
The VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

No 3]

MAY 31, 1805.

[VOL. I

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed ; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.

TASK.

The Editors of the VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

April 2d, 1804.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM often solicited by my acquaintances to write to them. My time being much occupied by different callings, I find it impossible to comply with their request in many instances. Having written many letters formerly, it occurred to me to collect as many of them as I could from my friends, and out of them to make a selection, and send them, not only to many of my acquaintances, but to many strangers, through the medium of the Magazine. Two reasons have induced me to this measure—one, from observing the eagerness with which letters written in an actual correspondence are generally read, and the other, from a humble persuasion, that they have been made a blessing to those to whom they were at first addressed.

If you judge such as I may forward from time to time, worthy the attention of your readers, it may be in my power to furnish materials to fill a page or two of your publication, for several numbers. In the mean time, my own mind will be in a measure relieved, as thinking I have substantially complied with the solicitations of my friends.

Wishing the greatest success and utility to your undertaking,

I am, with respect,
Your humble servant,

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LETTER I.

August 31st, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MY letters have generally been of a serious nature.— Please to allow me to indulge myself in the same humor at this time. How happy should I feel to arrive at that state of mind Mrs. Rowe describes in some of her letters— “To look upon myself as an inhabitant of the other world, and as a disinterested spectator of the noise, bustle, and confusion, which reigns in this.” But that is an attainment, which I apprehend is above my reach, and I hope to have patience quietly to resign to my lot.

I love to think about my Soul.—You know I frequently used to talk about it when you were here. Is it not of more importance than any thing else, to which we can turn our attention? What are pleasures, riches or honors, or even beauty itself, the pride of females, in comparison with that immortal mind, which will survive the ruin of this world, and all it contains? Why then should we not think and talk about it, more than any thing else? Does it not please you to consider how the faculties of the Soul will be enlarged, when it gets released from this prison of clay in which it is fettered, and by which it is hindered from soaring up to the throne of God, and perhaps wandering with perfect freedom among the Stars? Or does the thought of unpardonable sin make you dread the idea of immortality?—Much of the evil we commit is owing to our not thinking highly enough of ourselves. This you may think a strange doctrine. But do you suppose, that if we considered ourselves as children of the most high, and heirs of immortal glory, we should not endeavor to preserve our dignity? Do we not see those who are descended from honorable families careful not to do any thing which may disgrace their ancestors or themselves? And would we not be equally attentive to our conduct, if we were constantly to remember, to what a noble family we are related?—That we are Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God?

All the wonderful things I used to talk about doing after I am dead, was only to give you some idea how free and unconfined the Soul will be after its separation from the body. However, I can see no reason why the Soul may not be acquainted with the affairs of mortals on earth. I am rather inclined to believe it will. Why did the rich man in Hell pray Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brethren, to warn

them, lest they should come to that place of torment, if he did not know in what manner they were going on? And Paul says, we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, in which he seems to allude to that noble company of worthies he has mentioned in the preceding chapter. Besides, perhaps Heaven is not so far off as we have generally thought. I used to think it a long way off, some-where beyond the Stars.—But I suppose, where-ever God reveals himself to the departed Soul, and makes it happy by the communications of his love, that it is compleatly blessed, and may be said to be in Heaven. So it is not the difference of place so much, as their different natures and capacities, that makes a man on earth, and a Soul in Heaven. As soon as the bird is out of the cage, it is in the open air—and as soon as the Soul is out of the body, it is in Eternity, and happy or miserable.

We have had no account from N. since her departure—I shall, however, use my endeavor that she shall hear from me next week, if I can get an opportunity of conveying a letter, and can make out any thing which I think passable.

I am, with respect,

Your sincere Friend,

Q.

LETTER II.

September 29th 1724.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE account of that melancholy *event*, the death of your brother, which is the occasion of this letter, was not less sudden and unexpected, than it is afflictive. We are generally surpris'd at hearing such events, from not having accustomed our minds to anticipate the afflictions that may come upon us. When we feel ourselves at ease; when prosperity smiles with a kind aspect, and affords all those good things which appear necessary for our present comfort; and when we are surrounded with agreeable friends and relations, we are very prone to forget that calamities may suddenly overwhelm us; that some misfortune may quickly destroy all our outward comforts, and that *death*, that canker-worm to our pleasures in this world, may make such ravages amongst our dearest connexions, as may pierce our hearts with the keenest anguish, and drown us in a flood of sorrows. The mind natu-

rally revolts from the contemplation of death. It is a disagreeable task to descend by meditation into the dark and gloomy regions of the grave, where silence, perpetual silence reigns, and where all things are forgotten. But as uncomfortable as it is to think on such a subject, we should act wisely to fix our thoughts upon it more frequently; because it would have a tendency to fortify the mind, and arm it with resolution, to bear with Christian resignation, a calamity like that which we now deplore. By bearing an affliction of this nature with fortitude and patience, I would not have you understand, that you should make no discovery of your sorrow, or that you should submit to it with an unfeeling mind, as to a common event; for that would be to renounce humanity rather than to discover true nobleness of soul. But what I mean is, that you should not give yourself up to immoderate and excessive grief, so as to disqualify you for the discharge of other duties which you may be called to perform. After all, I believe there is nothing but true religion, that can give the mind such support and calmness under bereavements and afflictions of this nature, as effectually to exclude all improper feelings of the heart, and to make one say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

The death of our friends, are as messengers sent from Heaven to admonish us of our approaching dissolution—To bring to our recollection, that we have no continuing and abiding city here below, but are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. However thoughtless we may be at other times of the approach of death, it is hardly possible to see our friends die, without feeling we are mortal.

"They point us to the dust below,

"And every grave, cries, come away."

The death of our friends also serves to shew us the vanity of putting our dependence in mortals, and excites us to seek for some surer foundation upon which to build our hopes of happiness. Permit me then to recommend it to you in the most earnest manner, that now, when you feel your heart softened by affliction, you would be engaged in seeking after God as the portion and happiness of your soul, by sincere prayer. If the Lord becomes your father, and Jesus Christ your elder brother, death can never separate you from their love and protection. Earthly friends may die, and leave you to lament their loss; but they will never leave you nor forsake you.—I would observe further, that such sorrowful dispensations should wean our affections from an undue attachment to the world, and all it contains, that we may be more willing to depart whenever the summons comes to call us away.

“Heaven gives us friends to bless the present scene,
“Resumes them to prepare us for the next.”

I hope when you consider that you deserve to be scourged with scorpions, you will not grow impatient under the corrections of the rod, especially when it is in the hand of a kind and indulgent father who has the good of all his creatures in view; and particularly when you consider how much cause you have to be thankful for the numerous mercies you still enjoy.—Mr. M. will inform you of every thing passing here more fully than I could by letter.

I am your most sincere Friend.

Q.

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FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

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ON INFIDELITY.

No. I.

WHEN the religion of the gospel was first preached to the world, it was “every where spoken against.” All the malignant passions of human nature, and all its most bitter, deep-rooted prejudices, were leagued in opposition to it. But notwithstanding the unwearied efforts of its enemies, it spread with astonishing rapidity through every part of the civilized world. In the cities of Greece, those schools of wit, and learning, within sixty years after the æra of Christ there, were flourishing Christian churches. In Rome, and even in the Palace of the Emperor, the name of Christ was worshiped—The monstrous superstructure of heathenish superstition, fell before the preaching of the Cross, and a purer morality was taught, a more rational worship was offered, and more correct, and enlarged views of the character of Deity were entertained. In the early ages of Christianity, the enemies of the Church were the perverse and misguided Jews, and the uninstructed Heathen. The opposition was determined, steady, and systematic. The prejudice of early education, the unrelenting spirit of religious bigotry, the interests of an artful and designing Priesthood; the learning, the subtlety, and the wit of Philosophers; the self-indulgence of a luxurious age; and the strong arm of the Roman government, were all united against eleven poor obscure Fishermen, and one Tent-maker—This was most fearful odds in-

deed. That this religion was not crushed in its infancy, and totally exterminated, is as miraculous, as that an egg-shell should not be crushed by the whole, unbroken force of a mill-stone rolling over it. But it flourished amidst the most sanguinary persecutions of its most deadly enemies. The blood and the ashes of the martyrs seemed to be prolific; and for one that went to the stake, there were hundreds, and thousands, who were ready to shed their blood, for the sake of this religion; So that, in the space of about three hundred years, the Roman empire became Christian. From this period the persecution of the Christian name abated; but still the opposition of the world to the pure doctrines of the Gospel, remained in all its force, and the Church soon became most lamentably corrupt: The Scriptures, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, were either neglected, or the plainest precepts of the Gospel were perverted, so as to countenance, or at least give indulgence to the most scandalous immoralities. While this was the case, there was no opposition to Christianity, as it was professed: A religion which coincides with the depravity of the human heart, is not likely to suffer hostilities from the world. How long this state of corruption continued—to what an enormous height it was carried—in what clouds of darkness the Church was involved, and how dark was the night, is known to every one versed in Ecclesiastical History—But at length, by the mercy and good providence of God, the dawn appeared: The reformation gave a mortal blow to the Papal Hierarchy—the human mind was unfettered from the shackles of a monstrous spiritual tyranny, and a new impulse seemed to be given to all the powers of human nature—The purity of the Gospel shone forth in mild radiance, like the moon emerging from a dark cloud. Then again, the ceaseless opposition of the world to true piety began to manifest itself, in the persecution of the professors of the reformed Churches. That depravity of heart which had marked itself under sanctimonious appearances, now threw off the disguise, and a most deadly persecution commenced against the followers of JESUS CHRIST. At that time too, some whose minds were (in some degree) illuminated by the progress of truth, but whose hearts were unreformed, revolting from the glaring errors, and the absurdities of the Romish Church, were hurried from the extreme of unconditional submission to the Papacy, and implicit faith in the doctrines of the Church, to the opposite extreme of incredulity, and scepticism. From the best information that I have been able to obtain, it was about this period that the *Deists* first made their appearance in the world. This sect was, at the begin-

ing, far from being numerous. Their increase has, however, been rapid; but it is no difficult matter to account for this event: The principles which they held—the doctrines which they inculcated—the morality which they taught, was well suited to the temper of the human heart. To this it may be added, that a smattering in knowledge frequently enables a man to perceive the difficulties with which a subject is encumbered, but does not put it in his power to give the solution. And it is well known, that many who enlisted under the banners of infidelity, were never famous for extent of literature, or for profoundness of thought. It may also be observed that the enemies of Christianity, have been in the habit of setting up themselves for Philosophers, and men of liberal sentiments; and to ridicule religion, was an easier way to obtain the reputation of philosophy, than a course of long and laborious study. Many, therefore, who were desirous of the distinctions of learning, but who were either too stupid, or too indolent, ever to arrive at eminence in the walks of science, took the shorter road of infidelity, and came out to astonish the world at once with their wit and philosophy. As the numbers of the sect multiplied, the attention of the friends of religion was turned towards them, and as often as an attack was made, they stood forth to repel the assault, and with the shield of truth to cover their religion against the weapons of its enemies. But the Deists have never yet been shamed into silence by defeats.—Their forms of attack were perpetually varied, and though repulsed a thousand times, they have, a thousand times, renewed the attack.—Every art was tried—every effort, that human ingenuity could devise, was made, to overthrow the Kingdom of Christ.—Earth, air, and ocean, were ransacked, for the purpose of finding, in the processes of nature, something to invalidate the authority of the Scriptures.—Historians, Poets, and Philosophers, determined, if possible, to write down Christianity—Farce and Comedy attempted to laugh it out of the world—“Coarse publications” multiplied daily—Buffoonery, ribaldry, and obscenity, were resorted to, when argument failed. These efforts had a most disastrous influence on the minds of thousands.—Infidelity spread with an almost incredible rapidity. At a period not long past, the prospect, to the eye of sense, was awfully gloomy! It seemed as if all the foundations of religion were about to be upturned, and the world demoralized! Nothing but an unshaken confidence in the promises of the great head of the Church, could, in that day of alarm and contention, have supported the Christian. But this storm

was not of long continuance—it was fierce—it was violent—it raged—but it was short. “A grand experiment on human nature, convinced the world, that society could not exist—that peace and good order could not be preserved, without religion.” But though the fierceness of the storm has ceased, the “danger is not yet over.” And it will not be over, while the Devil is unbound, and men unconverted. It is necessary, therefore, that Christians be still on the watch, and that the Shepherds of the Flock of Christ guard well their folds from the ravening wolf of Infidelity. And particularly, it is necessary to fortify the minds of youth against the destructive principles of unbelievers, to make them familiarly acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, and to instruct them in the evidences by which the truth of our Holy Religion is established. Wherefore, it appeared to me not unsuitable, that a Magazine, devoted to the important object of promoting religious knowledge, should contain some essays upon the evidences of the Christian religion, written in a popular style, and expressing clearly and forcibly, the most cogent reasons for the truth of Christianity. In addition to this design, it occurred to me, that it would not be improper to prefix to such essays, some observations upon the objections most commonly urged against our religion. If the Editors of the Magazine approve of this plan, and of the execution thus far, they may insert this as a preliminary essay. The design originated from a sincere desire to promote the interests of truth and piety—Its execution I leave to the decision of others.

