

AN EXAMINATION
OF THE
B I B L E ;
OR, AN
IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION
OF
SUPERNATURAL & NATURAL
THEOLOGY :
WHEREIN THE FOUNDATIONS OF
TRUE RELIGION
ARE ILLUSTRATED AND ESTABLISHED.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
A RATIONAL SYSTEM OF FAITH,
AND REMARKS ON THE
UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

By *WILLIAM MUNDAY.*

“ Imposture is all dissonance ; let what master soever of it
“ undertake the part, let him harmonise and modulate it as he
“ may, one tone will contradict another ; and, while we have
“ ears to hear, we shall distinguish it. It is TRUTH only which
“ is consistent, and ever in harmony with itself.”

“ Truth, when displayed, is divinely bright,
“ One clear, unchang'd, and universal light.”

Baltimore :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

1808.

DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, TO WIT.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twelfth day of July, in the thirty third year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1808. William Munday, of the said district, hath deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following ; *to wit.*
“ An Examination of the Bible ; or, an Impartial Investigation
“ of Supernatural and Natural Theology ; wherein the founda-
“ tions of True Religion are illustrated and established : to
“ which are added, a Rational System of Faith, and Remarks on
“ the Union of Chvrch and State ; by William Munday.

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PHILIP MOORE,

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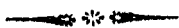
Bank of Wisdom

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U.S.A.

PREFACE.



AS the Creator of the universe has made man an intelligent rational being, it is his privilege and indispensable duty to exercise those powers, and to withhold his assent from whatever appears repugnant to his reason; let no one then be so timid as to resign an inclination to satisfy just doubts. In America no Romish priest dare prescribe limits to the exercise of our reasoning faculties; and Protestant ones surely will not, nay they cannot, consistently with those principles which justify their dissent from the Romish communion. An honest desire to obtain truth, will sanctify the most rigid scrutiny into every thing; and no authority can be so sacred as to set aside the most valuable distinction of humanity, with which our Creator has furnished us, or to give the lie to our most self-evident conceptions of right and wrong.

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If the liberty, of which Americans boast the possession, mean any thing, it must primarily include freedom of thought ; without which there can be no freedom of action. Thus it must mean an uncontrouled power to examine the validity of every proposition offered to our assent ; without which power, and the due exercise of it, our assent cannot be the assent of rational beings. Who is most the friend to human kind, and to truth ? those who appeal to the human understanding, and submit to the public judgment whether things are really so or not ; or those who say, “ they *are* so !—they *shall* be so ! you *shall* acknowledge them to be so, or else be *damned* ? ”

Let not weak minded Christians lament what they call licentious abuses of that liberty on which we are happy to congratulate ourselves : Injudicious productions of the pen will always meet the treatment they deserve. Fallacious pretensions to reasoning cannot deceive mankind in these liberal times ; nor can truth be obscured when the attention of honest inquirers after it is properly exerted.

In

In the following work, clearness, just representation, rational demonstration, and conclusive argument, it is believed, will compensate for any literary defects.

Truth, undecked with the embellishments of literature, may be deemed by the pedantic and superficial reader, contemptible nonsense; while falsehood, arrayed in the brilliant style of the learned, will dazzle their weak minds, and prepossess them in its favor. But men of solid sense, possessed of enlightened and liberal minds, will strip the subject of their investigation of all disguise, and judge impartially of its intrinsic merit. To the judgment of such men, the following examination is respectfully submitted.

“ In vain may delusive eloquence strew corruption
“ with her flowers; the sun of Truth shall wither
“ them, and expose the foul deception.”

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INTRODUCTION.



IT is an incontrovertible fact, founded on universal observation and experience, that there are virtuous, devout men of all nations and denominations in the world, however inconsistent and absurd the fabulous or supernatural parts of their forms or systems of religion may be. Consequently every system that embraces the principles of morality, virtue, and religion, which God has implanted in human nature, inculcating, agreeably thereto, a belief in the Supreme Being, the immortality of the soul, and necessity of a virtuous life, in order to enjoy confidence in God here, and happiness hereafter, whatever falsities are attached to them through ignorance or design, may be beneficial to those
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that can believe. For God having established one universal, internal, incorruptible medium of religion in human intelligence, respects the external corruptible forms or systems of nations and communities no more than he does the professions or persons of men ; it is the upright, virtuous, religious man who fears to offend, and loves his Maker, that God respects. Let men shew the superiority of their systems, and value them according to their rationality and the good effects they produce in society, but let none be so presumptuous as to attempt imposing them upon the world as divine, nor pretend to exclusive favours from an impartial God, to whom the whole human race are equally dear, and who makes no distinction between man and man, only as they distinguish themselves by their obedience to his divine law implanted in their heart. This truth is verified by God himself, and men of all nations and denominations
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enjoy its blessings, but through ignorance and the influence of imposture, reject the internal medium through which they in reality receive them. To set this matter beyond a doubt, let the best form of worship be strictly observed, if the will and affections of the observer are not right, or in other words if he is not obedient to the internal manifestations of God, he will feel guilty and condemned under a consciousness of his disobedience, notwithstanding his unshaken faith in the best external system, and rigid observance of all its rites and forms of worship. On the other hand if he is obedient to those internal manifestations, he will enjoy peace and confidence in God, free from the least sense of guilt or condemnation, although no external form should be observed, but that of an upright, amiable and religious deportment; which is full proof that all external

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nal forms or systems, though good in their place, and necessary for the promotion of religion, the order and union of society, and therefore cannot be dispensed with, are but human, and in themselves contain not one single essential principle of religion.

