behaviour in this circumstance, is thus described by Isaiah, “ He was despised and rejected
“ of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with
“ grief. He was despised, and we esteemed him not;
“ we esteemed him smitten and afflicted of God:
“ But he was wounded for our transgressions, and
“ the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and
“ with his stripes we are healed. The Lord had laid
“ on him the iniquities of us all. He was brought as
“ a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its
“ shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.
“ He was cut off out of the land of the living, and
“ for

“ for the transgression of my people was he smitten.
 “ He made his grave with the wicked, and with the
 “ rich on the earth; he had done no violence, neither
 “ was there any deceit found in his mouth; yet it
 “ pleased God to bruise him. Therefore, said the
 “ Lord, I will divide him a portion with the great,
 “ and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, be-
 “ cause he hath poured out his soul unto death: for
 “ he was numbered with the transgressors, and he
 “ bare the sin of many, and made intercession for
 “ the transgressors.” Such was the Messiah to be,
 the man whom God was to send on earth, for an
 ensign, or example to man, and for the instruction
 and redemption of repenting sinners.

C H A P T E R X.

Of the FULFILLING of the PROPHECY.

SUCH is the description, the prophets gave of the Messiah, both of his manner of life, his reception in the world, and his resignation at his death; who was to be descended from Jesse; who was to instruct and condemn the world; whose words were to slay the wicked, and teach the poor the way of salvation. The prophets had specified the time when the Messiah was to come, and when this time came, Jesus was born. He was of the lineage of Jesse, and from the womb, or earliest knowledge, he dedicated his time to the instruction and reformation of mankind. As he grew in years, he increased in knowledge; he waxed strong in spirit. He was filled with wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him; or in the words of the prophet, *The spirit of wisdom, and the fear of the Lord was upon him.* (Luke, 2d Chap.) *Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man:* He was made, in all things, like unto his brethren; he was tempted as they were; but his super-excellence was, that he resisted all temptation. At a time when temptations may be supposed to have the greatest effect on young minds, arrogance and ambition presented themselves to his mind. “If
 “thou beest the Messiah, the son of God, cast thy-
 “self down from this precipice; for it is written,
 “he shall give his Angels charge concerning thee,
 “lest, at any time, thou dash thy foot against
 “a stone. Again, the Devil took him up to an
 “exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all
 “the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and
 “said,

“ said, all these things will I give to thee, if thou
 “ will fall down and worship me.” I do not think
 there was any personal conversation between Jesus
 Christ and the Devil, or that it was necessary to go
 to the top of an exceeding high mountain, to see
 all the kingdoms of the world and their glory ; he
 might have seen as much of them in a valley, as
 from the highest mountain on earth. The expression
 means no more, than an allegorical representation of
 these ideas, which were presented to the mind of
 Jesus by the Devil, which on reflection, he rejects
 or withstands : for we are not to tempt providence,
 by putting ourselves into unnecessary dangers : and
 that the sole business of life is, not to regard human
 grandeur, but to execute the commands of that
 Being who gave us existence, and appointed us here :
 We are to dedicate all our care and all our life to his
 worship. Temptation is a suggestion raised in our
 minds by our passions, to do what our conscience
 disapproves of ; where there is a comparison made,
 between the enjoyment of what our passions provoke
 us to do, and that, which our conscience tells us,
 our duty requires.

When the course of years arrived, which brings
 the human mind to its greatest strength, Jesus be-
 gan his ministry. He began to preach, and declare
 to man the will of God ; *he did not fail, nor was he
 discouraged : he reprov'd with equity, and smote the
 wicked with the rod of his mouth.* He reproached
 the chief among the Jews with their hypocrisy,
 oppression and superstition, who, under the gloss of
 conforming to tradition, had made the law of God
 of no effect. He told them that their praying in the
 streets or in public, shewed their intention was more
 to acquire approbation from men, than from God ;
 and that they should be rewarded accordingly. Re-
 proof to honest men, always begets an examination
 of

of their actions, and amendment of those wherein they find themselves wrong: In bad men, it excites malice and hatred to the person who discovers their iniquity, and reproaches them for it: They therefore became his enemies; they persecuted him, they conspired against him, they took him and put him to death. Pilate, whom he had not accused, found no fault in him; but the Priests, whom he had accused and reproached, found great fault in him. They alledged, they had a law which condemned him to death, for what might not appear to him as a crime. Pilate gave him up to be used according to their law: they judged and condemned him. While he was under his trial, and under the circumstances of condemnation and death, his behaviour is as exactly described by the Prophets as by the Evangelists. "He was oppressed and afflicted, " he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and " as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, (Isaiah, chap. 1, 14.)" Jesus had told his disciples that he was the Christ foretold, who was to come for the reconciliation for sin; that agreeable to the prophecy, he should be put to death, and forsaken by them his Disciples; but that in three days afterwards, he should become alive and rise from the dead (Mat. 27, verse 22, 23,) "While " they abode in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the son " of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, " who shall kill him; but, on the third day, he shall " rise again." He was accordingly judged, betrayed and put to death in the manner foretold. The price given for betraying him, was thirty pieces of silver; and the use it was put to, was to purchase the potters field, after Judas, on his repentance, had thrown it down in the temple, agreeable to the prophecy of Zechariah, (chap. 1st, verse 12, 13) It seems that when he told them, that to fulfill the

prophecy, he must be put to death and rise again the third day, they did not comprehend, or take this prophecy, or his prediction in a literal sense ; for on the report of Mary, Peter and two others he appeared to, they still doubted the reality of his resurrection, but took it for an idle tale or impossibility. They saw indeed, that the body was gone, but could not persuade themselves, that its being gone, was owing to his resurrection. But to their great astonishment, while they were met together privately, he stands before them, upbraids them with their unbelief of what he had foretold would come to pass, and desired them to come near, to examine and feel his wounds, that they might be convinced that it was no apparition or deception, but he himself who was crucified, and had now rose from the dead : and ordered them to publish his resurrection to the world, and teach all men those things they had heard from him, that by this his resurrection, they might show the truth of a future resurrection, and judgment of all men. But who would believe their report, besides those to whom the arm of the Lord was revealed ? One of themselves, who had not yet seen him, declared, that notwithstanding their assertion, the prediction of Jesus Christ himself, the prophecies which foretold the resurrection of Christ, and altho' the body was gone from the sepulchre, in a manner he could not account for, yet he never would believe, that the apparition they had seen, was the same person, whom he saw die on the Cross, except his senses convinced him, by seeing and feeling the wounds in his hands and feet. This Disciple had the proof he required, but this proof could extend no further than to himself : the same objection, he had raised in his mind, before his conviction by his senses, would occur to every one, to whom the resurrection was told, without the same proof.

proof. Jesus therefore told them, that all power was given him by his Father; and as he had confirmed his doctrine by miracles, he gave them the same power to confirm his resurrection. *As my father hath sent me, even so send I you; whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained.* He had cautioned them before his death, to take heed that no man should deceive them, for that many would come in his name and deceive many; but he now gave them the signs, to know the true from the false teachers. *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name, shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover;* that he was then to ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God; and would send them the Holy Ghost (or that Divine Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father) to instruct and direct them: that they should be brought before kings and governors, to give testimony of his doctrine: but desires them not to be afraid, or concerned at what they were to answer; for it should be given them at the same time, what to say; for that it would not be they, but the spirit of God, that spoke in them.

It is the greatest power that can be given by God to men, to forgive sins committed against himself: but Jesus Christ has left us evident marks to know such, to whom this power is delegated. He who can forgive sins against God, is one, whom neither the venom of animals, nor poison can hurt; the application of whose hands should instantly cure the sick; and who, without learning, can speak all languages. When I find such a man, I shall believe he has power to forgive my sins, for I believe in Christ. But if I find any man, or body of men, take on themselves

to forgive sins; and yet be subject to be hurt, either by venom or poison; or who cannot cure the sick by the application of their hands; I shall believe such to be deceivers, for I believe in Christ. Paul tells the Galatians, *There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ; but altho' we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, than I have preached, let him be accursed: for the gospel which I have preached, is not of man; neither received I it of man; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* To the Ephesians, he says, *Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of those things, cometh the wrath of God, upon the children of disobedience.* Jesus Christ, after leaving his final instructions with his disciples, and telling them that he would be constantly with them, (or that they should be constantly under his direction,) ascended into heaven in their sight.

It had been a received opinion among the Jews, that, about this time, the Messiah should come, and restore the kingdom to Israel; which they mistook to be that temporal power they had under David. The disciples of Christ were of the same opinion; and altho' by his miracles and resurrection, they were convinced he was the Christ, yet they still imagined his kingdom was to be a temporal one. *Lord, is it at this time, thou wilt restore the kingdom to Israel?* Acts, 1st, 6th. He told them, he would send them the Holy Ghost, whereby they should know the truth; he expounded to them the scriptures, and made them sensible, what the nature of his kingdom was; that it was not of this world, but a spiritual one, to be enjoyed after death. It was soon after the ascension of Christ, that they gave an evident proof of this power, of being authorised to act by the Holy Ghost or Divine Spirit. A man forty years old, (lame from his birth, and whose support was begging

begging at the gate of the Temple) at the word of Peter, is instantly cured, to the amazement of every one that knew him : for his being lame, from the place he constantly attended at for charity, must have been known to all in Jerusalem. This miracle, wrought on so known an object, made so much noise, as enduced the rulers to examine into it. They called the man restored to his strength of limbs, and Peter before them ; and being satisfied, that the man, now before them, was the same beggar they had so long known lame ; they asked the Apostles, in whose name, and by what power they had done this ? to whom Peter answered, *Ye rulers of the people, and Elders of Israel, if we are to be examined, by what means this man is made whole ; be it known unto you, that in the name of Jesus, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him, doth this man stand before you whole.* This answer, from men whom they plainly perceived to be unlearned, disconcerted the council. There was no denying the miracle ; it was evident, both to them present, and to all in Jerusalem. It reduced them to this *dilemma*, either that they had wrongfully put a just man to death, or that the Almighty had perverted nature, and wrought miracles in support of falsehood. The first they would not allow, and the last could not be supposed ; for, as the man cured of blindness, answered on a familiar occasion, *We know that God heareth not sinners, but if a man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.* There was no evading this alternative, and therefore, to smother all further enquiry, they ordered the Apostles to preach no more in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. On their continuing to preach in his name, the rulers had the Apostles brought before them a second time, and said, *Did we not strictly command you to preach no more in the name of Jesus ? and be-*

hold you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

It is a practice among bad men, to asperse those they hate, and to alledge every crime against them, which a malicious world may be induced to believe. To excuse themselves for putting Christ to death, they aspersed his doctrine, and those who followed it, as guilty of what the world must think criminal. The apostles (guided only by the spirit of truth or the Holy Ghost) were open to the fraudulent designs of their enemies. They were characterized by them, then judged and condemned by the world, without examination. Paul, to avoid being put to death by the Jews, was obliged to appeal to Cæsar, and was thereon delivered up to the Roman governor, in order to be transmitted to Rome. He had been examined by Festus, and his accusers called, to know what charge they had to lay against him, that along with his prisoner, he might transmit his crime. But Festus told Agrippa, that the Jews had no accusation against him, of such things, as he, from their clamour, imagined they had: but only some things concerning their own superstition; and about one Jesus, who had been put to death, and whom Paul affirmed to be still alive. This was a crime he had no conception of. If it was a mistake in Paul, it was of too trivial a nature, either for the senate to inquire into, or for Cæsar to determine on. And it was unreasonable to send a man prisoner, *and at the same time not withal to signify his crime.* When Paul came to Rome, he addressed himself to the chief of his countrymen there; and told them that altho' he had nought to accuse his nation of; yet to save himself from the fury of some, who had sworn to kill him, he was obliged to appeal to Cæsar. The Jews told him, they had received no letters, nor knew of any particular charge, their nation had against him; but as to that sect, of which
he

he professed himself a member, it was universally spoken against. It is probable, that when Paul was delivered up among the rest of the prisoners, the report of his crime was also made, when it appearing, that nothing was laid to his charge, but a dispute with the Jews, whether or not, some certain man was still alive, whom they had put to death; and which the Jews repented so greatly, as obliged the prisoner to save himself from their fury, by appealing to Cæsar, and putting himself under the immediate protection of the Roman governor; and was sent to Rome, not so much for being a criminal, as one who sought protection, as being a Roman, that he was then dismissed: and he remained at Rome for two years in his own hired house, where he had full liberty to preach the gospel, both to Jews and Pagans. But there was one very material difference between those whom he was to convert. Both the Jews and he believed in one omnipotent Being as God: to them he was to prove that the Messiah, promised and expected, was this same Jesus whom they had crucified, but whose kingdom was not of this world. But the heathens, and particularly the Romans, had an infinite number of gods, which had each their particular temple and mode of worship. He was to prove to them, that these supposed beings, they worshiped as gods, were only the fictions of men: this was downright atheism to them. To tell them of one omnipotent, eternal and invisible God, whom no image could represent, nor could dwell in temples built by hands, but was every where, and at all times present, over all the expanded universe; to tell them of *Jesus Christ* who was come into the world for their instruction, whose precepts they were to observe, whose example they were to follow, who was born and brought up in Judea, whom the Jews had unjustly put to death, who afterwards re-assumed life,

conversed with men on earth, and then (in their sight) was taken up to heaven; this was a doctrine or system, so widely different from what they were brought up to believe; from what they could conceive; that they would naturally conclude with Festus, that Paul was mad, and these notions the productions of a distempered brain.