P.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE HINDOOS.

[The following extract of a letter, from the Rev. John Thomas, to the Rev. Mr. Rippon, taken from the Baptist Annual Register, will doubtless be entertaining to most of our readers; as it contains a brief historical sketch of some of the customs of the Hindoos, as well as the power of the Gospel to overcome the strongest habits of men.]

THERE are four *Shasters*, or laws, among the *Hindoos*, which they call the *Vedas*; these they hold in the highest esteem, and say it is unlawful for any man to read or hear them read, except he is a *Brahman*. The *Vedas* are

said to have been written many millions of years ago, which, however, is easily disproved by other books and writings in use among themselves. These Vedas are written in *Sanscrit*, which may be called the Latin of the East, and they are the fountain of all their books of theology, as the Koran among the Moors, and the Bible among us. There are eighteen sacred books called *Poorans*, which are all commentaries on the Vedas: and it is the custom of all the Brahmans, to learn a great part of these by heart, and they are very apt and clever in quoting portions of them in conversation: this they find the more easy to them, as all their books are written in verse. I think it is impossible to convey to any person who never was in that country, an adequate idea of that profound reverence in which they hold their sacred books. But what is wonderful, they hear the divine authority of these books questioned with patience and moderation, at all times, and in all places. Some of these books hold up for their veneration, characters which are very profligate, and contain strange doctrines, evidently of an infernal origin, which have a dreadful effect on their minds and manners. They abound, moreover, with such contradictions (though on the other hand with very good moral precepts) that I am sure it is no difficult thing to convince the more intelligent persons amongst them, that they are not of divine authority: and I am persuaded, there are some to be found among them, who think there is no revelation from God yet, because they see in all these books, some things incompatible with their notion of God. That there is one great God, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient; that he is to be worshipped and served; that the soul is immortal; that we all have sinned; and that some atonement is necessary; are truths commonly believed among them all; and add to these things, the divine predictions we have of the latter day, with the encouragements of Jehovah, to declare his glory among the Heathen; and I think, without any thing more, one might find reason enough to go and preach to them. But I can truly say, wherever I have been conversing or preaching among them, I have invariably found them willing to hear, and that they always behave with great decency and respect. I trust also that the door of faith is opened to the *Hindoos*, by the conversion of two or more *Hindoos*, and by many other striking effects, which, though short of real conversion, may, in the Lord's own time, prove a great blessing to many. You will see some little account of *Boshoo*, the Munshiee, one of these converts, in a letter from him and a Brahman, which will accompany these papers. He is about 35 years of age, and a

person of more than ordinary capacity, and has been well educated in the Persian language; he was recommended to me by Mr. W. C———, who is a great Persian scholar; and I have employed him in the office of my Munsee, or teacher, all the time I have been in *Bengal*. It was he that composed the *Bengal Hymn* I send you, and many other sonnets of his own accord, without any assistance from me or any other; and it was he who chiefly laboured with me, in the translation of Matthew, Mark, James, &c. and he often disputes with and confounds the Brahmans, both learned and unlearned, though he is not a Brahman himself, but of the writer *Cast*;* and this is not in a small degree extraordinary, for the Brahmans think it a very great condescension to hold an argument with any person whose *Cast* is inferior to that of a Brahman. This man has a considerable degree of knowledge and gifts, and I hope they will one day shine forth to the good of many. I should have baptized him, but his relations refused to give him his wife and children. He will accomplish his wishes I hope, before I return, and then his family will be numbered with the stated hearers, and he himself be baptized with the Brahman *Parbotee*, of whom I shall give you a short account presently. The greatest difficulty in spreading of the Gospel in *Bengal*, arises from the *Cast*: for all who are baptized, and partake of bread and wine with us, will lose cast; and when a man has lost cast, his most intimate friends and nearest relations will forsake him for ever. He cannot possibly be restored again by any means; and the meanest Hindoo, from that time, refuses to eat, drink, or converse with him; he becomes an outcast and a vagabond in their eyes, in the most strict sense. But when the way is once opened, the difficulty will gradually diminish, and, if they walk as becometh the Gospel, they will become a *Cast* of themselves, and that an honourable one too.

I might here give you an entertaining account of many who left off their idolatry, flower-offerings, and vain superstitions, and are in the habit of reading the Bible † as the Word of God, and the only book that discovers, to their satisfaction, the way of salvation: But I am already spinning out my paper to a greater length than I intended, and what I have to say of *Parbotee* will take up a considerable portion

* Order or Tribe.

† They have *Matthew*, *Mark*, *James*, some part of *Genesis*, and the *Psalms*, with different parts of the prophecies, in Bengalee manuscript: three or four of them have all the above, and some only a single part, which they lend to one another and copy.

of your time. I will by the bye, just mention a few things of *Mohun Chund*, another Brahman, of whom I once hoped well, whose heart failed him, at last: but I cannot say, even now, that I have given up all hopes of him—far from it: This man is a Brahman of some repute, and has a vast number of disciples, who prostrate themselves at his feet wherever they meet him: He lives at *Boolahant*, about six miles from *Malda*. He came to hear me in the crowd, and was easily to be distinguished from the rest, by his fixed attention and regular attendance. One day, after I had been discoursing about prayer, he very gravely asked me, “Sir, when a man prays to God, how many days is it before he gets an answer?”—I then repeated the account of the woman of Canaan, and other different cases: he continued to attend, converse, and write, on the things of the Gospel, and seemed at length convinced that he was a great sinner before God; that there was no refuge for him among all their *Shasters*; and that the Gospel alone was of God, discovering the way of salvation. This man continually came to see me, and was reckoned by his people a convert to Christianity, for he disused the worship and ceremony of the Hindoos, to his own temporal loss, and forbade that homage which had long been superstitiously paid him from the people. He often talked publicly with great persuasion, to other Brahmans in favour of the Bible. On the 28th of June, 1790, he had been to pay me a visit, and returning to his own home, he found there *Parbotee*, a Brahman, who called to see him.

Parbotee was a man of *title*, and of a more high and honourable rank than this man. He was also a very strict observer of the Hindoo laws and customs, daily rising early in the morning, and repairing to the distant jungles* to gather curious flowers, superstitiously valued amongst them; and these he offered, with abundant forms, in the river *Mahanuddee*, which was near; and repaired, at particular seasons, to their more sacred river the *Ganges*, which they say cleanses from sin.—There was not his equal, in all the neighbourhood, for zeal and accuracy; a thorough devotee. This man having heard of our new *Shaster* (the Bible) was not a little displeased: and when he understood that the other Brahman, who came in, had been to see me, he required of him to go and wash his clothes, for he must be defiled, and would defile, for he had been in the company of an Englishman: and it is the common custom of all religious orders among them, to go out of the company of an Englishman or

* Woods.

Mahometan, into the river, and immerse their bodies, with their clothes on. I have often observed the Brahmans, and *Pandits*,* do so after holding any conversation with me. To induce this man to go and wash his clothes, *Parbotee* urged, that I was of the *Maleetch* viz. *unclean*, if not *filthy*. He replied, that filthy men did filthy deeds; whereas he could never say so of this Englishman—and he would not wash his clothes. The other continued to insist upon it, and finding his injunction was not honoured, he proceeded to do a thing which will appear trivial to you, but is a very formidable action among them:

It is the custom of the country to smoke very much; and their tobacco is made up into a paste, with spices, &c. this paste they place on one side of a copper-plate, and coals of fire on the other side; the tobacco being lighted, they then put it on the upper extremity of a tube, and the lower extremity runs down into a shell or other vessel, containing cold water, and sometimes rose-water, which is very common there. The smoke is agreeably drawn through the cooling water by means of another flexible tube, which is the pipe, and is generally about twelve feet long:—Now, when Brahmans, or others of equal cast, meet together, it is a constant mark of friendship and good understanding, for the man of the house to offer this Hookah to his visitor, and it is passed on from one to the other. But when the Brahman in question gave the Hookah to *Parbotee*, he emptied the water out of it: this is the action that will appear little to you, but which is a kind of formal disgrace among them, and proves a forerunner to that which is worse than death, viz. *losing cast*. Such a proceeding, before witnesses, could not escape particular notice, nor fail of drawing the attention of many, to the great dishonour of *Mohun Chund*: So he left the company, and went and poured out his complaint to God in prayer. The day was far gone, he returned no more to his company, but retired with his family to rest. About two in the morning, he was called up by *Parbotee*, with vehement cries; and on opening the door, found him in great agitation, and, to his inexpressible surprize, *Parbotee* desired to hear the Gospel, and that the Brahman *Chund* would go and pray for him: he replied as well as he could, and took him to the house of *Boshoc* the *Munshce*, where they spent their time till day-light in reading, praying, and singing. But matters were not yet explained: they observed he did not go to his usual ceremonies, but returned to *Munshce's* house in great trou-

* *Viz.* Learned Doctors.

ble of mind, about noon, making his former requests, and, on their repeated enquiry, he related to them a very remarkable dream, in which I have no doubt at all but he received divine admonition and instruction. The effects of it were visible on his body and mind for several days. I found it very difficult to administer any consolation to him, and was afraid the consequences might be soon fatal; but he continued daily to hear the Gospel, and began to join the rest in singing and praying; and confessed to all his former folly, and professed to believe that the Bible was the only Word of God, and JESUS CHRIST the only Saviour. When I left Bengal, he had continued to walk in an orderly becoming manner, and gave me and others great satisfaction.

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 FROM THE ASSEMBLY'S MISSIONARY MAGAZINE.

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 ON SANCTIFICATION.
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REAL Christians have often very inadequate conceptions of the Gospel-plan of *sanctification*, and suffer much from this cause. They know that the people of God will ever desire a deliverance from sin, and will gradually be obtaining a victory over it. But finding that their own corruptions are very strong and active, they are frequently sunk into great dejection, and are ready to conclude that their state is graceless; and in consequence of this they have no heart to come to Christ to accept the benefits which he has procured for his people, and which he offers and promises to them. Now, though we ought to be very cautious that we do not build up ourselves or others on unfounded hopes and unwarranted comforts, yet let the following remarks on this subject be well considered.

1. It is not certain that no progress is made in *sanctification*, or that corruption is unusually prevalent, because it is most sensibly perceived. Sin has a blinding influence on the soul, and it often actually prevails the most when it is the least discovered and felt. David for some time after the commission of his great sin seems to have been wonderfully insensible. It is one of the certain and invariable effects of *sanctification* to make the subject of it peculiarly sensible of

sin and desirous of deliverance from it. Sensibility to sin, then, is no evidence that the work of *sanctification* is not progressive.

2. There is much self-righteousness in our refusing to come freely to Christ, because we see ourselves to be guilty and vile in the extreme, long and deeply polluted by in-dwelling corruption. What is this but making our *sanctification*, or comparative holiness, a preparation or qualification that may recommend us to the Saviour's favorable notice? What is it but attempting to make our pardon depend, in part at least, on our own worth, or personal excellence; on *something good* in ourselves, and not entirely and without reserve on the righteousness of Christ? But the fact is that our *sanctification* can never be, in any degree, the meritorious or procuring cause of our acceptance with God. It never was so to the greatest Saint that ever existed; and all expectations or imaginations of the kind are so far from being just or commendable, that they are extremely criminal, as derogatory to the free grace of God. They are not to be cherished, but immediately to be relinquished and abhorred. Hence,

3. Whatever be our unworthiness, pollution and ill-desert, we are not only permitted, but commanded, *now and as we are*, to come to Christ for a complete pardon, and effectual deliverance from sin. This is our immediate and indispensable duty, however great may have been our past vileness. To empty us completely of ourselves, to strip us entirely of self-righteousness and reliance, and to bring us to rest and trust *simply and wholly* on Christ Jesus for justification and acceptance with God, may be, and often is, the design of our Heavenly Father, in making his people to know so much of the plague of their own hearts. And it is by bringing them most sensibly and affectionately to the Redeemer, as their *all in all* that the work of *sanctification* is also most affectually advanced: for one appropriating act of faith, one real taste of the pardoning mercy and love of God in Christ Jesus, will more powerfully break and dissolve the heart in penitence for sin, raise a stronger hatred of it, create a desire of deliverance from it, and prompt to a more vigilant, vigorous, and effectual contest with it, than all legal fears, legal hopes, and self-righteous endeavours—This is Christian experience:—This is the Gospel mystery of *sanctification*. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him which died for them and rose again.”

Extract from Witherspoon's sermon on Ministerial Fidelity.

From the supposition that many will have access to the Magazine who are not in possession of the works of DR. J. WITHERSPOON, we present our readers with an extract from the writings of that excellent author—The design of the sermon, from which the following is taken, is to state the difficulties attending a faithful discharge of the duties of the ministry. There is certainly no necessity for an encomium on the piece; it will be found sufficient to recommend itself.