When, therefore, the authors and advocates of a system, pretend to partial and supernatural communications from the Creator of the universe, and thunder forth bulls and dogmas, dooming to destruction all who believe not their human system to be divine; when a view is taken of the compilation on which their system is founded, of the falsehoods, absurdities and wickedness therein contained, and attributed to God; when it is considered that the increasing multitude of enlightened men, who cannot consistently with the character of reasonable beings, and their ideas of the

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the wisdom and purity of God, believe such things, are on that account looked upon as enemies to God, unworthy of human society, and in many parts of the world made the victims of intolerance,—humanity weeps for their wrongs, and justice indignant calls for redress. It was the consideration of this persecution by human systems, together with a pure desire of clearing fabulous nonsense and imposture out of the way, which dictated this examination, that a rational system of religion might be established : a system founded on the power, wisdom and munificence of God, which is seen in the immensity and order of the creation, and in the abundance with which he fills the earth, and on the manifestation of his moral and divine law, implanted in all mankind ; a system founded on the certain authority of God, agreeably

bly to his attributes, and worthy of his rational creatures, and not on the preposterous authority of man, who being at best fallible, and often exceedingly wicked, are unworthy of such high confidence, even though their relation should not imply a violation of the laws of nature ;— but to hold it a duty to place confidence in man, capable of falsehood and imposture, when they relate things contrary to nature, reason, and experience, is an absolute palpable violation of every principle by which truth can be discovered, or imposture detected. But before benign conciliating religion, free from all imposture, can be established, the fabricators and advocates of contending supernatural systems of religion, have, by their presumptuous folly, in proscribing all others, rendered an exposure of their falsehood unavoidable.

However

However sublime supernatural systems may have appeared in the dark ages of the world, when mankind were kept in gross ignorance by the knavery and oppression of priests and kings, and nearly on a level with the brute creation ; however successful they have been through the means of superstition, and support of despotic kings, who have used them as the instruments of ambition, slaughter, plunder, and extension of power ; together with the indefatigable exertions of professional men, who have got into the pulpit from no better motives (if men are to be known by their conduct) than the obtaining an easy luxurious living, except only those well-meaning, unenlightened, superstitious characters, whose sincerity, want of information, and blind zeal, render them the easy dupes and tools of imposture, and who are ready to believe every thing, however extravagant, unnatural

natural and absurd, as revealed incomprehensible mysteries. (And notwithstanding the holy wars, bloody crusades, the fire through which the victims of imposture, tyranny and superstition have been made to pass, the saws, harrows, and all the tortures that have been inflicted to enforce,* and the innumerable books written to defend—) what? not the truth, but falsehood, for every good man is a lover of truth, and the wicked respect it.

Notwithstanding all these things, the light of reason has illuminated the civilized world, and the advocates of miracles have lost in a great degree their influence and power to impose. The deformed monster of oppression, imposture and superstition, which has so long extended its dark and baneful influence over the human race, fettering the rational powers of the mind with unprincipled

* 2 Sam. xii. 31.—1 Chron. xx. 3.

cipld dogmas, miracles, dreams, visions, prophecies, and supernatural communications, which would in the very nature of things produce nothing but fanatics, knaves, and hypocrites, did not the divine internal system, the foundation of all moral good and of religion, the divinity within man, oppose its dire effects. This monster, by the power of truth and reason, operating freely upon rational, unprejudiced inquiring minds, has received a deadly wound, and will, in all probability, ere long, meet that fate imposture justly merits.

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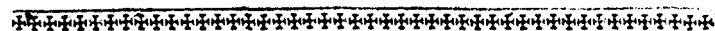
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The Bank of Wisdom publish all works of human interest, we scorn no ideas of serious thought. Ideas and beliefs some may think “dangerous” and would want to hide, we seek to reproduce and distribute for the consideration and intellectual development of every human mind. When peace and understanding is established throughout the world it might be said that humanity has achieved an acceptable degree of civilization, but until that longed for time we must never cease to search for greater truth and a higher morality for humanity.

The wealth of thought hidden in obscure books of past ages makes festinating reading, and as much of this original thought was suppressed by the sheer power of the established systems of the time, these ideas may well be those needed for the future progress. One thing is certain, the belief systems we have are not the ones we need.

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AN
IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION
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B I B L E.



CHAPTER I.



CREATION.

TO discover the truth, or at least the reasonableness of things, before they are confided in, is a duty man owes to God, society and himself, and any doctrine that militates against this duty is absolutely false, and cannot be of God. This grand truth being firmly established, will serve as an infalliable test in this examination.