All new systems require time to make them familiar to the mind, before it will allow an examination of them. It is with difficulty prejudices can be laid aside, or the judgment induced to consider such novelties in a serious manner. But when by the continuance of Paul's preaching, and the curiosity of those who went to hear him, men were induced to examine into the credibility of what he preached; they first began to doubt their own, and afterwards to adopt his doctrine. Curiosity is natural to mankind: A doctrine even seemingly absurd, inclines men to hear and examine, what can be said in support and justification of it. This produced more hearers, and a further inclination to examine. The more they heard, the more they wanted to examine, until their curiosity ended in conviction; the consequence of which was, an evident desertion of the heathen temples. The heathen priests were too much concerned in this, not to be alarmed: they applied to government, to abolish this new sect. Men who denied the very existence of their gods, could have no regard for them, and they who did not regard the gods, would not be bound by any tie of virtue; whence arose that universal prejudice against them, as men capable of every vice. Thus Tacitus reports them to be men, *who, for their detestable crimes, were universally hated.* To tell truth in part of any thing, and falsify the rest, is the surest method to make calumny believed. It was true, the Christians paid no regard to the gods of the Romans, but their believing in one universal omni-

omnipotent God, was concealed ; and instead of that, it was said that they allowed of none other God, *but one Jesus Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, suffered death as a criminal, when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea.* Calumny thus artfully propagated, was the cause of all the subsequent persecutions of the Christians. Had Tacitus enquired, or informed himself of the tenets of the Christians, he would have allowed them to be more pure in virtue than all these gods he worshipped, of whom he says, “ Such was the lukewarmness or indifference “ of the deities, that they were alike unmoved by “ patterns of righteousness and those of iniquity,” (Anal. 7th) The increase of the Christians, notwithstanding the severe punishments inflicted on them, induced Pliny to enquire particularly into their tenets. He wrote to Trajan, that he had examined them in the strictest manner, even by torture ; but that, beside an obstinate superstition, he found nothing but innocence and simplicity of manners among them ; that by their profession, they were neither to steal, rob, defraud, commit adultery nor tell a falsehood ; that they had meetings before day, where they eat together, and then dispersed ; but although he found nothing criminal done at their meetings, yet he had forbid them ; but that, notwithstanding, their numbers were so great, that he begged the emperor’s directions what to do with them. This question could arise only from a supposition in Pliny, that although their stubborn superstition, in denying the very existence of the Roman gods, made them justly punishable, yet their innocence of manners, and strict observance of all the moral duties, deserved pity. Trajan thereon directs, that if the Christians were brought before him, he must punish them ; but that no inquiry should be made after them. This answer is ridiculed by Tertullian as inconsistent. To
punish

punish men, when brought before a magistrate, supposes them criminal; and to forbid any enquiry to be made after them, supposes them innocent. But if Tertullian's partiality had not outweighed his judgment, he would have considered, that to support the religion established in any well regulated government, is the first object the laws attend to. Christianity was quite opposite to that which the Romans professed, not only as to the manner, but as to the object of worship. If they had any regard for their gods, Christianity was the greatest insult that could be offered to them. In defence of their religion, they were obliged to persecute the Christians, and the emperor by his office, was obliged to put the laws in force. Pliny wrote, that except their stubborn superstition, they were a harmless and innocent people; and Trajan's order means only this, that in support of the laws, they must be punished when brought before him; but in regard to their moral behaviour in other respects, they should not be sought after. In this light, I see nothing inconsistent in Trajan's letter: The Christians have not shown the like lenity in like circumstances. Under the Christian government, innocence in morals is no excuse for him, who differs from the orthodox faith. For a man to plead his conscience, will not save him from being punished as a heretick. Persecution never answers the end proposed; men are inclined to pity those who suffer, and their pity makes them enquire more minutely into the cause of their sufferings; and often-times makes those converts to that religion, who would not otherwise have thought of it. Nero's punishing the Christians, by those cruel and wanton deaths, for a crime, which all Rome knew, he himself *only* was guilty of, raised compassion in the spectators, and made them, notwithstanding the bad opinion instilled into them of the Christians, more minutely enquire in-

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to the nature of their crimes, into the nature of their opinions; for their opinions were their crimes. Truth always gains by enquiry. I am persuaded, Nero's cruelty did not destroy more Christians, than it gained profelytes to Christianity: they were still persecuted and they still increased. I cannot tell whether it was compassion or policy, that made Alexander Severus favour the Christians; but had he known their tenets, he never would have applied to an oracle to know, whether he should allow temples to be built to the God of the Christians. Demetrius the silver-smith at Ephesus, had determined that point long before: He heard Paul preach, and soon found that what he taught, was destructive of his interest; he thereon called together his fellow craftsmen, and candidly laid their mutual danger before them, viz. "By this craft, we have our wealth, but this Paul
 "has persuaded and turned away many people, say-
 "ing, that they be no Gods who are made by hands;
 "so that not only our craft is in danger to be set at
 "naught, but the temple of the great goddess Diana,
 "will be despised, and her magnificence set at
 "nought and destroyed, whom all Asia and the
 "world worship." The most orthodox priest in the Empire could not have given a more just, nor a more honest reason for abolishing christianity than Demetrius did, without the assistance of an oracle. The worship of the God of the christians, and that of the supposed gods of the rest of mankind, he found, would be inconsistent. And this was the answer the oracle gave to Alexander.

C H A P T E R XI.

Of F A I T H.

F A I T H is a belief, built *solely* on these principles which reason presents to the mind. It is defined by St. Paul to be, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. It is a belief, our senses can give us no information of; it does not come under comparison with what we observe. Our conscience, supported by our reason, is the only evidence upon which we are to ground our belief: by them only we are to judge. *The substance of hope is belief*, which we can never increase to persuasion, except our reason first makes it probable. *Through faith we understand that the world was formed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made by the things that do appear*. The human mind from its confined knowledge, cannot conceive the power, or manner how the spirit of God operated, when he formed the world: but the idea I have of his omnipotence, is (to my reason) evidence sufficient, that it was formed at his command. In matters of faith, there must be a consistency, between the efficient power and the effect produced: this, when examined by my reason, and approved of by my judgment, becomes faith or belief in my mind. The idea I have of omnipotent power, is consistent with that, of his creating the world, and the institution of these laws, by which it is governed; but I am obliged, at the same time to annex to it, an equal idea of justice in that power; or, that as he has created inhabitants for this world, and requires obedience from them, so he must also have endowed them with a knowledge of what these laws

laws are, to which he requires obedience ; but obedience or disobedience supposes a free will, or liberty to chuse if they will obey or not. The idea I have of Divine Justice, is to my mind, a sufficient conviction, that he will reward or punish men according to their obedience : and universal observation tells me, that these rewards and punishments are not distributed, while men are here on earth. If then men are to undergo a trial, there must be a re-existence given them, to subject them to this trial. Now altho' human knowledge does not extend so far, as to inform us of the manner of this re-existence, or of the nature of these rewards or punishments, then to be allotted ; yet our ignorance, or want of conception, from our confined judgment, is no reason for us to deny that power in the Almighty ; no more than that our not being able to conceive the manner by which the world was created by him, should induce us to believe, that it was never created. That God who created the world, has a power to give a re-existence to man, that he will execute this power at an appointed time of judgment after death, and reward every man according to his works, is the basis of all religion, and the faith spoken of by St. Paul. The power of God we cannot judge of : but in affairs of this life, we are enabled to judge by comparison and observation ; and by those, and our reason, we are bound to judge.

There are many things the objects of faith, in which reason does not immediately interfere. We often believe history from the faith we have in those who report it ; and altho' we were not witnesses of the facts related, yet if our reason has nothing to object, we receive the relation as truth ; but if our reason does not discover some near affinity between the facts related, and the cause which produced them, our reason doubts their truth ; and if it discovers a contradiction

tradiction between what is related and what we observe, we disbelieve the facts, and conclude the relation to be false. No historian could induce me to believe, that a sparrow could fly away with an ox ; because the idea I have of the strength of a sparrow, is inconsistent with the idea I have of the weight of an ox. No cause occurs to my reason to object against the supposed existence of Alexander, Julius Cæsar or Vespasian : But when I am told that Vespasian wrought miracles, that he cured the blind and the lame ; I ask, to what purpose did nature so far go out of its manner, to shew this power in Vespasian ? Was it to convince the world, that God had appointed him Emperor, as the kings of England did, when their touch cured the Scrophula ? or was it in evidence to mankind, of some proposition or particular information, which could not be proved without this interposition of providence ? I am told that neither of these appeared, or was alledged. I am persuaded that nature will never vary, or go out of its way, to no purpose ; and that therefore in this, history has reported a falsehood ; as one of their own poets very justly observes, *Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit.* There are certain limits to the natural assent of the mind, beyond which true faith or real belief cannot be pushed : if it is attempted, reason steps in, and forbids it. Whoever therefore would enslave the mind, must instil into it some principle to counteract reason. Dread and fear have been, with great success, called in for this purpose. It has been inculcated by the clergy into weak minds, that except men give up their reason, they cannot be christians, or acceptable to God ; and give for instance the example of Thomas the Apostle, who would not give up his reason or belief on the report of others, that Jesus was come to life again, until he had the demonstration of his senses. And he was, on that
account

account, blamed by his master. But this disbelief in Thomas, did not rise from his reason but his prejudice: Observation on things past, did not allow him to understand, or give credit to what his master had foretold. The other Apostles were of the same belief with Thomas, before they saw him; they believed the report of the women was an idle tale.

It is asserted by the clergy, that christianity is a revealed religion; the knowledge of which could not therefore be attainable by reason, which with conscience, is the basis of the religion of nature; but that Christ had revealed to mankind a new obligation, quite unknown before, which revelation must relate to some principles of faith, different from, and independent of those, on which the religion of nature is built: for if it did not, it could not be called a new or revealed religion. It therefore cannot be confined to those rules, (conscience and reason) on which that of nature is built. From this it must follow, that the Christian faith is not to be judged of, by the law of reason; and except a man gives up his reason, and believes in what he cannot conceive, and be fully convinced of the truth of a proposition he is incapable to judge of, he cannot, by the churches doctrine, escape the wrath of God. After such a hard sentence, a man is naturally led to enquire, what are these inconceivable propositions, which, in contradiction to reason and judgment, he is obliged to be convinced of, to escape the wrath of God. If I search for them among the precepts delivered by Jesus Christ, I shall not find them; but I am told they are *mysteries*, found out by the fathers, confirmed by councils, and adopted by the church, which has an exclusive power to interpret the precepts and doctrine of Jesus Christ; and therefore have a right to pronounce damnation against every one, who does not receive their interpretation. To
them

them, to whom this power seems evident, fear and dread will certainly make them throw aside both their conscience and reason, as the greatest enemies to their salvation. But I am convinced that my reason and conscience is the law implanted in me by God : I will therefore give more credit to that law, than to their interpretation, whatever be the power, by which they claim a right to impose it ; and will examine by myself, the doctrine delivered by Christ, without regard either to the power or the threats of the church. I find in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, some things, which my reason could not inform me of, but none that I cannot assent to : and altho' he hath opened a way to mercy unknown to me before, yet my salvation does not depend on my knowing this, but on my conforming to the terms of it. " If " ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do " them." The Apostle James says, " Thou believest " there is one God ; thou dost well : The Devils " believe also ; but know, that faith without works " is dead. Show me thy faith without thy works, " and I will show you my faith by my works." The church will not give me liberty to think, yet the same apostle tells me, " That it is by this my liberty, " I am to be judged. So speak, and so do, as they " who shall be judged by the law of liberty." I find Jesus Christ conveys his instructions, both by direct precepts and by allegories ; and that the origin of all the inconceivable mysteries, imposed by the church, has risen from these sentences being explained in a direct way, which he intended as allegorical. Bishop Stillingfleet, I think observes, that the main inlet to all the distractions, confusions and divisions in the christian church, has been, by adding other conditions to church communion, than Christ had ordered ; that the grand commission, given to the Apostles, was to teach what Christ had commanded them ;

them; but not the least intimation given them to impose, or require any thing beyond what he himself has spoken. And Mr. Locke observes, “ that
 “ setting up as articles of faith, propositions not directed by Christ or his Apostles, is the foundation
 “ of all that superstition, which Popery has introduced;
 “ that were men, unbiassed, sent fairly to the Bible to
 “ search for, and find out their religion; and not the
 “ Bible put into their hands, to point out passages favourable to any particular sect or doctrine, neglecting or misrepresenting all others; Christendom
 “ would have more christians, and those more knowing, more unanimous and more in the right, than they now are.” Men, by nature, have the same ideas of right and wrong, true and false, probable and improbable, and when the same evidence is laid before them, they will nearly draw the same inferences from what they read. The New Testament is open to all men, who, if left entirely to themselves, would nearly agree in determining, what sentences spoken by Jesus Christ, are to be understood in a direct sense, and what in an allegorical one. I believe christianity, like a river, the further it has run from its source, the more it has been corrupted, by mixing with, or imbibing what did not come from the original spring, or that doctrine which Jesus commanded his Disciples to declare in his name. Mahomet took notice of the many corruptions introduced into christianity, and mentions them in his rapsody of the Koran. He therefore orders his followers never to exceed the bounds of their religion. Christianity began very early to be corrupted: St. Paul complains of it, and cautions both the Gallatians and Ephesians to guard against innovations. And St. John in his review of the churches, accuses some of falling off from the purity of the christian doctrine, by their innovations. The doctrine of Christ, met with the same pollutions, from design or mistake,

as the religion of nature did. It was a gross deviation from that natural law of duty, (which our Saviour tell us was from the beginning) by the many corruptions, which the passions of man had introduced, which made the coming of the Messiah necessary, to reinform mankind, and show how far they had deviated from what God had from the beginning commanded. He says, "Think not I am come to destroy the law or the Prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil them: For verily I say unto you, that until heaven, and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Again, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him: Every man that hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." To learn or to be drawn of God, is to live agreeable to these natural laws of duty, which he hath implanted in our minds; so that no man can be a follower of Christ, except he is first a good man, a strict observer of that original law which proceeds from God; and if he does not subject himself to that original law, Jesus declares he cannot receive him; for he came not to alter the law, but to explain and fulfil it: his preaching was to persuade men to return to the observance of it, which if they did he promised that they should find mercy with the Father. It is the law which all good men have observed before the coming of Christ: by obeying this law, Job kept his integrity during all his trials. The sole end of the preaching of the Jewish prophets was, to persuade them to conform to this law; and we find among the Heathens some or other of them, who, from the knowledge and tenor of that law only, have recommended every moral precept spoken of by Jesus Christ, in his sermon on the Mount. Revenge, swearing, profaneness, even speculative lust, with every other vice is forbid, and every virtue recommended. They declare that
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the worship of the Gods should be with all sincerity, chastity, holiness, and piety : that they are to be revered, with a pure, entire and uncorrupted mind ; and that even the fear of death should not make a man depart from his uprightness. The object of worship was the only article they were ignorant of. The difference then between revealed religion and that of nature, doth not consist in a difference of morals.

I shall next consider wherein it differs in other respects, or conveys instruction, where the religion of nature leaves us ignorant. In this enquiry I shall take the liberty, to believe *that only*, to be the christian doctrine, which Christ himself has declared to be such ; and *that only* to be the proper interpretation of his words, which his usual phraseology makes agreeable to my judgment. Conscience and reason are the rule given me by my Creator to know his will, and direct my judgment ; and God cannot contradict himself, nor impose new laws on me, inconsistent with those he has already, by nature, endued me with knowledge of. Whatever is truth, whatever is required of me to believe, must be conformable to these ; if what Christ has directed was not supported by them, I would not be a christian. But as I find no precept of his to disagree with these, but on the contrary an explanation of the Divine will, quite conformable to the idea I have of the Deity, I therefore am a christian.