“ I SHALL mention to you, however, one example, that I may illustrate the remark, and, at the same time, further discharge my own duty. It hath always seemed to me of great moment, to preserve just views of the sacraments, which are the seals of God's covenant, and the appointed means of the confirmation and comfort of his own people.—Without mentioning, however, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, I have found the greatest difficulty in preserving the sacrament of baptism from profanation, and from that comparative disregard under which it now lieth. This arises not only from the laxness of discipline in general, but from some mistakes and prejudices on the subject of religion. It appears to me a thing undeniable, that both sacraments are the seals of the same covenant, require the same terms of admission, and operate to the benefit of the receivers upon the very same principles; that is to say, according to the excellent words of our Catechism, *Not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of God, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.* The only difference is, that, in the Lord's supper, every believer acts for himself personally; in the sacrament of baptism, when administered to infants, the parent acts as a representative, and sponsor for his seed. None, therefore, ought to be admitted to baptism, more than to the Lord's supper, who have not a credible profession of faith in Christ, and, in the judgment of charity, or rather the judgment of men, may be supposed real Christians. Yet, is it not certain, that ma-

ny, who are justly excluded from the Lord's table, and some who never asked admission to it, do insist on presenting their children to baptism, and are pleaded for by not a few of better character, who cry out against the refusal, as an injury to the child, besides other bad consequences sometimes pretended?

The chief complaint is, that it is a pity the child should suffer for the fault of the father. This is the very error and prejudice in religion, which I think it my duty to oppose. It arises from a remaining degree of Popish superstition, to look upon the sacraments as spells or charms, which have some effect independent of the exercise of faith in the receiver.— The sacraments, my brethren, are not grace, but the means of it; they are not faith, but are appointed for the confirmation and growth of it. They belong to believers alone. They are seals of God's covenant; but they cannot seal that which was never made. It is just as if a man, who wanted to make a purchase from me, whose terms I had utterly rejected, and refused to give him my possession, should, notwithstanding, persist in writing out his contract, and signing it. Would this be of any effect? A contract is a sure title to the bargain, where the consent of both parties is ascertained; but where one of these is wanting, it is absolutely void, and of no effect. Infants cannot receive the sacraments, by exercising faith themselves; they have no right to receive the sign at all, but as they are the seed of believing parents by profession. Neither do they receive any real benefit from it, but when they are the seed of those who believe sincerely. If it be allowed that an unbeliever, who receives the bread and wine at the Lord's table, receives no benefit to his own soul, how can it be imagined, or supposed, that an unbelieving parent, in baptism, can first receive, and then convey benefit to his new born child? His coming there at all, in such a state, is a presumptuous profanation of a holy institution. Now, though I can conceive easily, and do believe firmly, that many blessings are conveyed to children by an act of duty in their parents, I can neither conceive nor believe, that they can receive any advantage from an act of profanity and disobedience.

The children of wicked parents, then, can receive no benefit by baptism, but what they would have whether they were baptized or not, viz. that they are brought up among professing Christians, and by that means have some opportunities of knowing the truths of the Gospel. And I cannot help thinking, it would, in the course of providence, be an inducement to them to attend more seriously to what they are taught, if they considered themselves as no members of the

visible church, till they understood the terms of admission, and desired it as their own choice. The case is very different with the children of real believers; they have a right to all the promises that are made to the seed of believers, as such, by that God who *sheweth mercy to thousands of generations of them that keep his commandments.* Some, I believe many, think that they are doing honor to the sacrament of baptism, by representing the rite itself as of so great necessity; but it is precisely that sort of honor that the Papists do it, by causing midwives and physicians instantly to baptize the children that are in a weak state, or by running to the beds of the sick, with a little of the consecrated wafer, and putting it in the mouth of a person either wholly insensible, or, perhaps, already dead. Our fathers, in the purer times of this church, whose institutions and practice, the longer I live, I do the more esteem and revere, in the most absolute manner, prohibited all private baptism. Their great reason for this, was to prevent the very abuse I have been speaking of, viz. the superstitious notion of the necessity of the outward rite to salvation, without a due attention to the manner of receiving it. And, indeed, it was their only reason; for they, who were so great enemies to the consecration of places, and the holiness of stones or timber, could never think that baptism, administered according to Christ's appointment, was invalid for being done in a private house, and not in a church, or in the presence of a small, rather than a numerous assembly.

These things, my brethren, which I have often mentioned occasionally, I have now repeated, and will add to them, that I think there is something very incongruous, at least unsuitable, in admitting any parent to present his child in baptism, whatever be his character in other respects, who has never asked admission to the Lord's table. Consider, that in the administration of baptism, the parent is constantly taken bound to command his children, so soon as they come to years, to renew their baptismal engagement in their own persons. Now, what consistency is there, in allowing a man to pledge his faith solemnly to God and his church, that he will command his child to do that which he habitually neglects to do himself. The pretence of fear, and unpreparedness for the Lord's table, is a condemnation of those who offer it, because it shews, that they suppose the one sacrament requires a different character or easier terms of admission than the other. After all, the above prejudices seem to me so deeply rooted with many, that they will not probably be soon destroyed; but I think it is the duty of every minister, in that, and all such cases, to speak his mind plainly, and, to the ut-

most of his power, to act consistently and uniformly, though he should suffer by the slanders both of the ignorant and profane.

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FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

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[OBSERVATIONS ON THE SABBATH.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, &c.

SUCH was the command given to the Jewish church—such is the command to all those of the present day, who believe in the existence and authority of the one only living and true God. No precept of revelation is given in language more forcible and authoritative; and that no mistake might arise as to its meaning and extent, it is divided into particulars which include all the cases where we might be liable to transgress—yet thousands regard this pointed commandment as little as a precept of heathen morality; and altho' spoken by *Jehovah* himself, it meets with as little respect from them, as if it had been the answer of a heathen oracle. This arises from the same source with all other violations of the law of God. Men may offer specious arguments to justify themselves in their disobedience to this commandment, but corrupt affections lie at the bottom of their system and give energy to their endeavors to defend it.

It was once a divine command, and it must be difficult to show when its authority ceased. Obedience to it was strictly enforced, disobedience was pointedly reprov'd or punished. What an awful instance of the displeasure of God against the breakers of this commandment, do we find in Num. xv, 32, &c. Nothing but those things which God himself has tho't sufficient can justify us in any departure from the strict letter of this commandment.

Some view it merely ceremonial, and not obligatory since the introduction of the Gospel: and as it is not expressly enjoined by Christ or his Apostles, they are ready to plead *their* authority in their favor. But if no reason could be offered, for the little notice which is taken of this commandment in the New Testament, there can nevertheless, no arguments be drawn from thence sufficient to disannul its authority. It appears nothing strange that it should not be expressly inculcated by Christ. It was a plain subject, and one very particularly noticed in the Old Testament. There was not then the same necessity to insist afresh on its observance,

as if there had been but little previously known about it.— We are not to consider the Jewish and Christian churches, as different churches—They are the same, only under different dispensations. It is not then necessary, that all the precepts of the Old-Testament be found in the New; nor is it certain, that a repetition of a commandment would give it any additional authority. It was God who established the moral law contained in the Old-Testament, it must then be impossible to add more authority to it, had every precept been recapitulated by Christ and his Apostles—This would indeed have been positive evidence; but a want of this is not a sufficient foundation for the rejection of any precept. If nothing can be found in the doctrines or practice of Christ, tending directly to weaken the force of any precept already entitled to obedience, it must be viewed still in force.

Christ was accused by the Jews as inimical to their laws in general, and also regardless of the Sabbath; but there was no evidence by which any such charge could be substantiated.— The practice of many, nevertheless, would seem to indicate a belief of the charge, and that Christ has really weakened the authority of the precept in question. But he never taught that men ought not to respect the Sabbath—He does not class it with the foolish and pharisaical customs and traditions of the Jews, such as their washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. But the inference is probably drawn from the reply of Christ to the Jews, on a certain occasion:—"The Sabbath was made for man, and not men for the Sabbath." The constant practice of the Apostles and primitive Christians, until corruptions took place in the church, shews plainly, that they did not understand these words of Christ, as giving any licence to neglect the duties of the Sabbath. It may be said of all moral precepts, they were made for man, and not man for them; for no doubt can exist, but that every commandment of God is suited to promote the welfare of man. The fourth commandment is like the rest, made for man's real advantage,—It therefore does not interfere with acts of piety, necessity, or mercy. Christ did not intend to lessen its authority, but to state it's true nature, and shew that it was not to be extended to objects which interfered with its original intention.

The moral tendency of the Sabbath is such, that none who carefully attend to it, can object to it, as an institution of small moment. But we are not to judge of its good moral tendency, from the bulk of men even in Christian societies—It's beneficial influence will only appear in proportion to the attention paid to all the duties of the day. We may, however, by

comparing the morals of these, with the morals of those who are known to disregard it, come to a very just conclusion: Where do we find a more general ignorance in religious truth, than amongst those who habitually neglect the Sabbath? To those professing a belief in divine revelation, gross ignorance of the truths it contains, must appear a serious evil. It has often been said, though it never was true, that ignorance is the mother of devotion—On the contrary, it is a fruitful source of impiety and immorality—Where do we find the morals of men more grossly corrupt, than in those places where the Sabbath is prostituted to improper purposes?

That immorality is a concomitant of a breach of the fourth commandment, is too obvious to admit of a moment's doubt—The hurry and bustle of the world is apt to claim much of our attention—With every advantage we enjoy, we are prone to forget the interest we have in another world. The time immediately devoted to necessary avocations, is not all that is likely to be given to the world—Without the intervention of the Sabbath, solemnly claiming our attention to divine things, eternity would soon be so far forgotten, as very little to influence any part of our conduct. The hopes and fears which men entertain respecting futurity, form the only effectual restraint to the corrupt and injurious passions of men: Destroy or lessen the means by which these principles are kept alive in man, and you open the way to all the evils of immorality—Reverence for God himself, will decrease in proportion, as men habituate themselves to think lightly of any of his commandments—A breach of one paves the way to a breach of another.—All the laws on earth will prove ineffectual, when the authority of the divine law is weakened only in opinion.

The state of every individual is important to himself—He is hastening to eternity—His way is narrow and difficult—Enemies are ever watching for his soul—Sin has even made him an enemy to himself—A thousand things expose him to jeopardy, in this journey of a day—Much watchfulness and circumspection, are necessary for him, lest he fail of entering into rest.—To prevent evils so great as may arise from yielding to temptations, and at the same time indulging delusive hopes, certainly will require a part of every seventh day.

But although self-examination, and other solemn personal duties are necessary, these are not the only duties which seem proper and necessary on the Sabbath—The interests of others are deeply involved in the part we act—Myriads unborn may also be affected by the conduct of the present generation. It has indeed become very fashionable to neglect the instruction of youth in the principles of religion—The young

mind must enjoy a perfect freedom in this respect. Instead of that unlawful rigor which would tyrannize over the conscience of youth, many have run into the contrary extreme, and leave it with their children, whether they will be influenced at all by religious opinions? Every observer must see the importance of early imbibing a reverence for religion. If religion be of any moment at all, it surely demands as much attention as any concern in life. But none will be found so foolish, as to suffer his child to be entirely unemployed, through youth, that he may, with the least difficulty from prepossession, fix upon the most useful employment—No attempts would be made to justify such conduct in worldly matters; does then the knowledge of truths, on which our eternal interests depend, demand less attention than what any man would bestow in teaching a child the simplest trade? Children wholly uninstructed in religion, are much more likely to abandon all thoughts of any set of religious opinions, than to give the preference to either.

Religion is a science; different systems have been published to explain and elucidate it; both truth and error, no doubt, have found their way into most of these systems; an acquaintance with one system, facilitates the study of any other—'Tis just so in other sciences—any knowledge of the Ptolemaean or Copernican systems of Philosophy, would be a good introduction to the Newtonian—Because the former, though in some points erroneous, contain many important truths. It is the part of wisdom to study that religion which seems most consonant to truth and reason, and to teach it, so far as our influence extends: Besides, the plan must be extremely injudicious, to keep the mind in ignorance of every creed, that it may, when ripened by age, make the wisest choice. Notwithstanding all that ignorance and infidelity may offer to the contrary, common sense will dictate the propriety of early instruction in the doctrines of the Christian religion. Not only do our children, but our servants claim our attention. Long accustomed to opinions both erroneous and unjust, men have become easy in the utter neglect of their duty to their servants in this respect—He is now a humane and benevolent master, who takes due care of the body, even if he pays no respect to the soul. Men are too inattentive to counsel, when their servants may ignorantly transgress the law of God, nor are they willing to give them opportunity, by which they themselves might arrive at a knowledge of their duty. For the instruction of both children and servants, none are in more favorable circumstances, than those under whose immediate care they are placed; nor will any

time Ie found better suited for giving them instruction, than the Sabbath.

The labors of the poor, and the schemes and plans of the rich, leave but little time for family duties of this kind.—The Sabbath puts a temporary check to the labors of the one, and the distracting solicitude of the other, and affords a season of rest and reflection, as well as leisure for family instruction.

For all purposes of a religious nature, the Sabbath is certainly one of the wisest institutions. The unwillingness of the human mind to give any time to religion, renders it necessary that there should be a period, when it should be compelled to serious reflection.