MOSES is the reputed author of the history of creation, and of the introduction

of evil into the moral world by the subtilty of a serpent ; events which took place, according to the chronology of the Bible, more than two thousand years before he was born.

Moses then, or some one else, says, that on the first day of creation, God said, “ let there be light, and there was light ; and God divided the light from the darkness, and called the light day, and the darkness he called night ; and the evening and the morning were the first day. On the second day, God made the firmament in the midst of the waters, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. On the third day, the earth brought forth grass, herbs, and trees. On the fourth day God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night : he made the stars also, and God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light

light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness.”

In this account is seen the unequivocal proof of misrepresentation, the mere conjecture of a person ignorant of causes and effects, who having no idea of water being raised from the earth by the power of the sun, conceived that water was created above the firmament. Thus respecting the deluge, it is said the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. But had the fountains of the great deep been broken up, or in other words had there been a vast body of water in a state of incrustation, and a concussion and inundation had taken place, the raising the water from the earth into the air, would not, when it descended again, increase the original quantity. This shews that the windows of heaven were mentioned as affording an additional quantity

quantity of water, agreeable to the historian's idea of the division of the water when the world was created.

The historian discovers no less want of understanding of causes and effects, respecting day and night, for he informs us, immediately after the chaos of matter was brought into existence, that light was created, which, being divided from darkness, was called day, and the darkness night, and that the evening and the morning were the first day. That on the fourth day, two great lights were made, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. Now it is manifest that the historian, or ignorant philosopher, had no idea of the sun being the only source of day in this world, or he could not have conceived an idea of the existence of day and night, morning and evening, before the sun was created.

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His notions are no less erroneous respecting the nature of the moon ; he says God made two great lights, meaning the sun and moon ; but it is well known in this enlightened age, that the moon is a dark body, and only *reflects* the light of the sun. Of this, however, the historian had no conception, nor will it be wondered at when it is recollected, that long after Moses' day, men of science believed the earth to be a flat body, and entertained many other opinions that have since been found erroneous.

Glaring inconsistency, contradiction and absurdity, are also manifest with respect to the creation of grass, herbs, and trees. In the account of the third day's work, it is said that the earth brought them forth, but in the following chapter, verse 5th, it is asserted that every plant and herb was created before they grew, or were in the earth ; and, to confirm the contradiction, a most curious

curious reason is assigned,—“for the Lord God,” says the account, “had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.” Now in the name of common sense, what had man’s tilling the ground, or rain, to do with creation? or what could put it into the fabricator’s head to make such a blunder?—According to his own account, could not God have caused the earth to vegetate without rain, or the assistance of man, as easy as he caused day and night, morning and evening without the sun?—But were the grass and trees, which appear to have been forgot in the recital, created also before they grew, or were in the earth, and planted afterwards?—Will not such absurdity silence the boasting advocates of inspired writings?

The creation of fowls, also, merits particular attention. It is said in the account of the fifth day’s work of creation,

ation, that “God said, let the water bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven ; and God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind.”

According to this part of the account, it is clear beyond all controversy, that the waters brought forth every winged fowl after their kind ; but in the following chapter, verse 19th, it is said, that “out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air” Here are contradictions which the advocates for the inspiration of the account, cannot reconcile ; even conjecture, to which they always fly for refuge from the pursuit of truth, will not enable them to hide the marks of falsehood that imposture has indelibly stamped

stamped on the account. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This approved adage, founded on reason and experience, will lose nothing of its force when applied not only to the account now under consideration, but also to the subjects of the investigation generally.

A little enquiry will demonstrate the folly of admitting that God ever did, or ever will communicate to any man an account of the manner in which he created the world. Because such a communication would be inconsistent with a probationary state with respect to the man that received it, as he would then be in a state of certain knowledge, and consequently cease to be a free agent and probationer on the principle of faith, agreeable to the manifest design of God, and the present state of man. And because it would be useless to the world, since no declaration
 whatever,

whatever, of one man to another, can merit implicit confidence ; it must stand the test of rational investigation before it ought to be believed, for faith that does not originate in the understanding, is only nominally professed in ignorance ; and the intelligent, rational, and divine principles that God has implanted in the human mind, the infinite wisdom, omniscience, and omnipotence, manifested universally, produce a faith in the moral world, of the existence of the Supreme Being, Creator of heaven and earth, which an account delivered by fallible man, could not possibly do. So powerful and universal are the convictions of nature on this subject, that it is believed no man ever lived without them. It is the height of folly and ignorance to attribute the account to God, not only because of its inconsistency in placing the man that should receive it in a state of absolute certainty respecting eternity, (a state, hostile to free agency,

agency, to virtue, and to the order of God,) but also because a particular account of the manner of creation would be void of the least utility, a mere gratification of idle curiosity, and therefore unworthy of God to communicate, even were it not inconsistent with, and hostile to the divine order of things. The living, powerful, universal, and eternal manifestations of God, which are for ever seen and felt by every age, and by every individual, are the only rational and proper grounds of faith that can possibly exist; before which divine source of intelligence, the declarations of ten thousand men, professing to have had revelations made to them, would vanish like the pale moon before the refulgent rays of the rising sun. Was the realities of eternity universally unveiled to the moral world, for one day, the probationary state which God has established on the principle of rational and moral certainty, would be entirely
destroyed

destroyed with respect to that part of mankind, who having arrived to years of understanding, should be beholders of the miracle.