When Jesus Christ declared to the world the will of God, and the manner in which he required to be worshipped, it was to this law he appealed, to convince mankind of the truth of his doctrine. He says, “ I tell you the truth and ye believe me not. Which
“ of you convinces me of sin ? and if I tell the truth,
“ why do ye not believe me ? ” He here makes that internal original law, the rule of judgment to distin-

guish truth from falsehood; and challenges them to show, wherein he had differed from it, either in his life or doctrine. This doctrine, he himself has sufficiently explained, and I think plainly enough expressed; and I know of no exclusive power, delegated by him to any body of men, to affix a particular meaning to any of his precepts. We are told that no prophecy is of any private interpretation; that every man should be convinced in his own mind, and therefore every man has a right to judge for himself. There can be no merit, where there is no free choice: What a man is compelled to do, is to him neither virtue nor vice. We are desired by the Apostles “so to speak and so to do, as they, who shall be judged by the law of liberty; for why should our liberty be judged of, by another man’s conscience. Let us therefore stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free; for where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” And if this is the doctrine of Christ, we must conclude, that where there is not liberty, there the spirit of the Lord is not. It was reason and conviction, and not force, that induced the Disciples of Jesus to believe him; by this, his Apostles established his Divine doctrine; and by the same free appeal to reason and conscience, which induced them to hearken to, and believe him, should every man examine the doctrine of Christ, and establish his own faith. But for what cause, besides a worldly, a political one, the church have taken on themselves, to put an interpretation on some passages of the scripture, which is inconsistent with what others in the new testament will admit of, and denounce the wrath of God on those who dissent from them, besides punishing them to the utmost of their power in this world, I can neither conceive myself, nor will they inform me of: for when they are asked to reconcile them, their

answer

answer is ; that these are *mysteries*, which altho' they can neither be conceived by the human mind, nor explained by human reason, must still be believed ; that these are articles of faith given, to try our obedience ; and the more absurd they may seem, the more is our merit in believing them. This answer may satisfy one, who, from habit, prejudice or indolence, thinks himself sufficiently a christian, by assenting to whatever the church directs ; but will never satisfy one, who chooses his religion from his own conviction ; or claims that liberty of judging, so much recommended by Christ and his Apostles. Of this latter class I am ; and I shall no farther regard the articles of faith decreed by the church, than as I find them conformable to the precepts of Christ, explained by my own reason ; for liberty of thought is as essential to the religion of Christ, as to that of nature. It was in opposition to the habits, the prejudices of the Jews, and the unanimous opinion of the chief priests and Scribes, that Jesus Christ promulgated his doctrine. Had his hearers thought it necessary, to have the concurrence of the Jewish church (the chief priests) to direct them in their belief, and authorize their faith, he would not have gained one proselyte ; yet the Jewish church was of Divine institution. But they had corrupted it ; they indeed kept up the ceremonies, but neglected the spirit of the law. May not the same falling off, have happened in the christian church ? History gives us an account of none more wicked, than some of the christian clergy have been, and scarce any so openly so, as some of the very heads of the church have shewn themselves. What was said of the Jewish clergy, may be with much more propriety, said of them ; *Their priests teach for hire, and their prophets divine for money, and like a troop of robbers, they murder on the high way by consent.*

C H A P T E R XII.

Of my BELIEF.

JESUS, in his instructions, declares himself a man, the son of man. This is an expression common among the prophets, to signify the human state, or a being altogether human; and generally human nature in its weak, helpless state, as, *the son of man in whom there is no help—The son of man which is a worm—The son of man which shall be made as grass.*—He says, he was sent into the world, commissioned by God to disclose his will to mankind; that the instructions and precepts which he delivered, whereby men may be enabled to obtain mercy, were not from himself, but from God, whose messenger he was. And that he was this messenger he proved by his miracles, but much more by the purity of the doctrine he taught. And to the attributes of truth and justice (which conscience and reason endowed us with the knowledge of, as essential to the Deity) he added that of mercy to men, on repentance and amendment of life. This is an attribute, no way inconsistent with my conscience and reason to assent to. It becomes the ground of our hopes, and should excite in us, a love and reverence for the Deity, who thus has had compassion on our infirmities. There is no force put on my mind to believe this; yet this is the whole mystery of christianity; the light which nature could not give us. This is the hope, wherein the religion of nature was defective. He said, the sole end, for which life is given to men, is to try their obedience to God, by their conformity to his will; that therefore it was foolish in men to throw away their time here, to any other purpose,

purpose, than on that, for which life was given them ; for they knew not how soon it might be demanded of them. The system of morals he gave, was the most complete, and built on the simplest and plainest foundation, that could be given, to make all the actions of men, while on earth, directed to one sole object ; that, at the time of judgment, they may obtain mercy, and enjoy happiness in eternity. In order to this, he recommends truth, justice and mercy, (the attributes of the Deity) to be observed by men ; and to leave to God, to judge and avenge the injuries done them by others ; to be patient under affliction, and resigned to the will of God ; to imitate God, to the utmost of their power, *by being perfect as their father in heaven is perfect* ; that the utmost happiness which men can enjoy here, is of a short duration ; that riches and power on earth, are not to be regarded as blessings ; they are only opportunities given men to try their obedience, by which they should be judged ; and *to whom much was given, of them much would be required* ; that as God, by him, had promised forgiveness of sins, upon a sincere repentance and amendment of life, they ought not to delay it ; but be always ready to submit to death, when summoned to leave life ; that without repentance there could be no forgiveness ; and that there was no repentance in the grave. He accuses the Jews, that they would not hearken to him, tho' neither his doctrine, nor his example could be accused. *I tell you truth and ye believe me not. Which of you convinces me of sin ? Why then do ye not believe me ?*

His unexceptionable doctrine shewed them their duty ; and his example, conformable to it, shewed them, that God required nothing of them, but what they might conform to ; yet would they not hearken to him, nor believe him.

The Jews seem to have been a people, from the beginning, whom reason could not convert: it was signs and wonders which directed their faith. They were worse than the heathens; for with the Jews, reason was no motive for conviction. They asked a sign, and Jesus told them, that since neither the miracles they had seen him perform (which they attributed to Necromancy) nor the doctrine he preached, could convince them he was sent by God; they should have no other sign but that of *Jonas*, who was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and then came again into the world; so he should be so long under the power of death, and then resume life. That the same prophecy which had foretold his coming, had also foretold his death, by those he came to instruct: but that it would be better, on the day of Judgment, with those of Sodom and Gomorrah, than with that perverse generation; that those of Ninevah should condemn them, for that they had repented, on the preaching of *Jonas*, while a greater than *Jonas* was there. Our Saviour here upbraids the Jews with incorrigible incredulity, and seems to give them up to the perverse disposition of their own hearts. The miracles he had already wrought, had not convinced them, that he was assisted by a divine power; neither had the conformity of his behaviour to the precepts he taught, cleared their minds of the suspicion of hypocrisy. He therefore asks them, *Which of you convinces me of sin?* He had explained to them the will of God, as recorded by the prophets; and by his own example shown, that God requires no more than man can perform. They had now therefore no cloke for their sin; nor should these Jews have any other sign from him, to evince his divine mission, than that which should be the consequence of their own wickedness, viz. his resurrection to life, after being put to death by them. Jesus's persevering

severing in his uprightness (under all his temptations and persecutions) unto death, made him that example, which takes off from men, all excuse for sin: He says, *If I had not come among them they would not have had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin.* And Peter says, *He acted in all things conformable to the will of God: he did well, yet suffered for it; he bore his sufferings patiently, and was therefore acceptable to God; and has left us an example whereby to follow his steps; who altho' he committed no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him, that judgeth righteously.*

An example, by which the world can be condemned, or which leaves no cloke or excuse for sin, must be between beings equally qualified. It is no crime in an elephant, that he has not the swiftness of a grey-hound; nor in the grey-hound, that he has not the strength of an elephant: they are not similarly qualified, and their different perfections cannot condemn one the other.

If Jesus was endowed, above the ability of man, his conformity to the doctrine he taught, could be no condemnation to mankind: they are not equally qualified; they would therefore have still had a cloke for their sins. All men would be good, if they had no temptation to be otherwise; but all men are liable to temptations, and the resisting them more or less, distinguishes the good from the bad, the virtuous from the vicious. Jesus shewed they might be resisted altogether; he overcame every temptation, which, either the Devil, or the persecution of human malice could present to him: and his example becomes our condemnation. He was tried to the utmost, and like gold tried in the fire, he remained pure. The miracles he performed,
were

were the consequence of his uprightness; and by his words, it would seem, that an exact conformity to the Divine will, would give any man that power. He says to his Disciples, *If ye had faith, as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this mountain, be removed to yonder place; or to this sycamore tree, be plucked up by the roots, and planted in the sea, and they would obey you.*

Jesus, having committed no sin, having never transgressed the laws of God; and the day of judgment being appointed, at the end of the world, to try such as had transgressed, it was not required of him to continue in the state of death, until the general time of trial: for as no crime could be alledged against him, he had none to detain him under the power of death; he therefore rose from the dead the third day. He continued so long under the power of death, as to shew that he had been dead; and rose to show, that as death was the consequence of sin, so was life that of righteousness: it was therefore not required of him to wait for judgment, but was immediately changed into that state of immortality, the promised reward of obedience to the Divine laws. He told also, that at the day of judgment, he should be appointed judge of the world, agreeable to what Isaiah had prophesied. *Thus saith the Lord, I will cloath him with thy robe; and strengthen him with thy girdle; and commit thy government into his hands. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open.* If any thing can raise in our minds, an idea of Divine mercy and justice, it must be, that we are not to be judged by a Being. "insensible of our passions or superior to our feelings; " but by one made, in all respects, as we are."

The tremendous judgment, when all the human race are to reassume life, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil

to

to the resurrection of damnation, is allegorically described in the Revelations by a book ; in which the merits and demerits of every one are written, and out of which they were to be judged. It is proclaimed by a great Angel, that if any could be found, whose life was free from sin, he should then come forth, that he might open the book, and be appointed to judge mankind, whose actions were all recorded there.—*And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book ; neither to look on it : and one of the Elders said unto me, weep not ; for behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, of the root of David, he hath prevailed to open the book, and to loosen the seals thereof. And they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book ; and to open the seals thereof ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people. And I heard the voice of many Angels saying, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for receiving power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing. And every creature in heaven and in earth, heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and power, and glory be to him, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Revel. chap. v.*

Paul to the Corinthians, speaking of the resurrection, and last judgment, saith, *Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even to the Father ; for he must reign, until he have put all things under his feet. Now, when he saith, all things are put under him ; it is manifest that he is excepted, who put all things under him : and when all things shall be subdued unto him ; then shall the son also himself be subject to him, who had put all things under him ; that God may be all in all.*

I observe an exact conformity between what is prophesied of the Messiah, and what is related of Jesus. The description, given by the prophets of
the

the Messiah, was very particular; and he in every particular answered it, both as to the time of his appearance in the world, his doctrine, his reception in the world and manner of death; so is there between the principles he lays down, and the duty he requires; my belief here is no where stretched beyond my reason; nor does any part of the system clash with the other. That the Almighty, who created man, should at the same time, by an internal law, inform him of the duty he requires, and that he should endow him with passions to try his obedience to this law, is quite agreeable both to my reason and experience. That he should have compassion on our infirmities; and when we become sensible of our errors, repent and amend our lives; that he should then extend his mercy to pardon us, is likewise agreeable to the idea I have of his divine mercy. That through Jesus Christ we have a plain and just explanation of the duties God requires of man, and a true information of the terms, on which we are to expect forgiveness if we trespass, the which, if we do not accept of, or alledge we are unable to conform to; his example, who (by being one of ourselves) was encompassed with the like infirmities, and in all points tempted like as we are, will, by his proved obedience and conformity, condemn us: This, my reason obliges me to believe. That to take from mankind all excuse, God hath appointed this man *Jesus* to be our judge, on that great day of trial, who, from his knowledge of human frailty, and his experience of the force of temptation, will have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, wherein to excuse and whereon to inflict punishment, raises in my mind the highest idea of divine justice and mercy joined together. Heb. 11. v. 17. *For in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethern, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;*

ple; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those that are tempted. And chap. 5. For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God; that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity, and by reason hereof, he ought, as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins; and no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was: so also Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, "Thou art my son this day have I begotten thee," who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared; though he were a son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him. And chap. 1, v. 9, Thou has loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows. To the Ephesians he saith, (chap. 1) wherefore I cease not to give thanks for you in my prayers—that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom, in the knowledge of him, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

I am therefore convinced of the truth of what St. Paul says, when he tells us, That God hath appointed
a day,

a day, on which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

As to the moral obligations, which the Christian religion requires, I believe they may be all comprehended in these three. Let us observe truth and innocence before God, benevolence and mercy towards our neighbours, and justice and fortitude as members of society. I believe that he, whose conduct in life, comes nearest to a strict observance of these, will be nearest to mercy at the day of judgment.

C H A P T E R XIII.

Of the DOCTRINE of the CHURCH.

IN the foregoing chapter I have declared what my faith is, and I am convinced, it is the faith recommended to me, by him who is to be my future judge: and that whatever a man soweth, that will he also reap: my reason is no where stretched to believe this. This system is simple and easy to be understood: but the church has condemned it, and in its place has substituted another; one incomprehensible, unintelligible, and inconsistent with human understanding: for they tell us, that God has been deficient in his information to the human mind, but that they have found out another faith, which they call *mystery*, or a belief beyond the capacity of the human mind to conceive, the which nevertheless if we do not believe, we cannot be saved. I cannot form, in my mind, an idea of God, without conceiving, at the same time an idea of justice. I cannot conceive, he would require of man a belief of any thing, which he has not endowed him with powers to conceive: This new faith I cannot conceive, I am therefore convinced, he will not require the belief of it as a duty in me. I am told by the prophets, that at the latter times, there will be a great deflection from the truth: And when I consider what the prophet *Daniel* must mean, when he tells us of the little horn, which, in his vision, was to rise, on the declension of the fourth empire; What Paul to the Thessalonians tells us of the *man of sin*; what the description of the *woman*, (the emblem of error) in the Revelation means, whose residence was the great city built on seven hills, full of blasphemy, persecution and cruelty, who was drunk with the blood of the saints, and

and made traffick of the souls of men ; on whose forehead was wrote *mystery, the mother of abominations* ; and compare those to the canons and discipline of the church at the latter end of the 15th century ; I am convinced that the prophecy is fulfilled.