In appointing the Sabbath, God has discovered both wisdom and goodness:—To oppose both of these, must be highly criminal.—Words cannot depict the guilt of those, who, in opposition to considerations so serious, spend the day in their customary employments—who trifle with the wisdom and authority of God, and injure, as far as they can, the best interests of their families and others.—But those act a part no less criminal, who spend it as a day of idle amusement—in unnecessary visits—in conversing on the ordinary affairs of life, or in doing whatever might abstract the mind from the important duties of the day.—It is proper, and doubtless may be made profitable, to spend a great part of the Sabbath in serious contemplation—in reflecting on our past lives—in considering our future destiny, &c: These, and other duties, commonly included, under the name of family religion, would, it is believed, do much to strengthen habits of piety.



ON SLANDER.

THAT this insinuating vice has made its way into Christian societies, is become too plain to be denied; though our spiritual indolence may keep us from that rigid self-examination, which, if faithfully practised, would detect it in ourselves. There are two ways by which this evil hath crept in among us unperceived, and almost unresisted. The first grand inlet seems to be pride; a desire of establishing our character for discernment; of appearing to be persons whose opinion of sentiments and conduct is of importance to our friends. Well might our Saviour say to his disciples, *Ye know not of what manner spirit ye are of.* Can the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus—can they who acknow-

ledge themselves, in their daily addresses to a throne of grace, guilty, hell-deserving creatures, constantly depending upon the Father of mercies, through a Redeemer's intercession for fresh supplies of grace, can these form a high opinion of their own discernment, and think meanly of the attainments of their brethren? Is this following the Apostle's instructions, *In lowliness of mind preferring one another; each esteeming others better than himself?* Ah no! this is exalting ourselves above our brethren, and bringing ourselves into imminent danger of that punishment threatened in Scripture to spiritual as well as carnal pride, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased.* Let us reflect on the consequences of this unjustifiable conduct, and seriously ask ourselves, if it be our real desire to increase in faith, charity, and every Christian grace? If so, are these the means by which we can expect to succeed! Our propensity is to form an estimation of ourselves, by a comparison of our own character with that of our neighbour—though the word of God should be our standard. But if we are so unjust as to employ our time in seeking out our brother's failings, that we may manifest our discernment or establish our superiority, are we not very liable to think more of ourselves than we ought to think? On the contrary, if by the grace of God, we are enabled to discern the excellencies of those humble followers of the Lamb, who do not so much employ their time in watching over others, as in keeping their own garments unspotted, will not our emulation be roused to tread in their steps? and may we not expect, through the grace of God, *to have our hearts purified, through faith, to an unfeigned love of the brethren?*

Another inlet of this odious vice, is the dread of singularity. This is the foundation of almost all sinful conformity to the world: and what is more deplorable, it works very powerfully upon ingenuous minds. The pious Dr. Young prays,

“ Pardon our crimes, forgive our virtues too;

“ Those lesser faults half-converts to the right.”

It is melancholy to think that sweetness of temper and compliance of disposition should be abused by Satan and the world to draw men into dangerous snares and base compliances! But Christians should not be thus deceived. “ Those who have named the name of Christ, should depart from all iniquity, and hate the garments” that are even “ spotted with the flesh.” Has this been our careful and constant practice? Have we not mixed in society where this propensity to slander has made its appearance at first, like a gentle inoffensive stream, but has kept increasing till it arises to a torrent of troubled waters?—a torrent which we could

not get clear of without polluting our minds and endangering our peace? And has not this been repeated by some of us, till we have, through habit, become unconscious of our frequent participation in this fashionable iniquity.

Will your candid Christian readers, Sir, permit an obscure individual to lay before them two or three methods, which he hopes, through a divine blessing, have been and may (by refreshing his memory in committing them to paper) be still more helpful to him, in combating a depravity, which he feels and laments; and to be delivered from which he is desirous to offer up his earnest prayers to that God who hath promised to *work in his people, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

1. Self-examination and self-reproof, may be very useful expedients. Let our active thoughts turn inward, and, instead of letting our souls,

“Shut up in their dark room,

“Seeing so clear abroad, at home see nothing;

“But like a mole in the dark, busy and blind,

“Work all their follies outward, and cast them up

“To the world's open view;”

Let us keep our hearts with all diligence for out of them are the issues of life. Let us be humbled under a sense of our own imperfections; and when we find our tongues upon the start to utter some real or supposed failing of our neighbour, the thought of which, perhaps, is sin, as originating in pride and self-complacency,—let us check them with this reflection:—What would be the fate of our characters, if our Heavenly Father should see fit to deliver them up to the will of our enemies? *Lead me, says David, in a plain path, because of mine observers.* Let us not with such petitions as these upon our lips, become the rigid observers, much less the calumniators of others. If we are severe in judging ourselves, we shall have no inclination to censure others.

2. Temperance and regularity of conduct. Though we may make conscience of refraining from running with the world in their excess of riot, yet, if we make too free an use of the blessings of Providence, and suffer our hearts to be overcharged, we may expect our grand adversary will take occasion, while our souls are off the watch, to make his attack upon us. When the heart is merry, the tongue is too apt to run on without restraint. *Let our moderation, however, both in words and actions, be known unto all men;* and let every one of us be swift to hear, slow to speak, that we may thus avoid the temptation to slander our brethren, for want of materials to fill up conversation. We are required in that perfect law of liberty,

which is the delight of every believer, not only as the foundation of his hope, but as the holy standard of all his moral obligations, both to God and man, *to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* To labour with activity and cheerfulness, to be useful in the station wherein Providence hath placed us; not with a view to worldly applause, but in singleness of heart, fearing God, is the way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour: and if this course be pursued, we shall find no time for folly, and no inclination for slander.

3. The last and most effectual method, and one that is indeed frequently and earnestly recommended in the Word of God, is separation from the world: "Be not conformed to this world,—be not partakers of their sins,—touch not the unclean thing,—come out from among them, and be ye separate." In the present state of society, we are not required wholly to seclude ourselves from the company of unbelievers; nor would it be honourable to our profession to do so while Providence is favouring us with abilities, or station, or influence, that may be made subservient to the cause of religion: or while our calling is such as obliges us to labour among those whom we should not otherwise choose for our companions: but while we are present with them in person, we should in some good measure be absent from them in spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, if we are enabled to pray fervently for his sanctifying influences, can preserve our hearts and minds from contamination in the midst of folly and profanity; and even while we are necessarily labouring for the food that perisheth, can fix our contemplations on that heavenly inheritance which is reserved for those whom God upholds through faith unto salvation. And can we in the midst of such contemplations descend to the grovelling vice of slander? Will not our silence rather, when this or any other unwarrantable subject is in agitation, operate as a guard upon ourselves, a manifestation of our living above the world, and a gentle, though unequivocal rebuke to those who are thus abusing the greatest and noblest gift of nature, the gift of speech?

These may be serviceable means of combating this hateful propensity: they will, however, be but laborious and fruitless attempts without a divine blessing upon our endeavours. Let us, constantly and fervently, put up our petitions to the Holy Spirit, that he would descend and take up his abode with us, sanctifying our hearts and strengthening our hands to cast out, not only this, but *all* our spiritual enemies.

A SHORT AND EASY METHOD WITH THE
DEISTS.

Wherein the certainty of the Christian Religion is demonstrated. In a letter from Mr. CHARLES LESLIE to a friend.

SIR,

I. **I**N answer to your's of the 3d instant, I much condole with your unhappy circumstances, of being placed amongst such company, where, as you say, you continually hear the sacred Scriptures, and the histories therein contained, particularly of Moses, and of Christ, and all revealed religion, turned into ridicule, by men who set up for sense and reason. And they say, That there is no greater ground to believe in Christ than Mahomet—that all these pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever have been, among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians—that they are all alike impositions of cunning and designing men, upon the credulity, at first, of simple and unthinking people: till, their numbers increasing, their delusions grew popular, came at last to be established by laws; and then the force of education and custom gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till such deceits come really to be believed, being received upon trust from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and bottom of them. Which, these our modern men of sense, (as they desire to be esteemed) say, that they only do; that they only have their judgments freed from the slavish authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth; which, they say, ought only to be decided by reason—though, by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preserve themselves from outrage, and legal penalties; for none of their complexion are addicted to sufferings, or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you desire from me, is some short topic of reason, if such can be found, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long disputes; and which these men of reason deny by wholesale, though they can give no reason for it, only suppose that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated, and corrupted; which, in reason, ought to lie upon them to prove, who alledge it; otherwise it is not only a precarious but a guilty plea; and the more, that they refrain not to quote books on their side, for whose authority there are no better, or not so good grounds. However, you say, it makes your disputes endless, and they go away with noise and clamour, and boast that there is nothing, at least nothing certain, to be said on

the Christian side. Therefore you are desirous to find some
one topic of reason, which should demonstrate the truth of
the Christian religion, and at the same time distinguish it
from the impostures of Mahomet, and the old Pagan world;
that our Deists may be brought to this test, and be either ob-
liged to renounce their reason, and the common reason of
mankind, or to submit to the clear proof, from reason, of the
Christian religion: which must be such a proof, as no impos-
ture can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian
religion not to be an imposture. And whether such a proof,
one single proof (to avoid confusion) is not to be found out,
you desire to know from me.,

And you say, that you cannot imagine but there must be
such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear, and one.
And therefore that one reason for it, if it be the true reason,
must be sufficient; and if sufficient, it is better than many;
for multiplicity confounds, especially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed a hard task upon me, I wish I
could perform it. For though every truth is one; yet our
sight is so feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it directly,
but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But I think, that, in the case before us, there is such
a proof as you require; and I will set it down as short
and plain as I can.

II. First, then, I suppose that the truth of the doctrine of
Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact which
are recorded of him in the Gospels, be true: for his miracles,
if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to Moses. If he brought the
children of Israel through the Red sea, in that miraculous
manner which is related in Exodus, and did such other
wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily
follow that he was sent from God: these being the strongest
proofs we can desire; and which every Deist will confess he
would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. There-
fore the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of
these matters of fact.

1. And the method I will take, is, *First*, To lay down
such rules, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that
where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false.
And then, *Secondly*, To shew, that all these rules do meet in
the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ: and that they do
not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, of Heathen de-
ities, or can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

2. The rules are these.

I. That the matter of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it.

II. That it be done publicly, in the face of the world.

III. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed.

IV. That such monuments, and such actions, or observances, be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

3. The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men, at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example, Suppose any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land; the waters standing like walls on both sides: I say, it is morally impossible, that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child, could contradict him, and say, That this was a notorious falsehood; for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land. I therefore take it for granted, (and, I suppose, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world) that no such imposition could be put upon men, at the time when such public matter of fact was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was said to be done, are all past and gone; and the credulity of after ages might be imposed upon to believe that things were done in former ages which were not.

And for this, the two last rules secure us as much as the two first rules in the former case: for whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used, ever since the matter of fact was said to be done, the deceit must be detected, by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions, or observances, were ever used by them. For example, Suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get some to believe it: but if I say that not only such a thing was done, but that from that day to this, every man at the age of twelve years had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of such a finger; and that this institu-

It was said to be part of the matter of fact done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having descended, without interruption, and been constantly practised, in memory of such matter of fact all along from the time that such matter of fact was done: I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case; because every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

III. Let us now come to the second point, to shew, that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have all these rules or marks before mentioned; and that neither the matter of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the Heathen deities, have the like; and that no imposture can have them all.

1. As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded 600,000 men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna; and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true; because every man's senses that were then alive, must have contradicted it: and therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false, and no such things done. So that here are the first and second of the above mentioned four marks.

For the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books as truth, and not to have rejected them, as a manifest imposture, which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, *Deut. xi. 2—8.* *And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm; and his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day; and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came unto this place; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliah, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did, &c.*

From hence we must suppose it impossible, that these books of Moses, if an imposture, could have been invented, and put upon the people who were then alive when all these things were said to be done.

The utmost therefore that even a *suppose* can stretch to, is, That these books were wrote in some age after Moses, and put out in his name.

And to this I say, that if it was so, it was impossible that those books should have been received as the books of Moses, in that age wherein they may have been supposed to have been first invented. Why?—Because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. *And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished; that Moses commanded the Levites which bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee, Deut. xxxi. 24, 25, 26.* And there was a copy of this book to be left likewise with the King. *And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them. Deut. xvii. 18, 19.*

Here you see that this book of the law speaks of itself, not only as an history or relation of what things were then done; but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the King as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moses you will suppose this book to have been forged, it was impossible it could be received as truth; because it was not then to be found, either in the ark, or with the King, or any where else: for when first invented, every body must know, that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could less believe it to be the book of their statutes, and the standing law of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes, or acts of Parliament, for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes, that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, viz. the statutes and

municipal law of the nation of the Jews; and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books all along from the day of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books, as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but this one short question, Was there ever a book of sham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of the laws of the Jews? Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation or among any people?