This being obvious, can any man on serious reflection, confide in those accounts of supernatural communications, that are subversive of free moral agency, of faith, virtue and religion, which originate not in the astonishment of miracles, that operate with irresistible force on the senses, to the exclusion of the use of reason, or in any thing out of nature; but in the gentle, gradual improvement, and unrestrained, voluntary application of the rational, moral, and divine power with which God has formed the human mind. They are also at variance with the immutable order of God, which has been experienced in every age of the world, without the least account of any supernatural communication, wherever the means of detecting

detecting imposture are tolerated? Free inquiry, the exercise of reason, and improvement of the powers of the mind, have put a stop to the further introduction of imposition, has invalidated and destroyed all confidence in those which have been received by blind superstition, and advocated by bigotry, prejudice and hypocrisy, and has checked and overthrown the despotic power of barbarous priests and tyrants.

It ought not to pass unnoticed, that in the account mentioned above, it is said, “out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” Was the whale, and every fish of the sea, brought also to Adam to be named by him?—Or was it a miracle too great for God to perform, although

although consistency in an impartial nomination of every part of creation, trees, herbs and plants not excepted, required it?—Or was it a circumstance which escaped the notice of the fabricator?

These are reasonable questions, which the advocates for the inspiration of the account may endeavour to answer, but it is apprehended that every attempt to solve them, will only serve to confirm the conviction of the impossibility of the account being of divine inspiration.

In short, the whole account is rendered ridiculous, and unworthy the least degree of confidence, by its inconsistency, self contradiction, and total want of utility; and therefore man's duty to God, society, and himself, forbid his believing it a revelation from God.

CHAPTER II.

ADAM, MAN'S NATURE, &c.

HAVING shewn the account of creation (that part respecting Adam at present excepted) to be false, as a revelation from God, and contemptible nonsense as a production of man; the rules of justice and of fair decision, do not make it necessary to advance farther proof to invalidate the whole. But that no possible way may be left for men, whose pecuniary interests are in danger, (and who, there is cause to expect, will resist conviction itself, when it militates against their grandeur, ease and sumptuous living) to offer any thing in opposition to truth, the investigation shall proceed with as much brevity as possible.

Man's nature, it is said, is not now the same as it was when God created him, though

though he should be free from having committed any sin in his own person, or any way instrumental in the commission of it in the person of another. That God created all mankind in Adam and Eve upright, and in his own image, but by their being overcome, and yielding to the fallacious persuasion of a speechless, irrational reptile, they lost the favour and image of God, and involved their posterity in guilt and endless torment. That it was not however a mere serpent that beguiled them, but a devil that entered into it, by which stratagem he not only destroyed the image of God from their souls, but imparted his own to them, and all succeeding generations. That a Son of God came down from heaven and died a temporal death, that there might be a possibility of man's escaping eternal death, by obeying the call of God, and receiving the grace his Son obtained for the world, by his righteousness, death and intercession.

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These are the leading doctrines of the Christian system of religion ; the whole of which has been fabricated on the ridiculous attempt of some one to account for the origin of sin, and the cause of death, probably without any intention to impose it upon the world as revelation from God.

Moses, as the teacher and leader of the Jews, was deeply interested in the knowledge of the cause of so extraordinary an event ; both as it respected the nature and disposition of the people he had to govern, and the opposition he had to meet with from a devil (which according to the Christian doctrine must have been exceeding great) and also that he might account to the people for a circumstance apparently so absurd, as that of a serpent, having by subtle argument, prevailed on Eve to disobey her God. Is it possible, had God revealed the account to Moses, that he would
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have concealed from him the knowledge of so grand an adversary ? certainly not ; yet Moses knew nothing of those mysteries which the Christians make his account to contain. Not one word can be found in all the writings attributed to him, respecting fallen angels, a devil, or a Son of God, which, if true, must have been the foundation of the Jewish religion, as well as the Christians, and therefore could not possibly have been omitted by him in his system of religion.

Christianity appears to have originated in the dissensions of the Jews, as new doctrines and sects have since originated in the dissensions of the professors of Christianity. The conduct of the priests' servants, who used to put their flesh-hooks into the pot, and take out the best pieces of the people's offerings, and many other instances of infamous conduct respecting their sacrifices,

fices, occasioned considerable dissatisfaction among the tribes of Israel. It is highly probable that it was this wretched state of things, which gave rise to the fabrication of a new system of religion, upon the foundation of the old, which had sunk into contempt, and proved too gross an imposition any longer to afford a prospect, or encourage a hope of gaining proselytes, and deceiving the world. The prophet Isaiah commenced the work, as will presently be shown, by declaring all oblations vain, and an abomination unto God ; and by exhorting the people, instead of sacrifices, to put away the evil of their doings, and return unto the Lord, who would have mercy on them and abundantly pardon. This was rational and natural religion, but which unhappily terminated in the irrational and supernatural system of Christianity, or spiritualization of imposture, and of fabulous tales.