The seat of error, spoken of by St. John, was to be that great city built on seven hills, which ruleth over the kings of the earth ; whose dominion was to be supported by a great delusion, which God would send, on account of the wickedness of men ; the which should induce them to believe a lie. *Rome* was this great city built on seven hills, by which the world was conquered, and long kept in slavery. The dominion of error is there represented by two beasts, Revelations, chap. xiii. *I saw a great beast rise out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns ; and on his heads was the name of blasphemy ; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne, and great authority : and power was given him, to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over every tongue, and over every kindred and nation. And I saw, as it were one of his heads wounded to death ; but his deadly wound was healed ; and all the world wondered, and followed the beast ; and they worshipped the dragon who gave power to the beast, whose deadly wound was healed ; and I beheld another beast come out of the earth, which had two horns like the Lamb, but he spoke like the Dragon, and did all that the first beast could do before him ; he caused the earth and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed ; and he deceived them by signs, which were permitted him to do ; and he made all both rich and poor, small and great, free and bond to receive a mark, so that no man might buy or sell who had not that mark ; and caused that they, who would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

Rome had conquered and long governed the world by military power. Pride, rapine and ambition, were the motives which instigated it, to this universal invasion of the natural rights of mankind. Their emperors set themselves up as gods ; they persecuted and put to death, all who denied them this worship, or worshipped the living and true God. But when the empire, distracted by civil wars, was invaded ; and Rome plundered by the Barbarians, and the seat of the Empire removed from it, no man could imagine that this great city would recover its ancient glory and power : It seemed *wounded to death*. But at this time the delusion spoken of by Paul took place : the greatest and most universal ignorance began, that ever darkened the human understanding, and continued to keep the mind in slavery for above a thousand years. It was then that the second beast made its appearance, which had two horns like the Lamb. Rome became the seat of the ecclesiastical empire, and acquired a dominion more extensive, than it had possessed by the military power of its former empire : it did all that the first beast did before it. The pretext of its exercising this dominion and power, was the religion of Christ ; it is therefore said to have had *two horns like the Lamb* : but the means used to acquire this dominion, were the same, as were used by the Romans, in their universal invasion of the liberties of mankind. Pride, and ambition of worldly grandeur, made it use all the arts of fraud to deceive, and force to compel mankind, to be subject to its will. It succeeded, and that delusion took place, for no one was allowed to buy or sell, who did not acknowledge it's authority : and wherever any one was discovered, who disallowed it, he was killed ; and it maintained its power so long, as this ignorance, or strong delusion kept the human mind in subjection. But at last the impudence of its orders, and filthiness

of its abominations, first provoked men to enquire into, and afterwards doubt of the claim it assumed to this unlimited, and universal authority. Were reason only to preside, and direct the human mind, very little authority would remain to the church. The Protestant clergy in Holland, very candidly acknowledged this, when, in their address to the states to abolish the tenets, and proscribe the followers of Faustus Socinus, they said *that these hereticks were the most dangerous enemies the church could have ; for they taught a doctrine not above the reach of reason.* This reassumption of reason, assisted by the convenience of printing (then invented) made several countries dissent from the more gross errors of Popery ; but as the minds of men had been long immersed in ignorance, and habituated to error, they could not at once throw off all their prejudices ; they departed from the church, only in those very gross articles, which appeared more immediately repugnant to conscience, to reason, and the evident and plain meaning of the precepts of Christ laid down in the New Testament ; which now, in defiance of the church, and in neglect of its censures, men presumed to examine themselves, and judge of by reason. But they still retained in their faith, that there was that mystery in the religion of Christ, which human reason neither was, nor could be a judge of ; and the clergy, who, at this juncture, found they could not retain all their power, endeavoured to preserve as much of it as they were able, while reflection and learning were yet in their infancy. They got it established by law, in those countries which had dissented from the church of Rome, that at least, the system of faith established by the council of Nice, should be still retained and believed, under the penalty to be inflicted on blasphemy and heresy ; and that neither *the law of liberty, by which we are to be judged,*

ed, nor the directions given, that *every man ought to be convinced in his own mind*, should be allowed as any excuse, or alledged as reasons, sufficient to differ from it.

The council of Nice had decreed that the Divine Being should be composed of three persons, *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, each distinct from the other, and each separately to be God eternal; and yet, *that they should not*; for that the three together should make but one God: that the second person was begotten by the first, and that the third proceeded from the other two; and yet *that they did not*; for all the three were co-eternal, which can admit neither of begetting, nor proceeding. But that this, nevertheless, should be the true Catholick faith; the which if a man does not believe, they declare and ordain, that he neither can, nor shall be saved. This system of belief (conceived by this council and imposed on mankind) is beyond human conception, and of consequence beyond human belief; for the mind imposes on itself, which pretends to believe that, which it cannot conceive. All the parts of a regular system are built on an equal authority; for the truth of the whole must depend on the connection of its parts: but if any part of a system clashes, or disagrees with another, this clashing or seeming contradiction must be removed, before the mind can comprehend, either what that is, or how the system proposed, is to be conceived, before it can be believed. Belief is the persuasion of a truth: In truth there is that harmony in the circumstances of the thing narrated, which will not allow of the least jarring, much less of a contradiction. In our common courts of justice, there is not any other method to find out the truth, and to distinguish it from falsehood, but by a careful examination, whether there is that perfect harmony in the circumstances of the thing narrated, which

always attends truth ; and if we find there is this harmony, we conclude, that what is narrated may be true ; but if we find, that there is not this harmony, we conclude, that what is asserted to be true, must be false ; from this plain principle, that truth must be always consistent with itself. In examining the truth of this creed, I shall confine my enquiry to this one proposition, whether Jesus Christ (the second person in the Trinity) is, from the evidence I have any opportunity to examine, to be thought God from all eternity, co-equal with the Father. As they, who assert he is, have excluded common reason from being a witness on this occasion, I shall confine myself to that evidence which they allow of, viz. The Bible.

They allow that he is the Messiah prophesied of, in the Old Testament : and if what is foretold of the Messiah by the Prophets ; if what is related in the Evangelists of the life and doctrine of Christ ; if what is afterwards said by the Apostles, in their different letters to the primitive christians ; if all these evidences concur, in the testimony of his being God from all eternity, co-eval with, and equal to the Father ; then the decree of the council of Nice may be true. But if, on examination, there shall appear to be a want of harmony, or an evident disagreement, either between what is prophesied of the Messiah, or related by the Evangelists and Apostles, of his life and doctrine, and this ordinance given out by the council of Nice ; then their determination, I conclude, must be wrong, and their assertion false ; or that he may not be God eternal, co-eval and equal with the Father. The Apostle Paul tells us, that every man should be convinced in his own mind : these differences must therefore be removed, and this harmony take place, which always attends truth, before I can believe that this, or any other creed can be true, which I am directed to believe by any human authority. In the prophecies,

prophecies where the promised Messiah is described, he is said not only to be given as an instructor, but likewise as an ensign to the people, an example to point out and shew, that these ordinances of God, which he had declared, may, and ought to be observed by men; as one who, from the womb, should be endowed with the fear of God; one, who, being persecuted and put to death by those whom he came to instruct, should in all his temptations and sufferings, still preserve his integrity; one, whose exact conformity to the Divine will, should procure him such favour with God, as to constitute him a judge of mankind.

“ The Lord hath called me from the womb and said
 “ unto me, thou art my servant, in whom I shall be
 “ glorified. And now saith the Lord, who hath
 “ formed me from the womb, altho’ Israel be not
 “ gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the
 “ Lord; he has given me the tongue of the learned,
 “ that I might know how to speak a word in season
 “ to him that is weary; he has opened mine ears.
 “ Thus saith the Lord, to him whom man despiseth,
 “ in an acceptable time have I heard thee, in the
 “ day of salvation have I helped thee; I will preserve
 “ thee and give thee for a covenant to the people.”

It cannot be imagined that the Almighty God speaketh thus of himself. *Thou art my servant*: here is evidently the picture of one, who, from his birth, should be held forth as an example to the world; who would teach and shew mankind what manner of man he must be, in whom the Lord delighteth; one, on whom, (being endowed with the fear of the Lord) the spirit of truth, wisdom and persuasion should be conferred: here a man is spoken of, who was to exist in future times, in the common course of nature; whom, on account of his righteousness as a servant, God would exalt above his brethren. But this description is not applicable to one above human capa-

city, and much less to God himself. “*He has given me the tongue of the learned,*” supposes an endowment conferred on, and not inherent in the person who possesses it. It was from the merits of the Messiah, that God delighted in him; it was on account of his superior merit, that the Almighty says, *I will strengthen him with thy girdle and cloath him with thy robe, and commit thy government into his hand*: Surely the Almighty speaks of one different from himself in this description. If the favour of God was conferred on the Messiah from his merit; merit is a quality not applicable to God, he is above merit; no being can have merit in acting conformable to its own will. Merit is an inferior virtue, and only applicable to men, who, from the love of God, live in conformity to his ordinances, and imitate these his attributes, wherein he is imitable by men. That Being, at whose command all creatures exist, what he wills is justice, and must have an equal regard to all his works; his favour must arise afterwards from the behaviour of men themselves: he endowed them with a capacity of judging for themselves; he told them the consequences of obedience and disobedience, and left them to the freedom of their own will, to chuse whether they would obey or not: Their merit consists in their obedience to those laws, which God has made known to them. In this light, Paul speaking of Jesus says, “He took not on him the form,” (or as I understand it, was not appointed in the capacity) “of an angel;” “but was in all things made like unto his brethren,” “that he might be an example to men:” which could not be, had he been endowed as an angel. In this light also, St. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ, as one who attained to his glory, through his merit. He gives him as an example for men to endure with patience, whatever persecutions, whatever afflictions
may

may befall them: He says, " Let us run with patience
 " the race that is set before us, looking on Jesus as
 " the author and finisher of our faith; who *for the*
 " *joy that was set before him*, endured the cross and
 " despised the shame, and is now set down at the
 " right hand of God." And in this same light Jesus
 speaks of himself after his resurrection, "*Ought not*
 "*the Christ to have suffered these things, that he might*
 "*enter into his glory.*" Here is plainly intimated
 the motive for his patience, in his enduring the cross
 and despising the shame, viz. the prospect of reward,
 that joy that was set before him, for, or on account
 of his resignation to the will of his father. He is
 therefore given, by Paul, as an example to be con-
 stantly before us, why we should suffer all kind of
 persecution, rather than quit our faith in the gospel
 of Christ. But I cannot reconcile these words of
 Paul to the council of Nice, or how the prospect of
 reward, should induce the Almighty God, to suffer
 either pain or shame, on account of any future joy,
 to be acquired by these his sufferings from men; for
 I cannot believe that the happiness of God can at
 all depend on the actions of men. Thus Elihu says
 to Job, "*If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him?*
 "*or if thou be righteous, what receiveth he of thine hand?*"
 It seems evident from this, that either Paul, or the
 council of Nice must be mistaken; and which is so,
 let common reason and unbiaſſed judgment determine.
 From these reasons, it seems, that the Messiah, pro-
 mised by this description (altho' quite applicable to
 Jesus Christ) could not be God himself, but a real
 man to be presented to the world, whose doctrine
 and example should save or condemn mankind; and
 therefore was a proper judge to try them: And if
 Christ was the Messiah promised, this description of
 the Messiah is no way conformable to the Nicene
 creed.

To convey instruction by methaphor or allegory is used by all the prophets; but more especially by Christ. An allegory is defined by Logicians. *Figura quâ aliud dicitur, aliud intelligitur*; or where the purport of one idea is expressed by words which properly belong to another compared to it. Mankind, in the scriptures, are divided into two classes, the sons of God and the sons of the devil. Here the relation between God and good men, and between the devil and wicked men, is, from their different dispositions, made similar, or compared to that corporeal relation between parent and child, Jesus said, *if God was your father, ye would love me, for I came from God; but ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* And St. John says, *whosoever believeth that JESUS is the CHRIST, is born of GOD; and that whosoever heard his word and did it, should be adopted of GOD; for to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of GOD, viz. to them who believe in his name; and that the children (thus adopted) were born, not by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

When we would express the desires or actions of the Almighty, we can do it in no other terms, than by using the same phrases, which men use to one another, as, *thus saith the Lord—the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me—every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—When God saw the wickedness of man, it repented God, that he had made man—it grieved him at his heart.—The Lord smelled a sweet savour—the Lord said in his heart.* In the interpretation of these passages, I believe no man is so absurd in his conceptions, as to imagine, that the Almighty Being must be endowed with these bodily organs, tongue, nose, ears, eyes, or heart, to enable him to speak, smell, hear, see, or conceive;

or

or that it was necessary, that he should make use of language (sounds applied to the ears of the prophets) when he communicated his orders to them; but only that he affected the minds of those prophets in such a manner, as to let them know, what he required they should declare to the people in his name: this was called the Divine Spirit, or Holy Ghost inspiring them. The means or mode used by men to express their will to one another, is by speech or words; and when we apply this same intention to God Almighty, to signify the declaration of his will to men, we must do it by the same phrases; we call it his word. There is not an expression more commonly used in the Bible, to signify the declaration of the will of God, than by calling it his word. The first chapter of St. John's gospel is full of these figurative expressions. This chapter is alledged particularly, by the church as a proof, to support the determination of the council of Nice. For, as the other paragraph in his epistles, in the 7th verse of the last chapter, is generally allowed to be a spurious interpolation, committed some centuries after St. John's death, I shall therefore take no notice of it. To explain this chapter according to the usual meaning applied to such expressions throughout the New Testament, I must understand the *word* (*Λογος*) to mean the decrees, or orders given by the Almighty from the beginning; by *Life*, is meant the state of happiness enjoyed with God; by *Light* is meant the knowledge of the will of God; and by *Darkness* that perverseness, from pride, sensual lust and worldly desires, which hinders the wicked from enquiring into, or conforming to the divine will. Here, not only the *word*, but *light*, *life* and *darkness* are figurative expressions. I can easily conceive that when the divine decree gave existence to the world and every thing that was made, that he communicated to man those laws, by obeying which,

he

he should inherit eternal life and happiness with him; and I can also conceive, that the wicked or perverse did not pay obedience to those laws. And in the 14th verse, when he says, *the word was made flesh and dwelt among us*. I explain it thus,—that God had raised up the man *Jesus*, to whom he had communicated those laws, in an explicit manner, to which he required obedience; who had accordingly, thro' grace and truth, declared to mankind, whatever he had received of the Father, in obedience to his will: as, where he says, “If ye keep my commandments
 “ ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my
 “ Father’s commandments and abide in his love: for
 “ all things which I have heard of my father, have I
 “ made known to you.” The merit of *Jesus*, as he here declares himself, consisted, in that he had kept his Father’s commandments; he therefore abode in his love; and desires them to follow his example, if they would abide in his love.

I shall next enquire whether the life, the actions and doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, as recorded to us in the New Testament, be agreeable to this creed.—The first circumstance spoken of in his history, given by the Evangelists, is his immaculate conception; that he was not the son of man, but conceived by the Holy Ghost, in the womb of a virgin. Whether this was, or was not so, no way concerns my salvation: it is a piece of history I am at liberty to believe or not; but that it was so, in order to fulfill that prophecy of *Isaiah*, “A virgin should bring forth a son, and he
 “ should be called *Immanuel*,” seems not to be well considered by the Evangelist; for the prophecy this alludes to, concerns one *Maher-Shalal-hash-baz*, who in the reign of *Ahaz* king of *Juda*, was born of the prophets, and was given as a sign to *Ahaz*, to convince him (who was then threatened with an invasion from the united forces of *Rezin*, king of *Damascus*, and
 Pekin

Pekin king of Samaria) that before that child, thus born of a virgin, should attain the age to distinguish his right hand from his left, these kings he was afraid of, should be divested of their own kingdoms, by the king of Assyria; which accordingly came to pass: So that this prophecy has nothing to do with the birth of the Messiah, of whom it is constantly asserted, that he must spring from, and be a descendant of Jesse. The two Evangelists, Mathew and Luke, give different accounts of the lineage of Joseph, the husband of Mary; one says, he was descended from David in the royal, and the other, that he was descended from David in a collateral line: and then say, that Jesus was not the son of Joseph at all. So that the lineage they record, gives us no proof, that he was the Messiah promised, who was to spring from Jesse. I shall therefore pass over the birth of Jesus, as a circumstance no way relative to my faith as a christian.