But they must be yet more unreasonable:—For the books of Moses have a farther demonstration of their truth, than even other law books have; for they not only contain the laws, but give an historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time: As of the passover, in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt: * and that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God; and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel: That Aaron's rod which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi: As likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness: That the brazen serpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpent, Numb. xxi. 9: The feast of Pentecost, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon mount Horeb, &c.

And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars: as of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 15; their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

* Numb. viii. 17, 18.

And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated: That it was death for any of them to approach the altar: That their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given: * That, at his word, the King, and all the people, were to go out, and to come in: That these Levites were likewise the Chief Judges, even in all civil causes; and that it was death to resist their sentence. † Now, whenever it can be supposed, that these books of Moses were forged, in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children in pursuance to what was commanded in these books; that they had observed the yearly Passover, the weekly Sabbath, the new Moons, and all these several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies, commanded in these books; that they had never eaten any swines flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books; that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious High Priest, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives; whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge; ‡ and that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it? or, *secondly*, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practise? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above mentioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, *viz.* That these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged; and that these books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe, that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things as were inserted in those books.

* Numb. xvii. 21. † Deut. xvii. 8. 13. 1 Chron. xxiii. 6.
‡ Numb. xxv. 25. 28.

Well, then, let us proceed upon this supposition, however groundless. And now, will not the same impossibilities occur as in the former case? For, *first*, This must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them: whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept; as the Passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt; and so of the rest. But,

Secondly, Let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them, that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example, Suppose I should now forge some romantic story, of strange things done a thousand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world, that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such an hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before) in their public judicatures; that this book was their Gospel, and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other: I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible, that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received, as the Gospel of Christians? and that they could be made believe, that they never had had any other Gospel? — The same reason is as to the books of Moses: and must be as to every matter of fact which has all the four marks before mentioned. And these marks secure any such matter of fact as much from being invented and imposed in any after ages, as at the time when such matters of fact were said to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

Now, suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell there, that these stones were set up by Herculous, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of their actions; and for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was wrote at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye-wit-

nesses; and that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since; moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of Parliament to be taught our children; and that we did teach it our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children: I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England? and whether, if for any other, should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam?

Now, let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal, which is told in the 4th chapter of *Joshua*. There it is said, v. 6. that the reason why they were set up, was, that when their children, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them,

And the thing in memory of which they were set up, was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that time when it was said to be done, it was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red sea.

And withal free from a very poor objection, which the Deists have advanced against that miracle of the Red sea: thinking to solve it by a spring-tide with the concurrence of a strong wind happening at the same time; which left the sand so dry, as that the Israelites, being all foot, might pass through the oozy places and holes, which, it must be supposed the sea left behind it: but that the Egyptians, being all horse and chariots, stuck in those holes, and were entangled, so as that they could not march so fast as the Israelites: and that this was all the meaning of its being said, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot-wheels, that they drove them heavily. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at least not miraculous, in all this action.

This is advanced in Le Clerc's dissertations upon *Genesis*, lately printed in Holland. And that part, with others of the like tendency, endeavouring to resolve other miracles, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. into the mere natural causes, are put into English by the well known T. Brown, for the edification of the Deists in England.

But these gentlemen have forgot, that the Israelites had great herds of many thousand cattle with them; which would be apter to stray, and fall into those holes and oozy places in the sand, than horses, with riders, who might direct them.

But such precarious and silly supposes are not worth the answering. If there had been no more in this passage thro' the Red sea than that of a spring-tide, &c. it had been impossible for Moses to have made the Israelites believe that relation given of it in *Exodus*, with so many particulars, which they themselves saw to be true.

And all those scriptures which magnify this action, and appeal to it as a full demonstration of the miraculous power of God must be reputed as romance or legend.

I say this for the sake of some Christians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more easy to be believed, if they can solve whatever seems miraculous in it, by the power of second causes; and so to make all, as they speak, natural and easy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and easy result would be, not to believe one word in all those sacred oracles: for if things be not as they are told in any relation, that relation must be false; and if false in part, we cannot trust to it, either in whole, or in part.

Here are to be excepted mistranslations and errors, either in copy, or in press. But where there is no room for supposing of these, as where all copies do agree, there we must either receive all, or reject all: I mean in any book that pretends to be written from the mouth of God; for in other common histories, we may believe part, and reject part, as we see cause.

But to return: The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, in memory of which those stones at Gilgal were set up, is free from all those little carpings before mentioned, that are made as to the passage through the Red sea; for notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this this great miracle to be done, Josh. iii. 5. It was done at noon-day, before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all its banks, v. 15. And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds must take to do it; but all on the sudden: *As soon as the feet of the priests that bare the ark, were dipped in the brim of the water then the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan, and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.* The priests stood in the midst of Jordan, until all the armies of Israel had passed over. "And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did

Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever." *Chap. iv. from verse 18.*

If the passage over the Red sea had been only taking advantage of a spring tide, or the like: how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the Lord was mighty? How would a thing no more remarkable, have been taken notice of through all the world? How would it have taught Israel to fear the Lord, when they must know, that, notwithstanding of all these big words there was so little in it? How could they have believed, or received a book as truth, which they knew told the matter so far otherwise from what it was?

But, as I said, this passage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red sea, is free from all these cavils that are made as to that of the Red sea; and is a further attestation to it being said to be done in the same manner as was that of the Red sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us suppose, that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occasion, in some after ages; and then that some designing man invented this book of *Joshua*, and said, that it was wrote by Joshua at that time; and gave this stonage at Gilgal for a testimony of the truth of it: Would not every body say to him, we know the stonage at Gilgal; but we never heard before of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua: Where has it been all this while? and where, and how came you, after so many ages, to find it? Besides, this book tells us, that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age; and therefore that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it: but we were never taught it when we were children, nor did ever teach our children any such thing: And it is not likely that could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage did continue, which was set up for that, and no other end.

And if, for the reasons before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in Salisbury

plain; how much less could it be as to the stoneage at Gilgal?

And if, where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a sham reason cannot be imposed; how much more is it impossible to impose upon us in actions and observances which we celebrate in memory of particular passages? how impossible to make us forget those passages which we daily commemorate, and persuade us, that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it before we knew it?

And if we find it thus impossible for an imposition to be put upon us, even in some things which have not all the four marks before mentioned; how much more impossible is it, that any deceit should be in that thing where all the four marks do meet?

This has been shewed, in the first place, as to the matters of fact of Moses.

2. Therefore I come now, secondly, to shew, that, as the matters of fact of Moses, so likewise all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be shorter; because all that is said before, of Moses and his books, is every way applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and miracles are there said to be done publicly, in the face of the world; as he argued to his accusers, *I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing*, John xviii 20. It is told, Acts ii. 41. that three thousand at one time, and, Acts iv. 4. that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore, here were the two first of the rules before mentioned.

Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things: and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this: And Christ himself did ordain apostles, and other ministers of his Gospel, to preach, and administer these sacraments, and to govern his church; and that always, even unto the end of the world. * Accordingly they have continued by regular succession, to this day; and, no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian Clergy are as notori-

ous a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the book of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world; consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ, then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of Clergy as derived themselves from the institution of Christ; which must give the lye to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was at that time, (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged) not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of Clergy likewise, of his appointment, to administer them; and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the Heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated. First, For Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, chap. 6, &c. and those which are commonly told of him, pass among the Mahometans themselves but as legendary fables; and as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them, as the legends of their saints are in the church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux's life of Mahomet, p. 34.

But, in the next place, those which are told of him do all want the two first rules before mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon; his mersea, or night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to Heaven, &c. were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of Fox, or Muggleton, among ourselves.

The same is to be said, in the second place, of the fables of the Heathen gods, of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like: besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. And moreover, the wise among the Heathen did reckon no otherwise of these but as fables, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them; of which several of them have given us the *rationale*, or explication. And it is

plain enough, that Ovid meant no other by all his metamorphoses.

It is true, the Heathen deities had their priests; they had likewise feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them. But all these want the fourth mark, viz. That such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from the imposture, by detecting it at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the *Bacchanalia*, and other Heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof of them. And the priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c. were not ordained by these supposed gods, but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore these orders of priests are no evidence to the truth of the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now to apply what has been said, you may challenge all the Deists in the world to shew any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No—it is impossible. And, to resume a little what is spoke to before, the histories of Exodus, and the Gospel, could never have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ, of the Sabbath, the Passover, of circumcision, of baptism, and the Lord's supper, &c. are there related, as descending all the way down from those times without interruption. And it is full as impossible, to persuade men that they had been circumcised, baptized, had circumcised, or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. under the government and administration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised &c. And without believing of these, it was impossible that either the Law or the Gospel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the Gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat, when first invented; as impossible as to have imposed on the senses of mankind at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.

V. I do not say, that every thing which wants these four marks, is false; but that nothing can be false which has them all.

There is no manner of doubt that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, that he fought at Pharsalia, was killed in the senate-house, and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though we keep no public observances in memory of them.

But this shews, that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true soever.

And yet our Deists, who would laugh any man out of the world, as an irrational brute, that should offer to deny Cæsar or Alexander, Homer or Virgil, their public works and actions, do, at the same time, value themselves as the only men of wit and sense, of free, generous, and unbiassed judgments, for ridiculing the histories of Moses and of Christ, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded with infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. Besides, that the importance of the subject would oblige all men to inquire more narrowly into the one than the other. For what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar: whether he beat, or was beaten, at Pharsalia; whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books; and whether what is related in the Illiads or Æneids, be true, or false? It is not two-pence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to inquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity, are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy Scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other matters of fact, examine and sift them narrowly and find out the deceit, if any such could be found: for it concerned them nearly, and was of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable, then, is it to reject these matters of fact, so sifted, so examined, and so attested, as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact, which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence at all to us whether true or false?

VII. There are several other topics, from whence the truth of the Christian religion is evinced to all who will judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider: As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen should form a design of converting the whole world to believe their delusions; and the impossibility of their effecting it.

without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing that could recommend them; and to impose a doctrine quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and all wordly advantages or enjoyments; and this in an age of so great learning and sagacity, as that wherein the Gospel was first preached: That these Apostles should not only undergo all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions, and most cruel deaths, that could be inflicted, in attestation to what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery, of their own contriving. Some have suffered for errors which they thought to be truth; but never any for what themselves knew to be lies. And the Apostles must know what they taught to be lies, if it was so; because they spoke of those things which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c.*

Neither can it be said, that they perhaps might have proposed some temporal advantages to themselves, but missed of them, and met with sufferings instead of them: for if it had been so, it is more than probable, that when they saw their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy; especially when they might not only have saved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it. How improbable, then, is it, that not one of them should ever have been brought to do this?

But this is not all. For they tell us, that their Master bid them expect nothing but sufferings in this world. This is the tenor of all that Gospel which they taught: and they told the same to all whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment.

For all that were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden prepare for it. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily, and follow him; and told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; that whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife, children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his disciples; that he who sought to save his life in this world, should lose it in the next.

Now, that this despised doctrine of the cross should prevail so universally, against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world, against the rage and persecution of all the Kings and powers of the earth, must shew its original to be Divine, and its protector Almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms, persuade with-

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* Acts iv. 20. 1 John i. 1.

out-rhetoric, overcome enemies, disarm tyrants, and subdue empires, without opposition?

VIII. We may add to all this, the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ; such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ; and the other about seventy years after. So that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have inclined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ. But their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry; and Julian the Apostate, the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of Christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. But there is another argument more strong and convincing than even this matter of fact; more than the certainty of what I see with my eyes; and which the Apostle Peter called a *more sure word*, that is, proof, than what he saw and heard upon the holy mount, when our blessed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the Apostles: for having repeated that passage as a proof of that whereof they were eye-witnesses, and heard the voice from heaven giving attestation to our Lord Christ, 2 *Pet.* i. 16, 17, 18. he says, v. 19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy*, for the proof of this Jesus being the Messiah; that is, the prophecies which had gone before of him, from the beginning of the world; and all exactly fulfilled in him.

Men may dispute an imposition or delusion upon our outward senses: but how can that be false which has been so long, even from the beginning of the world, and so often, by all the prophets, in several ages, foretold? How can this be an imposition, or a forgery?

This is particularly insisted on, in the *Method with the Jews*. And even the Devils must confess, that that book we call *The Old Testament*, was in being, in the hands of the Jews, long before our Saviour came into the world. And if they will be at the pains to compare the prophecies that are there of the Messiah, with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumstances, in the person, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of our blessed Saviour, they will find this prove what our Apostle here calls it, *a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts*. Which GOD grant. Here is no possibility of deceit or imposture,

Old prophecies, and all so agreeing, could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat; and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all these.

For this therefore I refer the Deists to the *Method with the Jews*.

I desire them likewise to look there, *sect. 11.* and consider the prophecies given so long ago, of which they see the fulfilling at this day, with their own eyes, of the state of the Jews, for many ages past, and at present; without a King, or Priest, or Temple, or Sacrifice, scattered to the four winds, sifted as with a sieve, among all nations; yet preserved, and always so to be, a distinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas those mighty monarchies which oppressed the Jews, and which commanded the world; in their turns, and had the greatest human prospect of perpetuity, were to be extinguished, as they have been, even that their names should be blotted out from under Heaven.