It will now be proper to introduce the account on which the Christian doctrine is founded, and then inquire for that evidence of its divine origin, which is necessary to constitute it worthy of God, and proper for rational beings to believe. In the third chapter of Genesis, it is as follows, “ Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he said unto the woman, yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ? and the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden,—but of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die ; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw, &c. she took
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of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the Lord said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."

Can this account authorize the Christian system of religion? there is not a word in it of a devil going about
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like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, nor of a Son of God, redeeming the world.

Has a Devil been busy ever since he deceived Eve, in seeking the ruin of the human race, and did it not concern mankind to know it, until four thousand years after he began his depredations? To apologize for this absurdity, it is said, that man, in the first ages of the world, was incapable of comprehending so spiritual and sublime a revelation. The inconsistency of this palliation will appear evident, when it is recollected that those fabricators also assert that the human understanding is of no use in this mysterious system of religion; that the distinctions of humanity are under the despotic power of a devil, and incapable of spiritual discernment; that the knowledge is received only by faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. So that, according to
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their doctrine, if man, in the first ages of the world, did not comprehend the revelations made to him, it was not for want of any thing that was in their power to do, but because God withheld the knowledge from them. But imposture unveils itself when it asserts that “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him,” that “Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,” and that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.” These are distinguished marks of divine favour, grace, and wisdom, which has never been experienced by man, since the second pretended revelation. If truth is consistent, and ever in harmony with itself, let a rational world determine whether or not these inconsistent doctrines and accounts, which evidently belie each other, are not the spurious offspring of imposture. In vain will its advocates endeavour to
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make those discordant parts harmonize, or impose on an enlightened world, gross falsehood for divine truth.

It is very certain, had Moses received the above account from God, he could not have been ignorant of its nature ; and it certainly appears that he had no idea of any thing more than a mere serpent. Had he known that a fallen angel had entered into it, he would not have called it “ more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made,” neither would he have said that God cursed it for what he permitted a superior power to compel it to do. “ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Who does not see that those ideas were derived from common observation ; serpents, many of them, are poisonous reptiles, and are frequently fatal to individuals. And as
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they glide with their bodies on the ground, the heel is generally most exposed to their venomous attack, and, so great is the dread, and aversion to them on that account, that no man ever sees one without killing it if he can, and the head seldom escapes being exceedingly bruised ; which is highly proper : for, although they answer a good purpose while confined to the wilderness, they would be ruinous, if suffered to exist near society. As to the fabled paradise, which no man ever saw, the author, to avoid detection, or the appearance of gross, barefaced fiction, drove his ideal culprit out of it, for a most curious reason, “ lest he put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” Nothing can be more absurd than this account, and serves to prove that it was the author’s ridiculous opinion that man was designed to exist in this world for ever, and
that

that the invented story of Adam's disobedience by means of a subtle serpent, and fall of all mankind in him, was to account for what observation taught him to know was the contrary.

The account also exhibits a purpose in God, that man should not know good and evil ; " Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." Which implies that man was created with a nature, in which it was not only impossible for sin to originate, but also impossible for him to have the least conception of it. Consequently, had Adam not been seduced by a subtle serpent, or devil, or by some other way, he would not have been a moral agent ; and what pleasure could God have taken in beholding creatures acting like machines, without will or choice, from absolute necessity. So that imposture represents man indebted to the kind offices of a devil for his moral agency, the improve-

ment of his nature, and for the free acceptable worship of God. But if it was impossible for sin to originate in man, how came it possible for it to originate in a devil, who must have been created a pure Angel in the realms of eternal bliss and glory, and no doubt in the immediate presence of God?—Was he tempted by another devil?—This is too absurd to suppose, for it leads to a race of devils co-existent with eternity. The account also implies, that men would have increased and peopled the world, and that they would have remained in a state of nakedness, regardless of their situation as brutes, and nearly on a level with them; subsisting only on the spontaneous productions of the vegetable creation: and consequently, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, wool, cotton, flax, hemp, silk, and every tree except those that yielded fruit, would have been useless

less to them. The mineral kingdom also, that contains such valuable and useful metals, and precious gems, which are a source of support perhaps to more than half the world, and which society could not do well without, would have been created in vain. There appears to be but one conjecture that can be offered in reply to those remarks, which is, that God knowing Adam would fall, previously provided for the event. It is not only consistent, but in many cases indispensably necessary, for man to make provision before hand for an event which he is morally certain will take place, because it might not be in his power to make the necessary provision at the moment it should be required. But this cannot be applied to the subject under consideration, for the motives that would influence a man in such a case cannot be attributed to God; it would therefore be more reasonable
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to conclude, that had God created man in the state it is said he did, he would have created nothing more than was necessary to accomplish his plan ; and that if any conduct of man, could have made a further creation necessary, it would not have been done until after such conduct had taken place ; that the mind of man might not be perplexed, by the appearance of God's being the author of what he has condemned and punished them for, which would involve the moral system in a state of incertitude. It cannot be supposed that any one would say, that God created those things, that man might behold his wisdom and power, universally displayed, because the mineral kingdom is hid in the bowels of the earth, and nothing but the hand of labour and of art can exhibit it to the human eye. Obvious absurdity, and every appearance of gross falsehood pervade the whole of this

this account ; and therefore, man's duty to God, society, and himself, forbids his believing it a revelation from God ; consequently the fabrication of Christianity, must share the fate of its foundation ?