When Jesus was thirty years of age, he then entered into his ministry, by declaring that he was a messenger from God, to shew forth his will, and point out to man the way of salvation; that he came to declare to man, not his own will, but the will of him who sent him. An ambassador or messenger, who comes to deliver the will of another, is to be considered in two capacities, viz. in a public one, as respecting the person who sends him; and in a private one, as respecting himself. In his public capacity, he is to show his credentials, that he has proper authority from him who sent him, and is no impostor: and when his credentials are allowed to be just, then what he declares, in the name of him who sent him, is to be received, as if he who sent him, had spoken it himself. Whether Jesus acted as God himself, or only as a messenger from God, is what I am to enquire into.

The

The people whom Jesus came to instruct, were the Jews; their religion they had from Moses. Miracles were the testimony of Moses, (or were his credentials) whereby the Israelites believed he was commissioned from God, to deliver them from the slavery of the Egyptians. He then prescribed them the law, which taught them their duty both to God and man; but they had perverted the meaning of the law, and by neglecting the moral, or weightier parts of it, had placed all divine worship in external actions, sacrifices and ceremonies. When Jesus declared his mission from God, to disclose to mankind the terms of mercy, it was necessary to show that he had the same power that Moses had, to obtain equal credit from them: his miracles, to them were his credentials. If his authority was not from God, he could not perform those things, which required a divine power to execute. Thus, in his answer to John the Baptist he says, "*tell John, that by me the blind receive sight, the halt go, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.*" In his public character, as a messenger from God, he speaks as God who sent him. In speaking as God, he personates the attributes of God; it is by them only he can represent God. "*Sanctify them with thy truth; thy word is truth.*" Conscious of his exact obedience, to that commission given him to execute, he says, "*I am the truth, the way and the life—the light of the world—the door of the sheep-fold, thro' which all must enter, to obtain eternal life. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*" As representing righteousness and truth, he says, "*The Father and I are one.*" As he represents truth, and truth as the word of God, he says, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" Truth is always the same from eternity to eternity: time, place or circumstance make no variation in truth. Truth is that
which

which is. Jesus therefore personating truth, says, in the present tense, *before Abraham was, I am.* And in consequence of his strict conformity to the divine word or truth, he desires he may be glorified, as he was with the Father before the world began, or from eternity. In these passages, he speaks in his public character, as representing the attributes of God. But that he only executed a commission given him by God, may be proved by numberless texts in Scripture. “*I can do nothing of myself; but as the Father hath taught me, so speak I those things—the Father loved the Son, and hath shown him all things—he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who sent him—the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son—as I hear I judge, and my judgment is just, because I speak not my own will, but the will of my Father who sent me.*”

In his directions to his Disciples, he says, “*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me; and he who despises me, despises him who sent me.*” To the Pharisees he saith, “*He that believeth my words, believeth not in me, (or because I say it) but in him who sent me; for I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who hath sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak:*” And his conformity to this command was the cause of his Father’s loving him. “*I am the good shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep. As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father; therefore doth the Father love me. This commandment have I received of my Father, and his commandment is everlasting life.*”

The source and opportunity of all the extravagant errors, which have been introduced into christianity, arises from an allowance not being made for the phraseology used by Jesus Christ. To judge properly of the meaning of any one, it is not the literal interpretation

terpretation of his words, or the substitution of an English word for a Greek one, but the idioms of that language he speaks in, and the phraseology he generally uses, which enables us to conceive his meaning, and interpret it properly. His common manner of expressing himself is by parables or similes, Ταῦτα ἐν παραβολαῖς λέλοσσηκα ὑμῖν. These things have I spoken to you in similes or parables. And Mark, chap. 4th. *With many such parables, spake he the word to them. And without a parable spake he not to them.* By his phraseology, the causes, means, or circumstances, by which any thing is brought about, are made to personate the things themselves. When he says, *I am the way and the life,—I am the resurrection*; his meaning is, that to conform to the doctrine I preach, is the way to obtain life at the resurrection. *I am the Bread which came down from Heaven*; means, that the doctrine I preach is from God; and if any man eat of this bread, or embrace this doctrine, he shall live for ever: “The bread which I give is my
 “ flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Veri-
 “ ly I say unto you, that except ye eat of the flesh of
 “ the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no
 “ life in you: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my
 “ blood is drink indeed.” It is evident these words are to be understood in a figurative sense, and not in the common acceptation of our language. He says
 “ *It is the spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words which I speak are spirit and life.*” In like manner, when he recommends to his Disciples, to meet after his death, and to eat and drink in commemoration of him, that by their mutual conversation, they might preserve his doctrine in their minds, and from his example, persevere in it unto death. He says, “ *this bread is my body and this wine is my blood.*” No unprejudiced person in his senses, can imagine, he was then eating his own flesh, and drink-
 ing

ing his own blood, according to the literal meaning, which these words bear in our language ; or that his doing so, could contribute any thing to their edification. The utmost our mode of speaking will allow of, is to personate qualities : With us, a new-born child may be called innocence itself, and an upright judge, justice itself : We mean by that phrase, that they are incapable of acting contrary to innocence or justice. And when Jesus says, *I am the truth* ; it signifies, I am incapable of saying what is not truth. But our phraseology will go no farther. When Jesus says *I am the way to eternal life,—I am the door through which you must enter—I am the light to show you the way*,—I can easily comprehend his meaning, because it is conformable to that mode of speaking, he constantly uses. But for us to call a person the way, because he shows the way ; or to call a person a gate, because he opens the gate ; or because he holds forth a lighted candle, he should therefore be that lighted candle, would be expressions too excentric for our language. Yet such are the absurd meanings put upon the sayings of our Saviour, and introduced as his doctrine. If we examine his doctrine, and explain the meaning of his sayings, conformable to the phraseology he constantly uses, we shall find a sameness throughout the whole system ; and nothing unintelligible or inconsistent, advanced by him : But if we interpret his words according to our modern mode of speaking, and thence deduce his doctrine, we pervert his meaning, we confound our understanding, and mislead our judgment. For what purpose this has been done by that council, must be left to be determined by that Being, whose justice and mercy will distinguish hypocrisy from ignorance ; for if our judgment is misled for want of sufficient information, we have this still to hope for, with St. John, *that if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

Jesus

Jesus is called the Son of God ; and St. John says, *every one that doth righteousness is born of God ; and that to whomsoever should receive him, he gave power to become the Sons of God.*—Jesus says, *they are called gods, to whom the word of God is given.* He as being more righteous than others, is called *the beloved Son of God* : as being the only man that lived and died without sin, he is called *the only begotten Son of God.* The word of God, or law of righteousness is called, both in the old and new Testament, the truth. (Psalm, 119) “ Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth : All thy commandments are truth.” (Jerem. 10th) “ The Lord is the God of truth.” To call God the truth, is the nearest representation we can form of him. In the expression of power given by the Almighty to Moses, he calls himself, “ I AM THAT I AM ;” or, as the Septuagint has it, “ *I am he that is : say, he that is, hath sent you unto them.*” We can define truth by no better words, than by calling it *that which is.* Truth is an attribute inseparable from the Divinity ; the same from eternity to eternity. Jesus addressing the Father, says, “ Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word “ is truth : As thou hast sent me into the world, “ even so send I them into the world, that they all “ may be one, (or of one mind) as thou Father art “ in me, and I in thee ; *that they also may be one in “ us.*” John the Baptist tells us, “ that he whom “ God hath sent speaketh the word of God ; for “ God hath not given the spirit by measure unto “ him.” This is the divine word, the spirit of truth, or law of righteousness, which St. John speaks of, in his first Chapter ; which, was it rightly translated, would be this, “ In the beginning was the word, and “ the word was with God, and God was the word. “ This was, in the beginning with God ; every thing thing

“ thing was made by him, and without him was
 “ nothing made, that is made. In him was Life,
 “ and this Life was the Light of man.” But our
 translators have transposed the words, *και Θεος ην ο*
λογος, and God was the word : they have made it,
and the Word was God ; whereby the *word* is made
 a principle in itself, instead of an attribute of the
 Deity ; whence a different meaning is conveyed to
 the mind from the words ; and from this wrong in-
 terpretation men have drawn this inference, that the
Word here spoken of, was a distinct person from God
 the Father, and that Jesus Christ was this word or
 distinct person, by whom the world was made. *Truth*,
righteousness, and the *divine spirit* were from all
 eternity ; and by the decree of God, every thing that
 is made, was made. But God confers this divine spi-
 rit on whom, and in what proportion he wills ; this
 was the case of the other prophets ; as when he says
 to Moses, *Behold I have made thee a God to Pharaoh*.
 To Jesus, it was given in an extraordinary degree ;
 it was conferred on him without measure ; but it doth
 no ways follow, because the divine spirit or word of
 God, was from the beginning, that therefore Jesus
 Christ, on whom it was conferred, should also
 be from the beginning, any more than Moses and
 the other prophets were. In explaining the para-
 ble of the sower, he says, *The Sower sowed the word,*
which prospered according to the Ground it was sown
on : He tells his disciples, that the Sower is the
 Preacher, and the Word is the Doctrine he taught,
 (that law of righteousness which was from the begin-
 ning) and the ground it was sown on, was the minds
 of the hearers, which prospered according to the dis-
 position of them who received it. Common sense
 will not admit that what is called *the word*, should
 signify both the sower and the seed sown. Paul tell-
 ing what is meant by faith, says, “ *By faith we believe*

“ that the World was made by the Word of GOD.”

The natural meaning which these words present to us, is, that the world was made by the Almighty FIAT, —*Be, and it was*, and not by any intermediate agent. But this is made more clear by the testimony of Christ himself, (John V. 26.) *For as the FATHER hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the SON to have Life in himself, and hath given him authority also to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man, ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν.*

Here his being the son of man is the cause that this authority is conferred on him. He was constituted a judge, because *He*, altho' the son of man, had yet conformed to the will of the Father; and therefore that power, that life or righteousness, inherent in God, was conferred on him by God. But if John means, in the first chapter, according to the received acceptation of the words, *that the world was made by Jesus Christ*, the power to execute judgment would have been conferred on him, not because he was the son of man, but because he was the maker of the world, and father of all created beings; and had therefore not only a power, but a right to judge his own creatures. I can see no other construction that can be put on these words of Jesus, or that any other inference can be drawn from them, which can admit of the meaning assigned them by the council of Nice. I am fully convinced that Christ was a better judge of his own meaning than they were: and the words, *καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο* may be more properly translated, *the world was made, δι' αὐτοῦ propter ipsum*, on account of him, than *per ipsum*, by him; for the world was certainly made, that man should be righteous. This is a sense much more agreeable to these dark expressions of the Evangelist. And in this sense, *he came to his own, but his own received him not*, will admit of a very easy and natural explanation. And these, *In him was Life, and this Life*
was

was the Light of Man, are of the same signification with our Saviour's, *For as the FATHER hath life in himself, so hath he given to the SON to have life in himself.*

The same Apostle John introduces our Saviour in the Revelations, declaring himself in these words, *To him who overcometh, will I grant to sit with me, on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on his throne. He that hath an ear let him hear.* This last injunction, *He that hath an ear let him hear*, is a reference to our judgment: and my judgment can interpret these words in no other manner, than, that to him who overcometh all temptation, will I bestow the happiness of sitting with me on my throne; for the same reason, or on the same account, as I, who overcame every temptation, am therefore now sat down with my Father on his throne. Here the merit of Christ, as a man, is given as the sole cause of his promotion to that dignity, of sitting on the throne along with God; so that if he had not been tempted and overcome all temptation, he would not have sat along with God on his throne; and that the attaining to that dignity, was not the cause, but the consequence of his conforming to the divine will.

I shall next consider our Saviour in his private capacity, abstracted from his public character: not as a messenger sent to deliver the will of another, but as a man subject to those alterations of mind, and bodily feelings, which a man only can be subject to. It is wrote, *that the child JESUS grew, and waxed strong in spirit. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of GOD was upon him.* And again, *The CHILD grew, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with GOD and MAN.* An increase of wisdom with stature, and an increase of favour with God and man as he increased in years, shew the progress of

wisdom in the human mind. But this description is no way applicable to the Divinity, or even to an Angel or pre-existent Spirit, the very supposition of whose pre-existence, would preclude any increase of knowledge; as their pre-knowledge, or experience would make them superior to improvement, by growing into manhood. Jesus, before he attained to that manhood, which brings judgment to maturity, was assailed by those vain imaginations, which present themselves to the minds of youth; but he repels them by reflecting, that man should worship or pay his sole regard and adoration to the Lord his God, and serve him only; he therefore gave up all thought of acquiring human greatness, and reflection confirms him in this; and he throws off all such thoughts. *So the devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him.* But these temptations would be too trivial, to present themselves to a mind superior, and pre-existent to humanity, whose judgment and memory must make it know the small continuance of worldly grandeur, and how little such an enjoyment could be put in competition with disobedience to that Being, through whom it enjoyed existence, and by whom, in a short time it must be judged. To such Beings, such a suggestion could be no temptation, nor the resisting it any merit.

Jesus did not begin his ministry, until he had attained to those years which bring the human mind to its greatest strength: whereas the mind of God or of an Angel would be equally capable to declare itself perfectly, from the time it began to express itself. But Jesus Christ is declared not to be such: He, from his infancy, gradually increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and Man; he was, as the first man, made a little lower than the angels; he did not begin his instructions, until length of time and maturity of judgment, had brought his mind to
its

its utmost strength ; and is, therefore generally placed as a contrast to the first man Adam. Thus St. Paul to the Hebrews says, *But we see Jesus made a little lower than the Angels* Βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον, who on account of his sufferings, *is now crowned with glory and honour*. The first man was made a little lower than the Angels, but falling from his obedience, he became subject to death ; but Jesus made, in like manner, a little lower than the Angels, preserved his obedience ; he withstood all temptations and sufferings even unto death ; he therefore rose, or threw off the state of death, and, in consideration of what he had suffered for his strict adherence to the will of the Father, he is now crowned with glory and honour. And to the Corinthians he says, *Since by man came death, by man came also resurrection from death ; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all men be made alive ; but every man in his proper order, Christ the first, and afterwards they who are Christ's*. As Christ was the messenger of God, all the instructions given by him, are to be looked on as given by God : but in things that do not concern him as a messenger, he declares his inability to determine. When the mother of Zebedee's children requests, that her two sons might sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom ; he declares that what she asks was not in his power to grant (ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι) but that the Father would bestow those places on whom he judged proper. And concerning the end of the world and day of judgment, he says, *Of that day and hour knoweth no man* : It was not given to any creature to know ; no, not to the Angels in Heaven, nor to the Son ; it was known to the Father only. Had the world been created and all things made by the Son, it is presumeable, that the Son would have also known when it was to be at an end ; or rather, when he would choose it should be at an end.