As likewise, that as remarkable of our blessed Saviour, concerning the preservation and progress of the Christian church, when in her swaddling-clothes, consisting only of a few poor fishermen; not by the sword, as that of Mahomet, but under all the persecution of men and hell; which yet should not prevail against her.

But though I offer these, as not to be slighted by the Deists, to which they can shew nothing equal in all profane history, and in which it is impossible any cheat can lie; yet I put them not upon the same footing as the prophecies before mentioned of the marks and coming of the Messiah, which have been since the world began.

And that general expectation of the whole earth at the time of his coming, insisted upon in the *Method with the Jews, sect. 5* is greatly to be noticed.

But, I say, the foregoing prophecies of our Saviour, are so strong a proof, as even miracles would not be sufficient to break their authority.

I mean, if it were possible that a true miracle could be wrought in contradiction to them; for that would be for God to contradict himself.

But no sign, or wonder, that could possibly be solved, should shake this evidence.

It is this that keeps the Jews in their obstinacy. Though they cannot deny the matters of fact done by our blessed Saviour to be truly miracles, if so done as said; nor can they deny that they were so done, because they have all the four marks before mentioned; yet they cannot yield! Why? Because they

think that the Gospel is in contradiction to the law. Which if it were, the consequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To solve this, is the business of the *Method with the Jews*. But the contradiction which they suppose, is in their comments that they put upon the law; especially they expect a literal fulfilling of those promises of the restoration of Jerusalem, and outward glories of the church; of which there is such frequent mention in the books of Moses, the Psalms, and all the Prophets. And many Christians do expect the same, and take those texts as literally as the Jews do. We do believe, and pray for the conversion of the Jews. For this end they have been so miraculously preserved, according to the prophecies so long before of it. And when that time shall come, as they are the most honourable and ancient of all the nations on the earth; so will their church return to be the mother Christian church as she was at first; and Rome must surrender to Jerusalem. Then all nations will flow thither; and even Ezekiel's temple may be literally built there, in the metropolis of the whole earth; which Jerusalem must be, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall meet with the conversion of the Jews: for no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jerusalem for supremacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, whose are the fathers, and from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

Then will be fulfilled that outward grandeur and restoration of the Jews, and of Jerusalem, which they expect, pursuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Messiah. They are sure it will not be at the beginning; for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Messiah (as the Christian church has done) before his final conquest, and that they will come to reign with him. So that this is no obstruction to their embracing of Christianity. They see the same things fulfilled in us, which they expect themselves; and we expect the same things they do.

I tell this to the Deists, lest they may think that the Jews have some stronger arguments than they know of; that they are not persuaded by the miracles of our blessed Saviour, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Messiah.

As I said before, I would not plead even miracles against these.

And if this is sufficient to persuade a Jew, it is much more so to a Deist, who labours not under these objections.

Besides, I would not seem to clash with that (in a sound sense) reasonable caution, used by Christian writers, not to put the issue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in contradiction to the revelations already given in the Holy Scriptures.

And they do it upon this consideration, That though it is impossible to suppose, that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed; yet men may be imposed upon by false and seeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as there are many examples, especially in the church of Rome) and so may be shaken in the faith, if they keep not to the Holy Scriptures as their rule.

We are told, *2 Thess. ii. 9* of him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and *Rev. xiii. 14. xvi. 14. and xix. 20.* of the devil and false prophets working miracles. But the word in all these places is only *Semeia*, signs, that is as it is rendered, *Matth. xxv. 24*; which, though sometimes it may be used to signify real miracles; yet not always, not in these places; for though every miracle be a sign, and a wonder; yet every sign, or wonder, is not a miracle.

X. Here it may be proper to consider a common topic of the Deists, who, when they are not able to stand out against the evidence of fact, that such and such miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny such things to be miracles, at least that we can never be sure whether any wonderful thing that is shewn to us, be a true or a false miracle.

And the great argument they go upon, is this, That a miracle being that which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unless we know the utmost extent of the power of nature; and no man pretends to know that; therefore that no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous: and, consequently, he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and false miracles.

To which I answer, That men may be so cheated; and there are many examples of it.

But that though we may not always know when we are cheated; yet we can certainly tell, in many cases, when we are not cheated.

For though we do not know the utmost extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing; yet it does not follow, that we know not the nature of any thing, in some measure; and that certainly too. For example: though I do not know the utmost extent of the power of fire; yet I certainly know, that it is the nature of fire to burn; and that when proper su-

el is administered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not to consume it. Therefore if I see three men taken off the street, in their common wearing apparel, and, without any preparation, cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and that the flame was so fierce, that it burnt up those men that threw them in; and yet that those who were thrown in should walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I should see a fourth person with them, of glorious appearance, like the Son of God; and that these men should come up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or so much as the smell of fire upon themselves, or their clothes: I could not be deceived, in thinking there was a stop put to the nature of fire as to these men; and that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned, at the same time.

Again, though I cannot tell how wonderful and sudden an increase of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many causes; as a warm climate, the fertility of the soil, &c. yet this I can certainly know, that there is not that natural force in the breath of two or three words spoken, to multiply one small loaf of bread, so fast, in the breaking of it, as truly and really, not only in appearance and shew to the eye, but to fill the bellies of several thousand hungry persons; and that the fragments should be much more than the bread was at first.

So neither in a word spoken, to raise the dead, cure diseases, &c.

Therefore, though we know not the utmost extent of the power of nature; yet we can certainly know what is contrary to the nature of several such things as we do know.

And therefore, though we may be cheated and imposed upon in many seeming miracles and wonders; yet there are some things wherein we may be certain.

But further, the Deists acknowledge a God of an almighty power, who made all things.

Yet they would put it out of his power, to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For if we cannot be certain of any miracle, how should we know when God sent any thing extraordinary to us?

Nay, how should we know the ordinary power of nature, if we knew not what exceeded it? If we know not what is natural, how do we know there is such a thing as nature? that all is not supernatural, all miracles, and so disputable, till we come to downright scepticism, and doubt the certainty of our outward senses, whether we see, hear, or feel, or all be not a miraculous illusion?

Which because I know the Deists are not inclined to do, therefore I will return to pursue my argument upon the conviction of our outward senses; desiring only this, that they would allow the senses of other men to be as certain as their own. Which they cannot refuse, since without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. Therefore, from what has been said, the cause is summed up shortly in this: That though we cannot see what was done before our time; yet, by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much assured of the truth of them, as if we saw them with our eyes; because whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before mentioned, could never have been invented, and received, but upon the conviction of the outward senses of all those who did receive it, as before is demonstrated. And therefore this topic which I have chosen, does stand upon the conviction even of mens' outward senses. And since you have confined me to one topic I have not insisted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. And now it lies upon the Deists, if they would appear as men of reason, to shew some matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evidence of its truth, than the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ, as no other matters of fact of those times, however true, have, but these only; and I put it upon them to shew any forgery that has all these marks.

This is a short issue—keep them close to this—this determines the cause all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tynæus, whose life was put into English by the execrable Charles Blount; * and compared, with all the wit and malice he was master of, to the life and miracles of our blessed Saviour.

Let them take aid from all the legends in the church of Rome, those pious cheats, the forest disgraces of Christianity; and which have bid the fairest, of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and his apostles, and whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot; at least, they are so understood by the generality of their devotees, though disowned and laughed at by the learned, and men of sense among them.

Let them pick and chuse the most probable of all the fables of the Heathen deities; and see if they can find, in any of these, the four marks before mentioned.

* *Who became his own executioner.*

Otherwise let them submit to the irrefragable certainty of the Christian Religion.

XIII. But if, notwithstanding of all that is said, the Deists will still contend, That all this is but priestcraft, the invention of priests, for their own profit, &c. then they will give us an idea of priests far different from what they intend: for then we must look upon these priests, not only as the cunningest and wisest of mankind, but we shall be tempted to adore them as deities, who have such power as to impose at their pleasure, upon the senses of mankind, to make them believe, that they had practised such public institutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of these things, or ever so much as heard of them before: and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done such things as they never did, to make them further believe upon the same foundation, whatever they pleased to impose upon them, as to former ages: I say, such a power as this must exceed all that is human; and, consequently, make us rank these priests far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers: for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive some unwary beholders; and their power of working some seeming miracles has been great; yet it never reached, nor ever was supposed to reach so far, as to deceive the senses of all mankind, in matters of such public and notorious nature as those of which we now speak; to make them believe, that they had enacted, laws for such public observances, continually practised them, taught them to their children, and had been instructed in them themselves from their childhood, if they had never enacted, practised, taught, or been taught such things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, so is it more than ever God almighty has done since the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has shewn, or belief which he has required to any thing that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward senses of any one man in the world, much less of all mankind together: for miracles being appeals to our outward senses, if they should overthrow the certainty of our outward senses must destroy, with it, all their own certainty, as to us; since we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our senses, than upon the supposition of the certainty of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle that is shewn to our senses.

4. This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation, and shews the weakness of

the defence which the church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have licked it up, and, of late, have gloried much in it amongst us) That the doctrines of the Trinity, or incarnation, contain as great seeming absurdities as that of transubstantiation: for I would ask, Which of our senses is it which the doctrines of the Trinity, or incarnation, do contradict? Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling, taste, or smell? Whereas transubstantiation does contradict all of these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short, and out of purpose. But to return.

If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing else but the invention of priests and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wisdom greater than that of men, angels, or devils; and more than God himself ever yet shewed or expressed, to deceive and impose upon the senses of mankind, in such public and notorious matters of fact.

XIV. And this miracle, which the Deists must run into to avoid those recorded of Moses and Christ, is much greater, and more astonishing, than all the Scriptures tell of them.

So that these men, who laugh at all miracles, are now obliged to account for the greatest of all; how the senses of mankind could be imposed upon in such public matters of fact.

And how then can they make the priests the most contemptible of all mankind, since they make them the sole authors of this the greatest of miracles?

XV. And since the Deists (these men of *sense* and *reason*) have so vile and mean an idea of the priests of all religions, why do they not recover the world out of the possession and government of such blockheads? why do they suffer kings and states to be led by them; to establish their deceits by laws, and inflict penalties upon the opposers of them? Let the Deists try their hands; they have been trying, and are now busy about it. And free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have made some inroads among the Hottentots, and some other the most brutal part of mankind; yet are they still exploded, and priests have, and do prevail against them, among not only the greatest, but best part of the world, and the most glorious for arts, learning, and war.

XVI. For as the devil does ape God in his institutions of religion, his feasts, sacrifices, &c. so likewise in his priests; without whom, no religion, whether true or false, can stand. False religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed close upon the heels.

The revelation made to Moses is elder than any history extant in the Heathen world. The Heathens, in imitation of him, pretended, likewise, to their revelations. But I have given those marks which distinguish them from the true.—None of them have those four marks before mentioned.

Now, the Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat; and the priests of all religions to be the same contrivers & jugglers: and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all.

And if the contest be only betwixt the Deists and the priests, which of them are the men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it: and let the Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who, by their own confession, carry all the world before them.

XVII. If the Deists say, That this is because all the world are blockheads, as well, as those priests who govern them; that all are blockheads, except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense: this (besides the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic, in behalf of what they call natural religion, against the revealed, viz. appealing to the common reason of mankind. This they set up against revelation: think this to be sufficient for all the uses of men, here or hereafter, (if there be any after state) and therefore that there is no use of revelation. This common reason they advance as infalible, at least as the surest guide; yet now cry out upon it when it turns against them. When this common reason runs after revelation, as it always has done, then common reason is a beast; and we must look for reason, not from the common sentiments of mankind, but only among the beasts, the Deists.

XVIII. Therefore if the Deists would avoid the mortification, (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield, and submit to be subdued and hewed down before the priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, That religion is no invention of priests, but of divine original: That priests were instituted by the same author of religion; and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, instituted from the time that such matters of fact were said to be done; as the Levites from Moses; the Apostles and succeeding clergy from Christ to this day: That no Heathen priest can say the same: they were not appointed by the gods whom they served, but by others in after ages: they cannot stand the test of the four rules before mentioned; which the Christian priests can do, and they

only. Now, the Christian priesthood, as instituted by Christ himself, and continued by succession to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a testimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Christ, as the sacraments, or any other public institutions; besides that, if the priesthood were taken away, the sacraments and other public institutions, which are administered by their hands, must fall with them: therefore the devil has been most busy, and bent his greatest force, in all ages, against the priesthood; knowing, that if that goes down, all goes with it.

XX. And now, last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men who think so unmeasurably of themselves as the Deists, you may represent to them, what a condition they are in, who spend that life and sense which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of his blessings, his revelations of Christ, and by Christ, to redeem those from eternal misery who shall believe in him and obey his laws: and that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, as that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit: and that there is no denying of them, unless we will be so absurd as to deny, not only the reason, but the certainty of the outward senses, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general: That this case is so very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any to discover it: That they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can shew some forgery which has all the four marks before set down. But if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves; or else sit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the priests, of being, not only the most pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the most inconsiderate, and inconsiderable of mankind.