A man, by shutting his eyes, may be in darkness in the midst of light ; so by prejudice, sinister or temporal considerations, man's mental perception may be blinded, and prevented from seeing the most self-evident truth. But this examination is for the world at large, and will prove acceptable to many worthy men, who love their God, and delight in the practice of virtue ; but are nevertheless considered children of a devil, because they have not been converted from the enlightened faith of reason, to that of blind superstition, and from a confidence that their peace of mind and future happiness depend on
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their obedience to the law of God, which is recognised and acknowledged by every power and faculty of the soul. No art nor power on earth can erase or alter it ; it needs no translation ; it was not revealed to any man or set of men, to be communicated by them to others of different languages ; it was not given to the world on paper in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, but it is established in the intelligence of man, and as inseparable from him, as his reason, understanding, memory, or any faculty he possesses. It is the universal edict of God, and no man can disavow it, unless all the powers of his soul are perverted by the love and practice of sin. The more a man exercises his rational powers in the pursuit of truth, and practice of virtue and piety, the more enlightened and established he will be in the plan and purposes of God, in creating this world ; and the more he will adore and praise God,
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from a grateful sense of present benefits, and for that eternity of bliss he is passing on through time, to enjoy. Because a man is not converted from this faith and practice, to an acquaintance with a devil, and to an acknowledgment of him as his father, and the author of "every thought and imagination of the heart of man, and that continually,"—"he shall be damned!"—There is not a man on earth, who is not irrecoverably hardened in a wicked course, but can bear testimony to the falsehood of this doctrine, which will hereafter be fully shown.

The absurdity has been shown of supposing Adam, or the first man, could not have sinned, had it not been for a devil, because it leads to a race of devils co-existent with eternity, and would make sin to originate with God. The story of Adam's representation of the human race, of original sin, and the doctrine

doctrine fabricated thereon, are no less absurd, and obviously appear to have originated in total ignorance of human nature, which ignorance too generally prevails in the present age, to the disgrace of an intelligent rational world. How clear, and every way consistent, and worthy of God, is the doctrine of truth and reason on this head. Man was created perfectly free from all evil, but he was also created with the powers of a rational being, and of a free moral agent, capable of preserving his purity, or of losing it. The world is a state of probation, and man's temporary existence in it, a life of trial, designed to perfect the created human nature, which all men are born with, in knowledge and virtue, as free moral agents. By which divine order, the original nature of man, consisting of principles only, derive a moral character, either virtuous or wicked, and become capable
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of reward or punishment. Was this not the case, but that man was created in a state of complete perfection, he could not have acquired the character of a virtuous moral agent, nor could he have had any thing to do, but remain as he was created, without the least improvement of his rational and moral powers, in the free, voluntary attainment of knowledge and virtue. And like a superior order of brutes, go out of the world as they came into it, since it never was the will of God that man should remain here, for ever excluded from his heavenly kingdom, as the fabulous story implies.

This world is every way admirably suited to man's situation as a moral agent and candidate for eternal glory ; he has earth under his feet, heaven over his head, an immortal soul in a mortal body ; in his intelligence are the agents of God, reason, understanding, and the

divine law, they shew him what is good, and what is evil, they convince him of his true interest, and of God's gracious will towards him ; and at the same time warn him of the imminent danger the glorious plan of God unavoidably exposes him to as a free moral agent. He has passions and propensities (which are absolutely necessary for moral agents to possess) to regulate, and keep in perfect subjection to reason and duty, or they will spread devastation and ruin through the moral system, and involve the soul in sin, misery, and condemnation. He has also his temporal existence, various and numerous wants to provide for, and and if not attentive to the divine monitor in his heart, will neglect his spiritual and eternal concerns, and take improper steps to procure the necessities of life. In doing which he perverts the order of God, shrinks from the test of virtue, sins against his better knowledge,

knowledge, against the moral and divine law implanted in his heart, and will render himself, if not prevented by sincere repentance and reformation, obnoxious to God, unworthy and unqualified for that glory he was created to inherit. Let it be observed that until man comes to years of understanding, or use of reason, he cannot sin against the law of God, because it exists in his rational, intelligent powers, and cannot be understood before those powers come to maturity ; and because it is the will of God, that man should believe and act on rational principles. (How does this agree with “believe,” though you cannot understand, or you “shall be damned?”) But he is accountable to those under whose care he is placed, and they are responsible to God for his evil actions, or habits, if owing to the neglect of their duty, either as it respects their own conduct,
or

or the conduct of those intrusted to their care.