The Apostle Peter in many instances, seems to have been actuated more by zeal than knowledge; and his zeal deceived his master: for when Jesus asked the twelve, whom the world said, and they thought he was, Peter answered, "*thou art the Christ the Son of the living God: Then Jesus said, blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whomsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.*" But he was mistaken in Peter's knowledge of him, who, it is evident, had no right conception, either of what the Christ was to be, or to undergo on Earth. For when Jesus told his Disciples immediately afterwards, what he, as the Christ, must undergo according to the Prophets: that on his coming to Jerusalem, he should be taken up by the elders, the chief Priests and Scribes; and that he was to be judged and put to death by them, Peter was so shocked, at hearing him express himself so different from what his thoughts of the Christ were, and so opposite to what his expectations were, that he rebuked him for saying so; "*Mercy to thee, Lord! these things cannot befall thee:*" For Peter, as well as the other Disciples, imagined the promised Christ was to be a temporal Prince; who was to restore the Kingdom to the house of David. On which, Jesus finding Peter to have an idea of the Messiah or Christ, very different from what he conceived he had, when he promised him these powers, he turned to him both in surprize and anger, saying, "*get thee behind me Satan, thou art a scandal to me, for thou conceivest not the things which are of God, but those that are of men.*" It seems by this that the knowledge of Jesus being the Christ, had

had not been revealed to him, by the Father; neither had he formed his idea of Christ from the Prophets; for he was ignorant, both of what the office and the sufferings of the Christ were to be. Jesus, at first, thought he had a right conception of him, and must have attained to it, by a revelation from the Father, and therefore gave him those extraordinary powers of binding and loosening; but when, by the rebuke of Peter, Jesus found he was mistaken in his thoughts of him, he calls him the *Devil, and that he was a scandal to him*. It cannot be imagined that these very extensive powers could be given to one, whom he afterwards compares to the Devil, and who was a scandal to the doctrine he professed to teach, as having no conception of heavenly things. Here Jesus judged as a man and was deceived as a man.

The next remaining instance of our Saviour's acting in a private character, is in his sufferings at his death: he knew that according to what was foretold of the Messiah, he must be put to death by the Jews. He had told his Disciples, that to fulfill the prophecies, that circumstance must happen him; but that he should rise from death the third day, and would shew himself to them after his resurrection, and acquainted them of the place he should then meet them in, viz. in Galilee. Yet when the hour approached, his resolution failed him, and he prays most fervently, that he might not suffer; *My soul is troubled even unto death, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour*. But on reflection he reconciles his mind to the thoughts of it, saying, *But for this cause have I come to this hour*. Yet upon the nearer approach of death, he still solicits God, that he should not suffer, *Oh! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup depart from me. All things are possible with thee, take away this cup*. Under these agonies of mind, he is said to be supported by

a special messenger from God, Luke, xxii. *And there appeared unto him an Angel from Heaven strengthening him; and being in agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* But as his most earnest prayer could not obtain this of the Father, he seems to have thought, that as the Father had refused, so he had also forsaken him, and exclaims at the cross, *My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me.* Let us review this a little: Our Saviour had the full assurance, that he the Messiah would, on death, be quickly transformed into that happy state, where an end should be put to all his sufferings, to all his cares and the persecutions of wicked men; still this assurance did not divest him of that human frailty, the terror attending death; yet, altho' this sensibility made him earnestly pray to shun it, his righteousness and resignation to the will of God, hindered him from making use of any other effort, than prayers to avoid it, *yet not my will but thine be done.* Had Jesus been insensible of, or had despised the terrors of death, he would have been no example to such, who, by natural constitution, are endued with that timidity of mind, which shocks them at the approach of it, and which they cannot help. But his struggles, at that period, and his resignation, when he found it could not be avoided, takes from men all excuse, for using any other means to avoid death, than a calm resignation to the will of God, when, through the wickedness of persecutors, a perseverance in their uprightness is the cause of their suffering.

Jesus Christ our Saviour had all the feelings of a man; or as St. Paul says of him, (Heb. 5th) *He was one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself was compassed with infirmities; and by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself*

himself to offer for sins. Thus his last and greatest temptation ended with his mortal life : his trial was over ; he had finished his course. On his resurrection his behaviour was quite different. Fears from men, and prayers to his Father were no more ; he was rewarded and crowned with Glory : *for all power was given him in Heaven and in Earth.* And, as his knowing the infirmities of man will make him a merciful Judge and mediator with the Father for repenting sinners ; so will his example be a condemnation to the perverse and obstinate.

I shall end this subject, with observing, that Jesus, after his resurrection, when he was no longer mortal, but going to enjoy the reward promised, says to Mary, *Go tell my Brethren, that I ascend to my Father, and their Father, to my God and their God.* Who his brethren were, he had told in his life-time, when he stretched out his hands to his Disciples, saying, *Behold my brethren.* And again when he says, *My brethren are they who hear the word of God and do it.* And in the same sense, the Angel speaks to John in the revelation, when he was going to worship him ; *See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the Prophets, who keep the sayings of this book ; worship God.* As all good men are called the sons of God, so are they called brethren to one another : And Mary was ordered to inform his Disciples, that he was going to ascend *to his God and their God* ; to him who was equally his Father, and the Father of all those who hear his word and do it.

Paul to prove a future resurrection, gives Christ as an example ; he says, *if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen : but now Christ is risen, and is the first fruit of them who slept ;* or in other words, you ask how it is possible for a man once dead to become alive again ? But Christ was dead, and is now alive ; therefore it is possible for men to
become

become alive after death. Here the comparison (the analogy) lies in Christ's being a man as others were ; for it would be a false inference, if Christ was not a man as others were, that his resurrection should be alledged as a proof to show it possible, that all other men might become alive after death likewise. Paul says, *As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ ; for if we suffer in like manner as he did, so shall we be also glorified in like manner* (ἐπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν.)

And again, *if the spirit of him which raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit, that dwelleth in you.* In these and many other passages in the epistles, the parallel is uniformly continued between Jesus Christ and these called the Sons of God. The same spirit which raised the one from the dead, will raise the others ; who, as being the adopted Sons of God, should jointly with him, enjoy that state of happiness of being with God.

Prayer is an earnest application to God, that what we desire may come to pass. In many instances, our Saviour is said to have retired to pray. This circumstance is irreconcilable with the Nicæan Creed. On what account, or for what reason can he be supposed to pray, that any thing should come to pass ? when it is by his own order that all things do come to pass ; but if the concurrence of that Being to whom he prayed, be necessary ; he must then be subordinate to that Being ; or his prayer or desire, without the concurrence of the Father, or greater Being to whom he prayed, would be of no effect to produce the thing prayed for ; as was the case, when he desired the fatal cup to be removed from him.

This seems to me the only interpretation, which either our Saviour's, or St. Paul's words will admit of ;

of ; and which I cannot reconcile, either to the decree of the council of Nice, or to those Creeds which the Church has imposed on us, as the Christian faith, under the penalty of eternal damnation for disbelief. I am therefore convinced, that this Religion instituted by the Church, is not the same with that, which Jesus Christ ordered his Disciples to publish to the world, in his name. These different councils which are made to direct the Christian faith, seem to me exactly similar to the traditions of the elders, which directed the Jewish worship ; of whom our Saviour says, “ *in vain do ye worship God, teaching, for doctrine, the commandments of men, and thro’ your traditions make the word of God of none effect.* In countries governed by the Church, the Holy Scriptures are made in reality, what the Prophet Isaiah represents by allegory. * “ It is as a book that is “ sealed and delivered to a man to read ; who “ answers, *I cannot read it for it is sealed, I dare not “ open it.*” The Prophet adds, “ the people’s fear “ towards me, saith the Lord, is taught by the pre- “ cepts of men : but woe to them that seek deep to “ hide their councils from the Lord. Woe unto “ them, who call evil good, and good evil ; who “ put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”

* Isaiah, chap. 29th.

C H A P T E R XIV.

Of E X T E R N A L W O R S H I P.

EXTERNAL Worship is a ceremony performed in token, or evidence of that disposition of mind we should be in, when we address ourselves to God. Thus kneeling at prayers supposes humiliation and submission to him whom we supplicate, and meeting together at church supposes unanimity in the manner in which we think God is to be worshipped; that with St. Paul we may all, with one mind, and with one mouth glorify him. Men readily comprehend what the senses communicate; but when knowledge is to be attained by thought and reflection, weak minds are both unable and unwilling to enquire into, and be convinced of what it is. They are afraid to examine, lest they should raise doubts in their minds, which they are unable to resolve: so these external ceremonies become by habit considered, not simply as tokens of what passes in the mind, but as that real homage which God requires: And men are brought to imagine, that humiliation and submission are sufficiently expressed by kneeling, when they say their prayers; and to glorify God with one mind and with one mouth, sufficiently shown by meeting together at church. This mistaken notion has prevailed among the ignorant, from the earliest times; and their priests have thought it convenient never to undeceive them. Jesus tells us that the worship which God requires, must proceed from the mind; *He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth*, or by that upright sincerity which enforces obedience; and not by any external ceremonies, which are often not attended with that submission and purity of mind, of which those are only

only types: He therefore desires the Jews to learn what the Prophet Hosea means, when he says, *I will have mercy rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings*; for if they knew that, they would not have reprov'd him for doing good on the Sabbath day: for that the meaning of that saying is, that it is the intention of the mind, not the actions of the body, which God regards. We have an early instance of this, in the sacrifice of Cain and Abel; they both sacrificed the first fruits of their labour; the one was acceptable, the other not.—for this Cain is angry. To him God speaks, *Why art thou wroth? if you do well, shall you not be accepted? but if you do not well, sin lyeth at thy door*. Here the external ceremony was the same in both; but not being attended with the same upright disposition of mind in both, Cain's sacrifice was not accepted.

The first piece of external worship ordered, is that we should not work on the seventh day of the week, for that day was to be kept holy to the Lord. By this commandment, our time is divided into two portions. The first six days we are to employ in our wordly concerns, but the seventh is to be set apart entirely to Divine Worship: he hath hallowed it, and we are to keep it holy. And that our minds may not be taken off by other concerns, we are forbid to work on that day, or to allow any to be done in our houses. Holiness does not consist in being idle, more than in being at work; but as the keeping from work, gives us an opportunity to dedicate that portion of time entirely to the worship of God, without being diverted from it by worldly concerns, we are therefore forbid to work on that day. To worship God is to obey his commandments, and this portion of our time is set apart, for us to study how we can best conform, by our thoughts, words and actions, to the duty he requires of us. But, if on that day, we employ
our

our thoughts on objects, which do not concern the worship of God, our being idle is so far from observing the commandment, that it becomes a temptation to our breaking it: This, daily observation shows; for on what are called holidays, men are more apt to devise and perpetrate what is wicked, because they are idle, than, were they at work, they would either have time to think of, or leisure to execute. I am therefore persuaded, that the simply keeping from work, because it is the Sabbath day, without employing it for that purpose for which we are forbid to work, is in the sight of God, (like Cain's sacrifice) not obeying the commandment, but a hypocritical show of conformity to the duty required.

Circumcision is that part of external worship, which distinguishes the descendants of Abraham from others. It was instituted as a token of the covenant God made with him and his seed. A covenant is a mutual agreement between parties, wherein are expressed and stipulated the conditions each binds himself to observe; and as there are certain benefits promised on observing them, so are there certain penalties announced on the breach of them; otherwise it would be a deed of gift, and not a covenant. And as a proof in future times that this covenant had been entered into, some external and lasting token was given, to be evidence against the party who should break it; it is a bond to appear in judgment against him. The conditions of this covenant were, that Abraham engaged, for himself and his posterity, to walk uprightly before God, and obey his commandments; and God promised, that if they did so, they should possess the land of Canaan for ever; and circumcision was instituted as a token, that this covenant had passed between God and Abraham, for his descendants, *Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the token of a covenant between you and me.*

me. And the conditions of the covenant are again repeated by Moses, (Lev. 16th.) "That if they obeyed the commandments of God, in walking up- rightly, they should be happy above all other na- tions; but if they broke this covenant, their trans- gression should be punished seven fold," or that the same crimes should be punished in them seven times more, than in any other people, with whom this covenant had not been made; *that these were the statutes, the judgments and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.* The token of the covenant is the evidence to be brought against the party who shall break the conditions of it. He thereby makes himself subject to the penalties specified, and forfeits all claim to the benefits, which the observance of it would have entitled him to. The Jews by taking to themselves the token of the covenant, accepted the conditions; by which, if they did not continue to walk uprightly before God, they were content to lose possession of the land of Canaan, and be punished seven fold for their offences. This covenant was strictly observed by God; and so long as they kept his commandments, their enemies fled before them; they subdued the land and possessed it: But when they broke the conditions, when they ceased to walk uprightly, and chose to themselves other gods, they became subject to the stipulated penalties; and circumcision (the token of their possessing the land for ever, if they had kept the conditions of it,) became their condemnation. For before their captivity, they had so thoroughly broken these commandments they had engaged to observe, as to become a most profligate state. *There was neither truth, justice, nor mercy found in the land;* and they who ought to have directed them in their duty, and preserved them in their obedience to the law of their God, were the most abandoned to wickedness. *The heads*

heads of them judged for reward, their priests taught for hire, and their prophets divined for money. The best of them was as a briar, and the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge. That as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murdered on the high way by consent. None called for justice, nor did any call for truth; they trusted in vanity and spoke lies; they conceived mischief, and brought forth iniquity. In this state they were, when God sent them the prophets, messengers to warn them of their danger, and to promise them forgiveness if they would reform. If ye put away your abominations, ye shall not remove. And again, Turn every man from his evil way, and the evil of his doings, and dwell in the land which the Lord gave you and your fathers for ever. Go not after other gods to serve them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no hurt. But you have not hearkened to me: therefore thus saith the Lord, because you have not heard my words; behold I will send and take all the families of the North, and Nebuchadnezzar my servant, and bring him against this land. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and these nations shall serve the King of Babylon seventy years; for as ye have forsaken me and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours: And it shall come to pass, that after seventy years are accomplished, I will punish the King of Babylon, &c. Here is an exact relation of their breach of the covenant by idolatry, and an entire corruption of morals; then of their punishment as stipulated in their covenant on Mount Sinai; and afterwards of the precise time this punishment was to last. The cause of God's anger is so minutely set forth by all the prophets, that one would think, there could be no mistake in the cause of their punishment. Yet their own historian (the author of the Chronicles, after their return from captivity, when it might be supposed

posed they were most sensible of the crimes for which they had been punished, and most penitent for having committed them) attributes their captivity, not to a breach of the moral law of God, but of the ceremonial law of Moses. It seems they had ploughed their lands when they ought to have left them fallow. His words are, *They who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, to fulfil the word of the LORD by Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths; for so long as she lay desolate, she kept Sabbath.* There are such words spoke by Moses, when he instituted the sabbatical year; but no such passage is to be found in Jeremiah, or in any other of the prophets sent to reform them: the neglect of ceremonies is never laid to their charge by them: On the contrary, the Jews are constantly censured for putting too much trust in ceremonies. God says, *Who hath required these things at your hands? I spake not to your fathers, neither commanded them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices; but this I commanded, that they obey my voice, (which is) to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before me.* The preaching of all the prophets was to this purpose. I am persuaded, if this historian had perused the writings, and examined the meaning of the prophets, he would have assigned a juster reason for God's anger and their punishment, than a neglect of the sabbatical year. The Jewish worship, as directed by Moses, abounded in ceremonies, which were afterwards greatly multiplied, to commemorate several occurrences which befel them; and a strict observance of these, took off their minds from the weightier matters of the law. St. Paul says, *Verily circumcision profiteth, if ye keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision becomes uncircumcision. And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who, by the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law?* It was

a great while before Peter was convinced, that ceremonies were of no merit in the worship of God. His master had told him, that it was not what went in at the mouth, which defileth a man; yet he would eat nothing common or unclean. This clogging the doctrine of Christ with ceremonies, was the occasion of a very sharp rebuke from St. Paul to him, *Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ? We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.* The modern Jews follow the practice of their forefathers: they are strict observers of the ceremonial part of their religion, but loose and negligent, in the observance of the moral part of it.