Therefore let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass, and no more time bestowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect, how far they have been all this time from Christianity, whose rudiments they are yet to learn; how far from the way of salvation; how far the race of their lives is run, before they have set one step in the road to Heaven: and therefore how much diligence they ought to use, to redeem all that time they have lost, lest they lose themselves for ever; and be convinced, by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, that the Gospel is a truth, and of the last consequence.

Sect. XIXth is omitted, as containing sentiments not essential to the subject of the letter.

FROM AN ENGLISH MAGAZINE.

*Narrative of the Death of the Hon. Fr. N———t, Son to
the late———*

AT sixteen he was sent to the University of ——, perfect in *Latin* and *Greek*, where he continued five years, and behaved so agreeably to his religious education, that he was looked upon a blessing and ornament to his family. At 21 he came to town, and entered himself at —— to study the law.

His new acquaintance began to rally him for his religion. To whom he would say, "Gentlemen, you, who pretend to reason, can't think laughter a conclusive argument. If religion be so absurd as you would have me believe, why don't you give some fair reasons against it?" This some of them would attempt, and though their arguments at first was as unsuccessful as their raillery, yet the poison sunk by degrees, and at last tainted him as deeply as themselves. He was adopted into their society, which met to lay down rules, for being so critically wicked, that the law should not be able to take hold of them.

He had too much prudence to lay himself open; he still kept a fair correspondence with his friends, and in strange places was sober and reserved. But in secret, and among his acquaintance, as wicked, as good parts, abundance of temptations, and a fair estate enabled him to be.

On Nov. 30, 1692, he was taken ill, and found, notwithstanding all his precautions, he had not yet shook off the expectation of another life. This made him throw himself up on his bed, and break into these expressions: "Whence this war in my breast? What argument is there now to assist me against matter of fact? Do I assert that there is no Hell, while I feel one in my bosom? Am I certain there is no after-retribution, when I feel a present judgment? Do I affirm my soul to be as mortal as my body, when this languishes, and that is vigorous as ever? O that any one could restore to me my ancient guard of piety and innocence! Wretch that I am, whither shall I fly from this breast? What will become of me?"

One of his old companions coming in here said, "How now, brother? Why this melancholy look and posture? What's the matter?" "The matter," replied he, "'Tis you, and your companions, have instilled your principles into me, which now, when I have most need of them, leave me in con-

fusion and despair. What advice or comfort have you now to fortify me with against the fearful expectations of another life? Are you certain that the soul is material and mortal, and that it will dissolve with the body?" "So certain," replied the other, "that I venture my whole upon it." Here I interrupted them by coming into the room; and applying myself to the sick person, told him, "that I was a stranger to him, but hearing of his illness, I tho't it my duty to offer him what service I was capable of." "I thank you," said he, "and would desire you to engage that Gentleman who sits there, and prove to him that the soul is not matter nor mortal." "That," said I, "is easily proved: Matter is universally allowed to be indifferent to motion or rest: That if it be in rest, it will rest to all eternity, unless something else moves it; and if it be in motion, it will eternally move, unless something else stops it. Now you, who think the soul matter, say that it first moves the animal spirits, they the nerves, and these the limbs. But to say this, is to say that matter moves itself, which is absurd, and contrary to the maxim just mentioned. Therefore the soul is not matter, and consequently not liable to be dissolved as is matter."

The sick Gentleman answered only with a groan, whilst his friend made haste out of the room. I was surpris'd at such an effect, and desired to know the reason of his discontent, whom he left with me. "Alas Sir," said he, "you have convinced me now 'tis too late; I was afraid of nothing so much as the immortality of the soul. Now you have assured me of that; you have ascertained me of a Hell, and of a portion among those who have apostatiz'd from their religion. You have now seal'd my damnation, by giving me an earnest of it; I mean an awaken'd conscience, that brings my sins into my remembrance, by reckoning up the numerous catalogue, for which I must go and give account. O apostate wretch, from what hopes art thou fallen! O that I had never known what religion was. Then I had never denied my Saviour, nor been so black an heir of perdition." I stood speechless some time, at these strange expressions, but so soon as I could recollect myself, said, "Sir, I would desire you would take care how you violate the mercy of God, and think so slight of the sufferings of *Christ*, as if they were not sufficient for the redemption of the greatest sinner. This may be a delusion of the Devil's. If you are convinc'd the soul is immortal, I hope 'tis to a good end. If you had died ignorant of it, you had been miserably undeceived in another world. Now you have some time to prepare for your welfare." "O which," he replied:

“As to the mercies of God in *Christ*. I once knew and tasted what they are; which is now part of my curse, in that I am now sensible of my loss. They are, I grant you, sufficient for those who have any share in them. But what’s that to me, who have denied *Christ*?—who have daily crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame? The Devil has nothing to do with the torture I undergo. ’Tis no delusion of his, but the just judgment of God. And your convictions are also part of my heavy judgment, in that you have given me a sensible horror of my sin, by proving my soul immortal. Had I gone straight to Hell in my old opinion, I had endur’d but one Hell, whereas I now feel two: I mean, not only an inexpressible torture which I carry in my breast, but an expectation of I know not what change. O that I were in Hell that I might feel the worst! And yet I dread to die, because the worst will never have an end.”

All this he spoke with so much eagerness, and such an air of horror as is scarce to be imagined. He was now got to bed, refusing all sustenance, and sweating exceedingly thro’ the extremity of his torments. Before I took my leave, I desired to pray by him, which with much reluctance he consented to. In the midst of prayer, he groan’d extremely, tossing himself as if he were in the agonies of death. When prayer was over, I ask’d him the reason of it? He answer’d, “As the damn’d in Hell, who lift up their eyes in torments, and behold afar off the Saints in *Abraham’s* bosom, have their torments thereby doubled, first by reflecting on the misery they are in, and secondly, by observing the happiness they have lost: So I, knowing myself to be hardened, and sealed unto damnation, hearing the prayers of the righteous, to which God’s ears are always open: This increases my torment, to think how I am excluded from such a privilege, and have no other portion left me, than blaspheming, weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever.” “Pray Sir,” said I, “consider there is a vast difference between you and them that are in Hell. They are lost irrecoverably for evermore, without any opportunity of reprieve, or hope of pardon: You are yet alive, and have promises belonging to you in common with other sinners; *Christ* died for sinners, and God has sworn by himself, *I delight not in the death of a sinner, but would rather that he turn from his wickedness and live.*” He replied with his usual earnestness, “I’ll grant you as much difference between me and those that are in Hell, as between a common devil, and a devil incarnate. If these are irrecoverably lost, without opportunity of reprieve, or hopes

of pardon, and I am yet alive, O, what then?—What's the consequence? Not that the promises belong in common to me with other sinners; nor to any sinners but such as believe, and repent. If *Christ* died for sinners, it was for such as repent and believe. But though I would, I can do neither; I have outlood my day of grace, and am hardened, and reprobate. If *God* delights not in the death of sinners, it is of such sinners, as repent and turn unto him. But his justice will vindicate itself on such obstinate sinners as me, who have denied his power and providence, both in my words and actions. Now he has met me for it, and O! it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living *God*. If *God* was not against me, I should not value, though all the power and malice of men joined to engage me; though all the legions of hell contrived to torture me with the most consuming pains; but when an irreconcilable *God* looks down upon his creature in wrath, and consigns him over to eternal vengeance; this is intolerable! inexpressible! Ah! who can dwell with everlasting burnings! O ye that have any hope, that have not yet passed your day of grace, cry mightily to *God* day and night, think no labour too much to secure you from the wrath of *God*. O! who can stand before him, when he is angry! What stubble can resist that consuming fire!"

This, and more to the same purpose, he spoke with so deep a concern, the tears all the while trickling down his cheeks, that no one in the room could forbear weeping; which he perceiving, said, "and can ye weep at the image and bare relation of the effects of *God's* wrath? What then do I suffer, who actually lie under the very weight of his fury? Refrain your tears for me. it is in vain; pity is no debt to me. Nothing is so proper for me as some curse to complete my misery, and free me from the *torment of expectation*." Here he paused a little, then looking toward the fire, he said, "O that I was to lie and broil upon that fire an hundred thousand years, to purchase the favor of *God*, and be reconciled to him again. But it is a fruitless wish! Millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of my tortures than one poor hour! O Eternity! Eternity! Who can discover the abyss of Eternity! Who can properly paraphrase on those words *for ever and ever*."

It began to grow late, so I took my leave of him for that night, promising to come again the next day, when I found his mind in the same condition still, but his body much weakened. There were with him three or four divines, who had been at prayer, which they told me had the same uneasy ef-

fect upon him as before. One of them reminded him, that St. Peter denied his master with oaths and curses, and was yet received again into his favor. He replied, " 'Tis true, St. Peter did deny his master as I have done, but what then? His master prayed for him, that his faith should not fail, and accordingly he looked him into repentance, and assisted him by his Spirit to perfect it. Now if he would assist me to repent, I should do so too; but he has justly withdrawn his intercessions from me. I have so often grieved the Holy Spirit, that God has taken it away from me, and in the room thereof has left me the spirit of impenitence and reprobation, and given me a certain earnest of a fearful inheritance in another life."

He spoke little more that day, much company pressing in: Towards night orders were given to prevent it. At six o'clock we all looked upon one another to know what course to take; no text being offered in his favor, but which he readily turned another way. While we were thus musing, he cried out with the utmost vehemence, "How long, O Lord, shall thy wrath burn for ever against me? Shall thy eternal justice for ever exact upon a poor despicable worm? What is my value or worth that thou shouldest pour out full vials of wrath upon me! O that thou wouldest let go thine hand, for ever forget me, and let me fall into my first nothing! As my righteousness could have profited thee nothing, so my impieties can have done thee no hurt! therefore annihilate me, and let me perish! Be not angry with me that I thus expostulate with thee; it will be but a little time, before thy wrath will force the dreadfulst blasphemies from me. O take awake my being, or misery; neither of them can encrease or diminish thy happiness, and therefore let them both cease, and let my name be known no more: Or if I must be, and be immortal, and thou wilt punish me because I have despised thee, let a privation of thought suffice, and let me pass my eternity in a dream, without ever being wakened by the pangs of torment, or by the gnawing of the worm that never dies! But O fruitless desire! I am expostulating with a God that has for ever shut out my prayers, and only protracts my breath a little longer, to make me an example unto others. O ye rocks and mountains, that ye would hide me from the wrath of an incensed God! But I cannot flee from his presence; what he hath begun he will finish! He will extend his wrath against me for ever and ever." Here some one knocked at the door, and it proved to be the postman with a letter for him, which being told him, "How, said he, a letter for me? A little lon-

ger, and I expect another sort of messenger: I am very quickly to give up my accounts of every secret action I have done, and I have a mind to make an experiment to see how I can bear it: Pray, sir, added he to me, do me the favor to read this letter. The contents I know not, but I suspect it comes from some of my old acquaintance." I desired to be excused, alledging that there might be something in it, improper to be divulged. "Nothing, replied he, can affect me now; I have no honor, no reputation, and what is worse, no heaven to lose, by this, or any other act." Upon this I broke it open and read it.

The letter received was as follows:

DEAREST SIR,

Understanding you are fallen dangerously ill, and that it has had a melancholy effect upon you, I could not (considering our strict friendship) but endeavor to remove those evils your mind may lie under, which perhaps is an office no less grateful, than making the body sound. Sickness and death are the common lot of mankind, and to repine and grieve at this lot, is to combat the laws of nature, and fight against impossibilities. What wise man repines at the heat in summer, or the cold in winter? A common evil ceases to be an evil. But perhaps your melancholy suggests to you, that it is a dismal thing to launch out into an unknown abyss. I answer, I dream sometimes of dreadful things, but when I awake all vanishes. Thus if we examine death and its supposed consequences by our reason, these formidable monsters grow tame and familiar to us. I would demand of him who asks me what estate I shall be in after death? What estate he was in before life? Pain and pleasure will leave their impressions upon a human spirit; therefore if I was either happy or miserable before I was born, I must still retain the impression; but I do not now: *Therefore* I shall not hereafter. I came out of nothing, and shall return into it. As the flame of an extinguished candle dissolves and loses itself in the circumambient air, even so the taper of life vanishes into pure ether, and is no more when once the laws of the vital union are broken. Death itself is nothing, and after death is nothing; why then should I be afraid of nothing? Take courage, man! Either die like yourself, master of your own fate and happiness, so long as it is to be kept; or recover and live worthy the character of a person who knows how either to live or die. So wishes

F 2

Your real Friend and Servant,

This letter was but fuel to the tormenting flame before burning in the breast of the sick gentleman, who immediately dictated the following answer.