If it is admitted that it never was the will of God, that man should remain in this world for ever, (which undoubtedly it never was, for if man was made to remain here, his disobedience could not have made it necessary to remove him to heaven, and become the means of procuring for him an inheritance more glorious than that designed for him had he not transgressed) it will follow that this life is a state of trial, preparatory to another, consequently that the material, corruptible part provided for the soul to dwell in during the period of its probation, must die, and return to the general mass of matter from whence it was taken, and the soul ascend to heaven, from whence it proceeded, agreeable to the original design of God. And not as the consequence of sin, as imposture represents,

represents, and its credulous dupes believe, who are so devoid of reason and common sense as to tell us, that by sin man became mortal and subject to death, and then in direct contradiction, inform us that Enoch and Elijah went to heaven without experiencing a natural death. As to the doctrine of a devil, and the story of a married woman's conceiving of the Holy Ghost, and becoming the mother of a God, and of his offering himself a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the world, and render it possible for man to be saved, they are things absurd and impious. It has been shown above, that the story of Moses' serpent, and the Christian's devil, was invented to account for original sin and temporal death, and that the story embraces principles that have no foundation, because they lead to a state of things impossible to have existed. Who for one moment can hesitate to reject the doctrine

that teaches man to believe, that God, having placed him in a state of probation, and given him from sixty to eighty years and upwards, to prepare for a future state, condemned the first man, for the first offence, and all succeeding generations, to eternal torments ; such an act would violate every principle of love, mercy and justice, and entirely destroy the whole system of a probationary state. But the advocates of this doctrine say, that although God has destroyed the first state of man, he has provided another more favourable, in as much as one sin, according to the former, would damn a soul for ever, but now should a man live in the constant practice of sin, until within one hour of his death, nay, if he has but time to call on God to have mercy on him, he may be saved ; such extremes as these are the characteristics of ignorance and imposture, but let none presume to attribute them to God.

Christians,

Christians, come forth and answer the following questions. Was Adam the representative of the whole human race ? and was he free to have stood as well as fall ? you acknowledge he was, otherwise God would be made author of his fall, and of the consequent misery of all succeeding generations ; then it is evident he must have stood in their place, to all intents and purposes ; and, if he believed in the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, so as to be restored to spiritual life and holiness again, before his probation ended, he must have risen from his fall. And, as all mankind fell with him, by an imputation of his guilt, all must have risen with him, by an imputation of his pardon, and restoration to the image and favour of God. Therefore, on your own ground, his posterity has nothing to do with Christ's coming into the world, as it was
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only a fulfilment of the covenant made with Adam, their representative. Had Adam withstood the devil in the serpent, (or in any other way he might have thought proper to attack him) until the end of his probation, would mankind have been exempt from trial? you answer they undoubtedly would, for as they were sentenced to eternal death for his disobedience, had he not disobeyed, they would have inherited eternal life, free from trials, or the possibility of committing sin. Here is presented a tale so absurd as to excite astonishment at the ignorance, and credulity of those who first received it as a revelation from God, and at the prejudice and bigotry of those who continue to believe it. It represents Adam and Eve as the only persons designed by God, originally for a probationary state, consequently had they stood, all succeeding generations could have been
nothing

nothing more than mere holy things, acting from necessity without will or choice, incapable of virtue, merit, or reward. What a contrast between Adam and his posterity ; he a free agent, they impelled by necessity ; they would not appear like the same order of beings, neither would their constrained homage be worthy of God's acceptance. But the total eclipse of imposture and ignorance is past, and the glorious sun of reason and truth begins to illuminate the moral world ; nothing is now wanting but leaders that are truly religious, millions of enlightened men are ready to flock to the standard of reason, and worship God according to its dictates, and the divine law implanted in the heart of man universally.

CHAPTER III.

SON OF GOD, &c.

HAVING shewn the absurdity of the story of a serpent, and wonderful discovery of a devil in it, ignorantly invented to account for the origin of sin, and cause of natural death, and also of the fabulous account of Adam as a representative; let the merits of the doctrine which is founded on it, of a son of God's dying a sacrifice and atonement for sin, now be considered. It is said that the son of God was sacrificed to atone for the sins of the world, and satisfy the law of God, and make it honourable, so that God might be just, and the justifier of all that believe. If this representation is true, then has God given reason to the human race, only to mock them, and amuse himself with impos-
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ing on their credulity ; for it completely annihilates all reason and justice from the moral world, with respect to doctrines of religion, leaving no other distinction between man and beast, but that of material form.

According to reason and justice, to punish an innocent person in the room of a guilty one, would be a horrid crime, and instead of being an honour, it would be an eternal reproach to the law, and the power that inflicted the punishment.