The next ceremony I shall take notice of, is Baptism.—When the affections of the mind are to be typified by the actions of the body, no better emblem can be made use of, to signify the throwing off all sinful lusts, than by using that expression, which signifies cleansing the body from what has defiled it. Hence, to purify the mind by repentance and amendment of life, is, by the prophets typified, by the figurative expression of washing. *Wash ye, make ye clean, take away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good.* Pilate, to show that he was innocent of putting Jesus to death, called for water to wash his hands, to signify that it was not with his consent, that Jesus was condemned; and the Jews looked on this ceremony as a token of dissent; they answered, “let his blood be on our heads and on our children’s, thou art free.” The Baptism instituted by John, is the token of a new covenant, whereby we engage to reform our lives, and throw off all sinful lusts, that we may shun the wrath that is

to come : being convinced that the persevering in our former courses would bring the wrath of God upon us ; but that by repentance and amendment, our past sins would, through the mercy of God, be forgiven. It is a solemn oath or appeal to God, that as we have cleansed our bodies from all filth, by washing in water ; so we engage to purify our minds from all iniquity, by a sincere repentance and amendment of life : it is therefore called the *Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*. Thus St. Paul says to the Hebrews, *Let us draw near with a true heart, in the fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*. If this is the nature of Baptism, it cannot be administered to infants, which have neither sin to accuse themselves of, passions to tempt them to sin, nor judgment to distinguish good from evil ; and are therefore incapable of the conditions of Baptism. There is no instance in the New Testament where Baptism is supposed to precede conviction. When the Jews heard John preach in the wilderness, and were convinced of the necessity of repentance and amendment, they confessed their sins and were baptized. When the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose immoral character he knew, came, desiring to be baptized, he called to them, *O generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*. By this it is signified, that without a reformation, that external ceremony (Baptism) would not confer remission of sins, so as to escape the wrath of God for former crimes. The Ethiopian Eunuch, on having the passage of Isaiah explained to him by Philip, and shown, that the prophecy there mentioned was fulfilled in Jesus, asked why he might not be baptized ? Philip answered, *If thou believest with all thy heart, (or art convinced of the truth of what I have spoken) then thou mayest*

mayest. To whom the Eunuch answered, *I believe that JESUS was the son of God*, or the man here prophesied of. On this answer, he was baptized by Philip. When Paul and the jailor were, by the miraculous appearances they had seen, convinced of the divine mission of Jesus, they were baptized in his name, or took the oath to live agreeable to the doctrine which he had taught. The baptizing of infants, is a very proper institution: it is an oath taken by the sponsors, whereby they charge themselves with the instruction of the child, and from time to time, to have the precepts and doctrine of Christ explained and inculcated into its mind, as it becomes capable to receive them, until it arrives at that ripeness of judgment which is sufficient to enable it to direct itself. By the sponsors performing the vow they have sworn, the child becomes habituated to the faith and duty required in a christian; which is the greatest security that can be thought of, for the child to become a good one. But still this is not the Baptism of John, nor of Christ, nor of the Apostles. By them Baptism was only administered to converts; *repent and be baptized*, was their precept. It seems that a mistake in these rites took early possession of mens minds, and that the Corinthians were not rightly informed, either of the doctrine of Christ or the nature of Baptism. When he wrote, there were divisions among them, Paul says, "I thank God, I baptized none of you, but Crispus" "and Gaius and the household of Stephanus." It seems these were the only persons whose instruction before Baptism, he could answer for. Were a Jew, a Turk, or a Pagan to become christian, it would be proper to show his conversion, by being baptized in the name of Christ, who says, *that him who acknowledges me before men, will I also acknowledge before my heavenly FATHER*. But this must be the voluntary act of the person converted. The business of an in-

instructor is to show a man his danger, and how he may avoid it: Wherefore Paul tells them, *That Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.* Infant baptism, like the Jewish circumcision, confers no merit of itself; they are both involuntary sufferings of the child: And what the Apostle says of the one, may be with equal justice, said of the other, viz. *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing*; the whole duty required, is comprehended in this, *Keep the commandments of God*; and whether we are circumcised or not, or whether we are baptized or not, will neither add to, nor take from our merit; or be alledged in judgment, either for or against us, when God will assign to every man his portion. But for one, who has, from his birth, been brought up in the christian doctrine, and has always professed being convinced of the truth of it, no such publick testimony is requisite. For such Christ hath instituted another sacrament.

The Eucharist is a ceremony, whereby men represent, or put themselves in the place of those, to whom this sacrament was at first administered. They are supposed to have the same faith, the same upright disposition, and resignation to the will of God, which the Apostles had, when our Saviour gave them his last charge. He was then going to suffer death, for doing the will of his father, and publishing to the world what God required of men, that they might obtain mercy for their sins; and that his sufferings should be to them an example, that no persecution should excuse or induce them to depart from their faith and duty: and in order to preserve this in their minds, he directed, that after his death, they should meet, to eat and drink together in remembrance of him, and thereby imprint in their minds the instructions he left them. Thus Paul tells the Corinthians, that as often as they eat this bread and drink

of this cup, they would show forth the Lord's death till he came; wherefore, whoever would do this unworthily, should be guilty of the body and blood of Christ; but that a man should first examine himself, before he eat or drank in remembrance of him.

The remission of sins was insured to man, in consequence of a new covenant, which God had made with man, and the Eucharist (or last supper) was appointed in commemoration of him, through whom this new covenant was announced to the world. The cutting off of the foreskin, the washing with water, or the eating and drinking together, are things which, in themselves, signify nothing; but if they are done in token of an oath, which we voluntarily take, and engage, in the presence of God, to perform; if we afterwards break that oath, then these ceremonies become evidences to condemn us. Wherefore St. Paul says, *Let a man first examine himself*, lest he do it rashly; let him consider seriously what is the strength of his resolution, his faith; whether his repentance is so sincere, and resolution so strong, that he can rely on his future behaviour; and if he thinks he can, then let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup; but if he does it, without considering the importance of the oath he takes, and returns to his evil ways, he will heap sin on his own head. This second covenant announced by our Saviour, differs essentially from the first made with Abraham, and repeated by Moses. The rewards and punishments of the Jewish covenant concerned only this life, and had so little relation to a future state, that it continued a dispute among the Jews (from any information which Moses had given them) whether there was to be a future state or not; for the precepts of Moses had not ascertained this point: it was by the light of nature only, the Pharisees believed in a resurrection.

“ If

“ If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my com-
 “ mandments, saith the Lord, I will give you rain
 “ in due season : ye shall eat your bread to the full,
 “ and dwell in the land safely. I will rid evil beasts
 “ out of your land ; your enemies shall fly before
 “ you, five of you shall chase an hundred, and an
 “ hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.
 “ But if ye do not obey my commandments I will
 “ appoint over you, terror and the burning ague.
 “ Ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies
 “ shall eat the fruit of it ; ye shall be slain before
 “ your enemies, and they who hate you, shall reign
 “ over you. I will send wild beasts among you,
 “ which shall rob you of your children, and destroy
 “ your cattle. I will bring a sword among you, and
 “ avenge the quarrel of my covenant. And if ye
 “ still walk contrary to me, I will also walk contrary
 “ to you, and chastise you sevenfold for your sins.
 And these threatnings have been remarkably fulfilled,
 by the present abject state the Jews are reduced to.
 But the second covenant, announced by Jesus Christ,
 hath quite different rewards and punishments an-
 nexed to it : and the observance of it, is so far from
 promising temporary blessings, that they, who em-
 brace it, become thereby, the more exposed to per-
 secution and oppression in this life, than other men ;
 but that those sufferings, (on account of their adher-
 ing to the truth) instead of being considered as
 marks of the divine wrath, will be considered as me-
 rit in the eye of God. Jesus saith, *Blessed are ye*
when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall
say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake ;
rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward
in Heaven. Paul tells the Corinthians, *We are naked*
and buffeted, and have no certain dwellings. When
we are reviled, we bless ; being persecuted we suffer
it ; being defamed, we entreat. We are as the filth

of the world, and the offscourings of all things unto this day. They, who trust to the second covenant, must lay aside all thoughts of rewards on earth; they must have such faith in Christ, as to believe, that after this life, there will be a general judgment; when all men shall be examined on their behaviour while on earth, when they will be rewarded or punished, according to what they have done on earth. Jesus therefore directs his Disciples, to turn their thoughts altogether to such objects, as will make them accepted of by God, when they come to be judged. Lay up treasures in Heaven, and fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but fear him who can kill both soul and body in Hell. Paul acknowledges, That if in this life only we have hope thro' Christ, we are of all men the most miserable.

This is not applicable to the heads of the church for these fourteen hundred years past, who have, of all men, been the most happy in affairs of this life, if riches, grandeur, and absolute dominion can make them so.

C H A P T E R XV.

*Of the MANNER whereby the CHURCH acquired its
POWER.*

TO know how this great dominion hath been acquired, requires some recollection of the history of Christianity.—When Jesus Christ delivered his doctrine to the Apostles and Disciples, whatever they did not rightly comprehend, he explained to them : he told them, that his kingdom (or that state of happiness prepared for the righteous,) was not of this world ; but *one* to commence, when all men shall be brought to judgment : when their earthly bodies should be changed into spiritual ones, when the righteous should be rewarded, and the wicked should be punished, each according to his works in this life. That in this life the righteous are persecuted by the wicked ; but that persecution here is only a trial of their obedience, and not a punishment inflicted by God for offences ; that they were not to be afraid of men, who can only kill the body, and then can do no more ; but to fear him, who can kill both body and soul in hell. After his resurrection, he ordered them to go and teach all nations these things they had heard from him. In obedience to this, they dispersed themselves ; and preached his doctrine in all countries where their zeal led them to. If any doubts arose among the new Converts, they applied to the Apostles to resolve these doubts ; as was the case at Antioch, where some imagining, that all Christians ought to be circumcised, they sent to the Apostles and Church of Jerusalem, to know if this was necessary ; who, on that account, met together in council, and resolved their doubts. There was no written law,
for

for Christians at that time to appeal to ; men were converted, merely, from what they heard and saw. I am also persuaded that many converts were made, not so much from the propriety of the Christian Doctrine being laid open to them, as from the folly and absurdity of the Heathen worship being exposed. After the death of the Apostles, men had no longer an opportunity to apply to those, who had been conversant with Christ ; and it was a long time after their death, that the Gospels and Epistles, which compose the New Testament, were collected into one book ; and even when they were, very few had copies of it. Therefore when any considerable number of Converts were made in one town or place, they used to meet together, and converse on their faith, or on these duties, which their new religion laid them under. And these collected bodies, or meetings of Christians, were called the Churches of these towns or places ; and whoever was esteemed the wisest, the best informed, and most zealous in the faith, became Bishops, or overseers of these Churches : hence the dignity and importance of the Bishop, was in proportion to the Church he presided over ; and when any doubts or disputes happened in the smaller Churches, the only method they had to decide those disputes was, by a reference to a neighbouring Church, where a greater number, and of consequence, a supposed more knowing body of Christians composed it. In all doubts and disputes, the reference was from the smaller to the greater Church : the villages appealed to the towns, the towns to the cities, and the cities to the metropolis : and according to the greatness of these Churches in different places, they who presided over them, were called Pastors, Bishops, Arch-bishops and Patriarchs. From the metropolis there could be no appeal ; for none could ly from a larger to a smaller body. When Paul was carried to Rome,

christianity

christianity had been heard of, but not known there. He staid there two years, and had full liberty to preach the Gospel : the field was large before him, and he wanted neither time, opportunity nor inclination to improve it ; insomuch that some of the Emperor's household became Christians. Rome was then the metropolis of the world ; there, the men of the most learning were ; and the Church of Rome, as it was the most numerous, so was it the most knowing. And of course after the death of the Apostles, all doubts and disputes in the smaller churches, were finally determined by it ; the ultimate appeal was to Rome ; so that the Christian faith became in a manner lodged in it ; and the Bishop, or he who presided among the Christians of Rome, became the first man of the whole Christian Church. And all other churches were obliged to acquiesce with the opinion of the church convened at Rome.