SIR,

Being not able to use my own, I have borrowed another hand to answer yours. You say well, it is a gratefuler office to endeavor to remove the disorders of the mind than of the body. What you urge of the common lot of mankind, as death and sickness, I could wish were my case; but my affliction is, that despair and hell are the common lot of atheists. Now your argument cannot reach my case, unless you first prove that atheism is as inevitable as death and sickness, and that therefore the effects of it are to be borne patiently, unless a man will combat necessity, and fight against the laws of fate. I have formerly used this way of arguing myself, but wonder now how I could ever think it conclusive. You say, that if we examine death and its supposed consequences, by our reason, those formidable monsters will grow tame and familiar. If by 'our reason,' you mean either that peculiar to atheists, or the common reason of human nature, I am sure these monsters will grow less tame and familiar the more we think of them. Since no reason shews what an unexperienced death is, or what the change consequent upon it, how can we judge of things we know no? reason on such as long as you please, and you will be at last as far from truth and satisfaction as when you begun. Your argument is extremely weak, about a pre-existent and future state: I retain no impression of past happiness or misery; therefore there is none to come. How that is a consequence I do not see. Next you would have me believe, upon your bare word, that death is nothing, and that after death there is nothing: Pray how do you know either, having not yet tried? There are a great many that say the contrary.—I have only concerned myself with the rationality of your letter, that you might believe that I am not distracted; which I would desire you to believe, that what I am going to say may not have the less weight with you: It is true, and whether you believe it or not, you will at last find it so.

If I could force you to believe me I would, but all I can do is to deal with you as a reasonable creature by opening my breast to you: and then leaving you at liberty to act as you please. While we are in health and business, we may act contrary to our intentions, and plead for things we believe not; but when we come to die, the vizard is taken off, and the man appears as he is. This is my condition, and therefore I can have no motive to impose upon my friend.

Religion is no imposture; heaven and hell are real, and the immortality of the soul as certain as the existence of the body. For a time we have officiously deluded and cheated one another out of religion and happiness; and God, who will not always be despised by his creatures, has chosen me as an example to you all, and a warning to the lazy and indifferent Christian. But who, alas, can write his own tragedy without tears! or copy out the seal of his damnation without horror! That there is a God I know, because I continually feel the effects of his wrath. That there is a hell, I am equally certain, having received an earnest of my inheritance there already in my breast. That there is a natural conscience I now feel with horror and amazement, being continually upbraided by it with my impieties, and with all my sins brought fresh into my remembrance. Why God has marked me out for an example of his vengeance rather than you or any other of our acquaintance, I presume, is because I have been more religiously educated, and have done greater despite to the spirit of grace. What egregious folly is it for dust and ashes to contend with its Creator! To question his justice, his power, nay his very being? when at the same time without this God, every such wretch would immediately fall into nothing, being without him not able to exist one moment. What vile ingratitude is it scurrilously to reflect on his religion, who died to reconcile such reflectors to himself! don't mistake yourself; it's not a light matter to question and contend with the God of nature; to abuse religion and deny its author, and, what is worst of all, apostatize from it as I have done. Behold! God has rent with me for it, after a long forbearance of my inveterate impiety and profaneness! Let me entreat you by my example to leave off your sins: Who knows but God may yet receive you? I speak not this out of any love for virtue, or hatred to vice, for I am hardened and impenitently reprobate. But like *Dives* I am unwilling my brethren should come into this place of torment. Make what use you please of this; only remember, that if it does not reclaim you, it will enhance your guilt, possibly to be overtaken in this world, as I am, by the just judgment of God; if not, be sure you will be light on hereafter; which is all, and I wish I cou'd say enough, from

Yours, &c.

As soon as the letter was read, and an answer sent, the night being far worn, we all took our leaves, wishing him good rest, and a happier condition the next day; to which he replied, "Gentlemen, I thank you, but my happiness is

at an end, and as for any rest to-night, all the ease I expect, will be in wishing for the day, as in the day-time I wish for the night. Thus I spend the little remainder of my miserable moments, in a fearful expectation of my dissolution, and the account I must make upon it. But, Gentlemen, a good night to you, and remember me to confirm you in the religion I have disowned, that you may stand more cautiously by my folly, and secure the happiness I have forfeited."

The next day came several of his friends out of the country, having had an account of his circumstances. One of them told him, that he and several more of his relations came to town on purpose to see him, and were sorry to find him in so weak a condition, as he appeared to be in. (For now he was nothing but skin and bone, the agonies he lay under, doing the work of the quickest consumption.) He answered, "I am obliged in common civility to thank you all: But who are my relations? Our Saviour said that such only as did the will of his heavenly father were his relations: I may properly say that none but the atheist, the reprobate, and all such as do the work of the devil, are my relations. This little tie of flesh and blood will dissolve in a moment, but the relation I have to the damned is permanent. The same lot, the same place of torment, the same exercises of blasphemy, and eternity of horror, will be common to us all. So that similitude of torments, place and duration, will join us in a very strict union." His friends, who had only heard he was distracted, hearing him deliver himself in such terms, were amazed, and began to enquire of some of us, what made him talk at such a rate. He hearing them whispering together, and imagining the cause, called them all to him and said: "You imagine me melancholy, or distracted; I wish I were either, but it is part of my judgment that I am not. No, my apprehension of persons and things is rather more quick and vigorous, than it was in perfect health, and it is my curse; because I am thereby more sensible of the condition I am fallen into. Would you be informed, why I am become a skeleton, in three or four days? Know then I have despised my Maker, and denied my Redeemer—I have joined myself to the atheist and profane, and continued this course under many convictions, till my iniquity was ripe for vengeance, and the just judgment of God overtook me, when my security was the greatest, and the checks of my conscience the least. Since I have denied that salvation, which cometh by Christ Jesus, there is no other mediator, or intercessor for sinners. If there be who is he that can redeem my soul from hell, or give a

Ransom for my life? No, no, if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin! but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversary. This is the wound that pierces my soul! Christ Jesus was the only expiatory sacrifice God would accept. I despising this, there now remains no other for me to accept of; no other to make an atonement and satisfaction for me. *There is no other name under heaven given, but the name of Jesus, whereby we may be saved.* And it is this Jesus, whom I have reproached, ridiculed, and abused in his members, nay, to whom I have induced others to do the same. Methinks your breasts are all open to me, and in the midst of your pity and surprize, you would bid me hope believe, and supplicate the mercy I have abused: that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and to bring to repentance. These, I know, are your thoughts: Alas! how fain would I hope, and believe! Can a man in torments not desire to be freed from them? No, assure yourselves I would upon any terms. But the wrath of God obstructs the power of hoping and believing, and though I would, I can do neither. I know not what some divines mean, who say, *He that desires to repent, in some measure does it.* I experience the contrary. A fruitless wish, that comes not to act, is no more than a conviction, which shall lay such persons under greater damnation. You would have me supplicate that mercy I have abused? Alas! that I have no hopes but what depend upon abused mercy! But why said I *hopes*? I have no hopes! my hopes are frustrated, my expectations are cut off; and what remains behind? Why I am bid to hope and believe! Oh? what mockery is this upon me! To find me in misery, and bid me be happy, without affording me any power of being so! Indeed should Jesus Christ say so to me, it would be comfort: but for you to say so, is the same thing, as if you should bid a malefactor shake off his chains, and assume his liberty, or call up the dead to rise out of their graves, and challenge their estates and honors again. How idle is it to bid the fire not burn, when fuel is administered; to command the seas to be smooth and calm in the midst of storms! Such is my case, and such are the comforts of my friends! But I am spent, and can complain no more: would to God, the cause of my complainings would cease? The cause of my complainings! This renews my grief, and summons up the little strength, I have left, to complain again. Like an extinguishing flame, that recollects at once all its alimentary matter, for one great blaze before it expires, 'Tis just so

with me : But whither am I going ?” As he said this he fainted away, and lay in a swoon for a considerable time ; but by the help of some spirits, we brought him to himself again. As soon as he opened his eyes, he said, “ O cruel, unkind friends ! to awaken me from a dream in which I had a cessation from my tortures.” This he spoke with so lively a concern, that no one of his relations could refrain from tears. “ You weep, said he, but your very tears come too late ; was I like another person that goes out of the world, it would be one of my greatest troubles to see you weep ; or at least it would add much to my pains. For he must be unnatural and senseless, that would not be troubled at the affliction of others, especially his friends and relations. But the case is otherwise with me : My cup is full, and runs over already : The bitterness of my soul is as great as it possibly can be in this world, and my heart is full of horror and anguish. No grief can add to mine, being already so great that it is incapable of receiving more. Perhaps this may seem a paradox to you at first ; but what think you of *time* and *eternity* ? Can one add an hour to eternity which comprehends, and swallows up all time ? Can one add any thing to the wrath of God, which includes the fury of devils and men, this being derivative from, and dependent on that ? And can any one add to my grief and torture, who am fallen into the hands of the living God ? No, no, reserve your tears for your sins, and cast them not away upon one, who is neither the better, nor the worse for them.”

You may easily imagine, what impressions this would make upon the spirits of his friends. However in the midst of their grief and amazement, they had the prudence to think of the reputation of their family, and to provide for as much secrecy as possible. They therefore conveyed him by night to other lodgings : but he was grown so weak, that he fainted away several times in the chair. They got him into his chamber, and to bed as soon as they could. After a little rest he yet found strength to express himself thus, “ I am not concerned to enquire whether you have brought me, or your reasons for so doing. It had been something, had you changed my state with my lodgings : but my torments are rather greater than before, for I see that dismal hour just at hand, when I must bid you all a sad farewell.”

The Physicians were now sent for again, but they still declared they could do nothing for him. Only they ordered him some cordial julep, which they said, might perhaps strengthen nature, to hold out three or four days longer.

My business calling me away for a day or two, I came again on Thursday morning pretty early. When I came in, I enquired of his friends how he had spent his time. They told me, he had had little company, and his expressions were much shorter than before: but what he did say, seemed to have more horror and despair in it, than before. I went to his bed side, and asked him how he did? He replied, *damned and lost for ever*. I told him, the decrees of God were secret. Perhaps he was punished in this life to fit him for a better. He answered, "they are not secret to me, but discovered, and my greatest torment. My punishment here is for an example to others, and an earnest to me of my own damnation. O that there was no God, or that this God could cease to be; for I am sure he will never have mercy upon me!" Alas, said I, there is no contending with our Creator, and therefore forbear such words as may provoke him more. "True, replied he, there is no contending. I wish there was a possibility of getting above God; that would be a heaven to me." I entreated him not to give way to so blasphemous a thought for—Here he interrupted me. "Read we not in the *Revelations* of those that blasphemed God, because of their pains? I am now of that number. O how do I envy the happiness of Cain and Judas!" But replied I, you are yet alive, and do not feel the torments of those that are in hell. He answered, "This is either true or false. If it be true, how heavy will those torments be, of which I do not yet feel the uttermost! But I do know that it is false; and that I now endure more than the spirits of the damned. For I have the very same torture upon my spirit as they have, besides those I endure in my body. I believe that at the day of judgment the torments of my mind and body will both together be more intense; but as I now am, no spirit in hell endures what I do. How gladly would I change my condition for hell! How earnestly would I entreat my angry judge to send me thither, were I not afraid he would out of vengeance deny me!" Here he closed his eyes a little, and began to talk very wildly every now and then, groaning and gnashing his teeth; but soon after opening his eyes, he grew sensible again, and felt his own pulse, saying, "how lazily my minutes go on! when will be the last breath, the last pulse that shall beat my spirit out of this decayed mansion into the desired regions of death and hell! O! I find it is just at hand; and what shall I say now? Am I not afraid again to die? Ah the forlorn hope of him that has not God to go to! Nothing to fly to for peace and comfort!" Here his speech failed him; we all believing him

to be dying, went to prayer, which threw him into an agony; in which though he could not speak, he turned away his face, and made what noise he could to hinder himself from hearing. Perceiving this we gave over. As soon as he could speak, (which was not until after some time) he said, "tygers and monsters, are ye also become devils to torment me, and give me a prospect of heaven to make my hell more intolerable?" Alas! Sir, said I, it is our desire of your happiness that casts us down at the throne of grace. If God denies assistance, who else can give it? If he will not have mercy, whither must we go for it? he replied; "Ay there is the wound; God is become mine enemy, and there is none so strong as to deliver me out of his hands! He consigns me over to eternal vengeance, and there is none that is able to redeem me! was there such another God as he, who would patronize my cause, or was I above or independent on God, I could act and dispose of myself as I pleased, then would my horrors cease, and the expectations and designs of my formidable enemy be frustrated. But this cannot be; for I" — Here his voice failed again, and he began to struggle, and gasp for breath; which being recovered, with a groan so dreadful and loud, as if it had been more than human, he cried out, "O the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!" and expired.

ERRATA.

In the 2d number of the Magazine, page 115, 8 lines from the bottom, for 'Saul' read 'Paul'. Page 116, 2 lines from the bottom, for 'Wise' read 'Were.' Page 117, 18 lines from the top, for 'united' read 'suited'.

Several pieces of Poetry have lately been received from Correspondents for the Magazine; but for want of room, their publication must be omitted for the present: The length of some articles which appear in this number, and which it was thought advisable not to divide by publishing only a part of them at present, has compelled us to this measure.