The confusion and anarchy occasioned by the civil wars in the empire, during the second and third century, obliged the different usurpers to endeavour to gain the affections of the people. they purposed to govern ; and notwithstanding the constraint put on christianity, by the former Emperors, Constantine found their numbers so encreased, that it was necessary for him to gain them ; and for this purpose he declared himself a Christian, (for the other account, given of a miraculous conversion by a dream, seems a ridiculous forgery) Policy obliged him to take this step. The good and quiet of the state required, that there should be but one religion established in the empire. His predecessors had endeavoured to bring this about, by extirpating christianity, but could not effect it : he therefore tried the contrary method, which was to make christianity the established religion of the empire. But, on enquiry into what that religion was, he found the Christians so distracted, so divided in
their

their opinions relating to some of the principal articles of christianity, that he could not ascertain, wherein consisted that religion, which he was to embrace and authorise : he therefore called a council to determine, *what was the Christian faith.* This council met at Nice from whom that remarkable decree proceeded. Before christianity was authorised by the Emperors, no man would take on himself to be the Bishop of a Church, but such whom a thorough conviction of the truth, and a strong zeal excited to take that office upon him : it was an office exposed, in a particular manner, to persecution. But when christianity became the established religion, and all danger from persecution was thereby removed, the Bishops, or directors of the different churches became men of importance. The influence they had over the people, made it necessary for the Emperors to gain their favour and approbation ; and the chief Bishops became the chief favourites. In this fluctuating state of government, then prevailing in the empire, the Bishops kept the people in obedience ; they directed their wills ; for as the people placed a confidence in their pastors, so they paid a blind obedience to them. The church of Rome, long habituated to give advice when applied to, now took on itself a power to direct, when not applied to. From this time we may date the corruptions of christianity. Before Constantine's time, no motives besides conviction, could induce a man, from a Heathen to become a Christian : Temptation lay altogether on the other side. But when power and riches attended the office of a Bishop ; then bad men, men of cunning and ambition, used their utmost endeavours, by art and hypocrisy, to obtain that office. And Jerom tells us, *that the church, by that revolution, lost as much of its virtue, as it gained of power and wealth.* Instead of that simplicity of manners recommended by Jesus Christ, and preached by

by the primitive christians, that universal benevolence, that liberty of judgment (that every man should be convinced in his own mind) that express prohibition for one man to judge of anothers merit, when he says, *Judge not, least ye be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Shall the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?* or shall fallible men presume to determine for God; all this was laid aside, and the clergy, in their councils afterwards, quite altered the very fundamental principles of christianity: they made the kingdom of Christ altogether a kingdom of this world. And instead of its being next to an impossibility, for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven, they decreed it next to an impossibility for any other but the rich to enter. Indulgences and forgiveness of sins were to be purchased by money, or by gifts to the church. They deprived men of the liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free, and put them again under the yoke of bondage. And to secure their conquest over human understanding, they deprived men of the liberty of examining into their assumed power; they made it penal to read the scriptures. They became as the Jewish lawyers were, to whom Christ says, *Wo unto you lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye enter not in yourselves, and these that were entering in, ye hindered.* The means used by the clergy, to bring mankind under this slavish subjection, were always conformable to the circumstances of the times. The distractions and confusion, which raged thro' the Empire on its decline, brought on such an universal neglect of learning, and inability of reflection, as made it easy for artful and designing men, to impose on the understandings, and delude the minds of the ignorant. The Bishop of Rome assumed a superior power to others by prescription; as all doubts and
disputes

disputes between the different societies of christians, ever since the Apostles time, had been ultimately determined by the church of Rome. It was the imperial city, which had long governed the world in civil affairs, by its right of conquest : and it was therefore proper, for the dignity of the state, that the church of Rome should likewise have the supremacy, and direct all other churches in religious matters. But when the bishop of Constantinople, on this account, took on himself, the title of universal bishop, Gregory of Rome exclaimed against it, “ as antichristian, blasphemous, infernal, and diabolical for any man to assume the title of universal or oecumenical bishop ; for that it was imitating Lucifer, who being swelled with pride, had exalted himself above his equals.” But these reasons did not prevail with the bishop of Constantinople to give up a title, which both he and the emperor Mauritius, thought belonged to the imperial seat. Yet when Mauritius was dethroned, and he and all his family murdered by Phocas, who usurped the empire ; then, because Cyriacus (then bishop of Constantinople) endeavoured to save the lives of the empress and her daughters, Phocas, in revenge, took the title of universal Bishop from Cyriacus, and conferred it on his antagonist Boniface Bishop of Rome ; which, notwithstanding all the strong and pious reasons, urged against such arrogance in any particular bishop by Gregory, was nevertheless accepted of by his successor. And that which appeared so wicked, so blasphemous and diabolical, in the eyes of Gregory, appeared in a quite different light to Boniface, when the same temptation was thrown in his way. And this title, thus conferred by an usurper (the most wicked man in his time) on the See of Rome, hath been ever since kept, and exercised by the bishop of Rome at the expence of an infinite number of lives.

Men,

Men, whose power is built on the deluded imagination of those whom they govern, have but a precarious title: they will therefore fortify it, by all the means and by every method they can think of. The world was ignorant; men received their instructions from the clergy; very few took it from the New Testament, or had an opportunity to examine it: and on this ignorance, the church of Rome hath built its power. For they did not allow that it was, solely, the gift of Phocas, which gave it a superiority over all others; they insisted that they possessed it by Divine right; that as Jesus, after his resurrection, had told the eleven Apostles, that all power was given him in heaven and in earth, and said to them, *As the Father hath sent me, so send I you*; they insist that they as the successors of the Apostles have the same power as the Apostles had; that Peter was the prince of the Apostles (as to him, had been given, in a particular manner, the keys of heaven and hell) therefore the bishop of Rome by being successor of Peter, must also have this power inherent in him above his brethren. It would be difficult to show that Peter ever assumed any power, superior to his brethren; or ever thought himself infallible. It is very evident that Paul did not think him so, for, at Antioch, he withstood him to the teeth, because he was to blame, and that not from his mistaking, but from his perverting the orders of his master. And by the testimony of Paul also, this claim of their being successors to Peter, in the Bishoprick of Rome, appears equally badly founded. By him it would seem, that Peter neither was, nor ever could be bishop of Rome. His words to the Galatians are, “ When they (the Apostles) saw that the gospel of the “ uncircumcision was committed to me, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter, (for he that “ wrought effectually in Peter, to the apostleship of “ the

“ the circumcision, the same was mighty in me to-
 “ wards the Gentiles.) And when James and Ce-
 “ phas and John, (who seemed to be pillars,) per-
 “ ceived the grace that was given unto me, they
 “ gave unto me and Barnabas the right hand of
 “ fellowship, that we should go to the Heathen, and
 “ they to those of the circumcision.” Here, by agree-
 ment, is allotted the province each should take. All
 then that is wanting to determine whether Peter was
 ever Bishop of Rome or not, is to know, whether the
 Romans were Heathens or Jews, when their con-
 version was undertaken: a question which may be
 easily resolved in the negative; and thence all claim
 of power, derived from Peter, to the bishop of Rome,
 must fall to the ground. If it should be asked, why
 the bishops of Rome did not take Paul for their pre-
 decessor, (who certainly was their first bishop) rather
 than Peter, who could not be so? the whole deport-
 ment of the Popes hath shown the motives for acting as
 they have. It was power, and not truth which they
 aimed at; it was subjection and not instruction they
 required of the people; and the only seeming pre-
 eminence, given by Christ to one Apostle above
 another, was to Peter: the keys of heaven and hell
 were not given to Paul: and as they claimed a power
 superior to their fellows, this claim must be derived
 from some one, on whom it had been conferred: it
 was therefore necessary, (in support of their claim)
 to make themselves the successors of Peter, whatever
 Paul or any one else should, or could say to the con-
 trary.

As the church at first acquired its power, from the
 ignorance which overspread the world, and had im-
 proved the delusion, during so many centuries, by
 depriving men of the means of better information,
 there is little of prophecy required in saying, that
 when mankind shall have thrown off that bondage,
 which

which the church hath so long subjected them to, and shall have reassumed that liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free, by taking to themselves the privilege to judge of that faith and duty, which the religion of Christ allows and recommends, that then this deception, this imagined power of the clergy, will be at an end. Truth requires no support but from knowledge and reason. *Search the scriptures, for these are they which testify of me*, are the words of Christ. It is an inward conviction only, which makes a man a christian. Wherefore the sword, with which the Messiah conquered the enemies of God; is always put (not in his hand, but) as proceeding from his mouth. On the other hand, as falshood is built on ignorance, it must be supported by violence.

To punish a man for worshiping God according to his conscience, or because he differs from others in opinion, about the manner he is to be worshiped, is persecution. It is punishing the body for a disagreement of the mind. The design of religion is to convert men from their errors, by convincing their understanding, and it is reason only that can convince the understanding, or change their conceptions. It is a free-will offering, which God requires. We must serve him from a sense, and love of our duty; for he is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth; wherefore St. Paul tells us, *that every one should be convinced in his own mind*.

Persecution, or punishing the body for a disagreement in the mind, may be very proper means in the hands of an usurping power, to compel men to be subjects, but such arguments will never make them converts. Where the understanding is to be informed in order to rectify the judgment, the arguments to be used, must be applied to the mind. The religion of Christ is therefore called a religion of liberty, it refers men

to their reason and conscience. Persecution is never applied, but when arguments from truth and reason are deficient; it is only falsehood that requires persecution to support it: and he who will not give his assent willingly, must be forced, or put to death; lest his opinion should infect the minds of others, *Delenda est Carthago*. Thus Pope Paul the fourth, gave this positive advice on his death bed, *that the inquisition only, could preserve the church*. Were persecution allowable, the Jews committed no sin in putting our Saviour to death: but if the putting him to death, because he differed from the high priests, or Jewish church, was a crime, then persecution cannot be allowable, but must be a sin, in any church. There is not an instance, or precept in all the New Testament, which even countenances, much less authorizes persecution, for men's differing in opinion from Christ. When our saviour, in his journey from Samaria to Jerusalem, came to a village, the inhabitants of which would not receive him, the zeal of James and John was so inflamed, that they asked their master, *Lord wilt thou, that we command fire to come down from heaven, to consume them, as Elias did? but he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*. And the only resentment he shewed, was to leave the inhabitants of that village to themselves, and go to another. By the religion of Christ, it is highly criminal to endeavour even to impose on the understanding. St. Paul says, *Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; that we should renounce the hidden works of darkness, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by a manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*.

But how can we obey this precept. *Prove all things*
and

and hold fast that which is good? When the church hath deprived us of the liberty of proving any thing by our own judgment; and hath decreed, that whoever shall presume to put this advice of St. Paul, in competition with their orders, shall be punished in like manner as St. Paul was; who, for teaching a doctrine different from the then established church, was put to death: Nay they do not stop here; they will prosecute their revenge after death; they will order God to send their souls to hell after they have burned their bodies. If our Saviour is to be believed, the greatest duty incumbent on men to observe, next to the love of God, is to love our neighbours. But there never hath appeared in the world any religious sect, so devoid of brotherly love and charity, as that which calls itself the infallible church of Christ. Paul says, *Tho' I speak with the tongues of men and Angels; tho' I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; tho' I have faith so as to remove mountains; tho' I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and tho' I give my body to be burned, yet if I want charity, all these virtues will profit me nothing.* God hath declared (Deut. Chap. 32.) *That to him belongeth vengeance and recompense, for that he will judge his people. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord and I will repay.* To Job he saith, *who is this, that darkeneth counsel without knowledge? knowest thou the ordinances of Heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof on the earth? Shall he who contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.* How then can men, who profess to believe these expressions to be the word of God, presume to take that power on them, which God hath so expressly reserved to himself? The religion of Christ requires that every one should examine, and be convinced in his own mind; and establish his belief on the best of his judgment, according to the powers,

with which God has endowed him. For this cause the Bereans are commended ; they are praised by Paul, as being more noble-minded than those of Thessalonica, in that they did not receive the Gospel, merely on his report, but they searched the Scriptures to know, if what he reported was true. Our Saviour tells us, *the kingdom of God is within us*, and asks, *why, even of ourselves, do we not judge of what is right ?* But the church hath condemned all this. It says, The kingdom of God is not within us, neither shall we of ourselves judge of what is right, nor be directed by our conscience in the sight of God, but we are to receive the kingdom of God from them ; who, from their office have an inherent right, to give it to those only, whom they shall judge proper : and he who reproveth the church, let him answer it. Here is a plain defiance passed, between Christ and the church, *and let the party who is wrong answer it*. In my imagination, it is not only the height of impiety, but the height of folly in men, to take on themselves to judge for God. *Know they the ordinances of Heaven ? Can they set the dominion thereof on the earth ?* Our Saviour often repeats this injunction, *judge not*. To imagine, on the great day of universal judgment, that the uprightness of another man's faith will be determined by my judgment, or that the sincerity of my belief is to be determined by the conceptions of another man, is to take to ourselves to give laws to God, and to exalt ourselves above our judge. The moral law hath sufficiently informed us, what crimes are cognizable, and punishable by men, as when God says, *who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*. The very constitution of society will oblige every member of it to conform to the moral law, as no society can subsist, without every one submitting to that obligation : But speculative opinions, about the most proper manner to worship God, or pay him our adoration,

adoration, and which neither trespass on the moral law, nor disturb the peace of society, are to be left to the particular judgment and conviction of every individual; as men will then be judged, not in a collective body, as being of such a sect, but where every individual will be obliged to answer for himself. This is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles. And Paul tells us, *That if he, or even an angel from heaven should come and preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed.* Now whosoever takes on himself to supercede or controul the orders of another, doth thereby exalt himself above that other. If the church takes on itself a power to dispense with these things, which God hath declared sinful, it thereby supercedes the decrees of God, and exalts itself above God: But the church, by its indulgences, its dispensations, absolutions, faculties, exemptions, penance and commutations, hath assumed this power; it therefore hath exalted itself above God. Yea it hath assumed a more extraordinary one; it hath declared that God shall not pardon sins without their permission, and hath subjected him, not only to the orders of the church, but also to the intention of him, whom they shall impower to execute their orders. The council of Trent hath decreed in their 13th article, that no sacrament should be of any force, except it be accompanied with the intention of the priest who administers it; so that conviction, repentance and amendment of life, with subsequent baptism, cannot make a man a christian, except the priest who baptises him, intends at the same time, that he should be one. Neither shall the mercy of God extend to the forgiving the sins of a sincere penitent, except the priest, who pronounces the absolution, intends at the same time, that God should pardon him; for it is not the words pronounced, but the intention of the priest who pronounces them, that

that is to make the sacrament effectual. Thus, the will, and power of God to pardon sinners, may be controuled, and made subservient to the mental reservation of a malicious lying hypocrite. In this Council, Catarinus bishop of Minori, was so foolishly hardy, as to take up the argument, in support of God Almighty's power, against the mental reservation of a wicked hypocrite, but he was not in the secret, his opinion was over-ruled, and the Council determined and decreed, that let the Priest be a hypocrite or not, his intention was, and should be necessary, in order to make the sacrament effectual to the purpose, for which it is administered. After this view of the power assumed by the church, let us compare it to that state of delusion prophesied of by St. Paul, where there seems to me such an exact resemblance between them, that were there no other arguments to convince me of the truth of christianity, than this description ; the completion of this prophecy, would convince me of the truth of that religion, which could predict what hath so exactly come to pass. Paul writing to the Thessalonians concerning the Day of Judgment, or the second coming of Christ, saith, *That day shall not come except there be a falling away first ; and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who shall oppose, and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God ; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders ; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness to them that perish ; because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God will send them a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie. And to Timothy he says, Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and the doctrines of devils ;*

Devils ; speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their consciences seared with a hot iron ; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.

Our Saviour tells us, that every tree is known by its fruit, for men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles : a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit, but by their fruits ye shall know them. And St. Paul desires us, to stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free. But persecution is the very reverse of liberty, and therefore the very reverse of the religion of Christ ; the principles of his religion are brotherly love and charity to all men ; but persecution is the production of malice, tyranny and ambition, working on the minds of a credulous ignorant multitude. Thus the Jewish priests and scribes persecuted Christ and his Disciples ; thus the heathen powers persecuted the primitive Christians ; and thus the Romish church persecute all those, who will not receive its doctrine ; while the heads of it, secure and happy in the ignorance of the deluded multitude, divert themselves with the thought

Quantum nobis profuit hæc fabula Christi !

ERRATA.

PAGE.	LINE.
26.	8. For wordly, read worldly.
52.	29. For wouuld, read would.
60.	3. For oxtention, read extenſion.
61.	21. For ſenſible, read ſenſitive.
63.	20. For extroordinary, extraordinary.
83.	18. For this, read his.
125.	30. For has, read haſt.
170.	00. For could ly, read could lie.
181.	15. For ſupercedes, read ſuperſedes.

ERRATA

PAGE	LINE
26.	8. For worthy, read worldly.
27.	29. For would, read world.
60.	3. For extension, read extensive.
61.	21. For feasible, read sensitive.
62.	20. For extraordinary, read ordinary.
83.	18. For this, read his.
125.	30. For has, read half.
170.	60. For could, read could have.
181.	15. For supercedes, read supercedes.