To this the opposers of truth will answer, that God had said to Adam, “ in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die ; ” therefore, had not a substitute been provided, he must have died not only a temporal, but a spiritual and eternal death, and the plan of God have been defeated. Here is another miraculous discovery of spiritual and eternal death, of which the
tale

tale contains not a word, no more than it does of a devil ; nor can such ideas, much less doctrines, with any degree of consistency, be inferred from it. It is plain to be seen that the author of the story had no idea of any thing more than a mere serpent, and temporal death.

This nonsensical stuff originated in total ignorance of the nature of man, of free moral agency, and of a probationary state ; the author conceived that for man to live by the sweat of his brow, or by industry, and return to the dust from whence he was taken, was a curse inflicted for some offence, and thinking as millions of ignorant people now think, and are taught by their priests to believe, that man came out of the hands of his Creator in a complete state of perfection, needing no improvement to constitute a virtuous moral character, and so formed as to have no
conception

conception of good and evil, and beyond the possibility of sin's originating in him, introduced into his fabrication a serpent as the primary cause of sin; and under the idea of a mere serpent only, it was cursed. Had a fallen angel entered into the poor helpless animal, agreeably to the Christian doctrine, it would have been more just and consistent to have bestowed a blessing on it rather than a curse, to make amends for the violent outrage committed on its nature. Surely the rays of reason will beam on the intellectual powers of the reader, and if they are not enveloped in invincible prejudice, he will clearly perceive the egregious deception.

What was the state of man before the introduction of sin into the moral world, according to the fabricator's ideas?—why, he was naked, and insensible of it—knew neither good nor evil—could not commit sin of himself—was

not a moral agent—incapable of acquiring virtue—existed on the fruit of trees—and was to have lived in this world for ever. And what was man's state after the introduction of sin according to this story? Why, with respect to his person, man emerged from a state of brutality below the common level of the brute creation, which nature had provided with suitable covering—he rationally discerned his nakedness, and decently covered it—became sensible of his moral powers of good and evil—appeared in the proper character of a free moral agent in this probationary state—improving the powers of his mind by agriculture, arts and sciences—manufacturing the materials which nature had furnished for the purpose of supplying those wants and necessities, which, together with the necessary passions and propensities of man, are designed by the Almighty to operate as trials

trials and tests of the virtue, devotion and resignation of moral agents to their God. And after the time allotted for the glorious and divine end, for which reason and the law of God are implanted in the heart of man, might be accomplished, his body is to return to dust from whence it was taken, and his soul, if immortalized by the love and practice of virtue and religion, to ascend to realms of eternal bliss.

Can any thing be more absurd than these representations? First, man is represented in a state as originally ordained of God, which is altogether inconsistent, most absurd, and impossible ever to have existed. Again, man is represented in a state as being the effect of sin, and of the avenging hand of God, which is altogether consistent, most rational, and the only one that ever could have harmonized with creation, the attributes of God, a state of probation,

tion, and with the principles essential to constitute a moral agent, such as man is and was created.

How embarrassed is the situation in which imposture has placed the Almighty ; he must either violate the moral system which is to govern the world, or suffer his first plan of creation to be frustrated. Christians, if the dreadful case of the first offence of a probationer for “ nine hundred and thirty years,” (the bible account of the time that Adam lived) admitted of a remedy, do you not think that God would have provided one honourable to himself, and consistent with reason and justice ?—What think you of the sinner’s renouncing every sinful practice, and sacrificing every evil desire to the law of God, and of making an atonement for sin, by a reformed life, which is the surest proof of true repentance ?—would it not be agreeable to reason, worthy of God,

God, and honourable to his holy law?—What satisfaction could justice require, so proper as the destruction or sacrifice of that principle of disobedience and carnality which gave the offence, and which is the sole cause of all sin? and what atonement for past offences, can be so acceptable to God, as a life reformed and devoted to his will?—this indeed is a free salvation, it costs nothing but the sacrifice of sin; here is love, mercy and justice, and it is hard to say that either have the ascendancy. This doctrine is worthy of God, in all respects consistent with his attributes, and with the probationary state of moral agents. How different from this is the Christian doctrine; in it the order of nature is inverted, the wisdom, justice, yea, all the attributes of God, obscured and dishonoured, and the understanding of man trampled under foot; and yet its advocates accuse the supporters of

rational religion with robbing God of the glory of man's salvation. There never was a charge more puerile and groundless than this, for God is the Creator and preserver of the universe ; if man is wise, virtuous and happy, those blessings have flowed from God to him ; and all that can be ascribed to man, is the use of his free will in choosing the good which God has set before him, and fidelity in the performance of his duty ; can any system of religion attribute less to man, or more to God ?

As men generally live from fifty to seventy years, it appears that this length of time is given, that whatever disadvantages man may be under, he might be brought by experience to know the evil of sin, and the good of virtue, to comprehend the nature of his soul, to obey the dictates of reason, and the law of God, which is within him, become
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established in religion, glorifying God in doing all the good he can ; and that when his mortal body dies, his soul might ascend to God his heavenly father, and progress in new delights, and increase in joys for evermore.

The law of God is like himself, unchangeable, perfect, and powerfully impressed upon the human mind, which St. Paul acknowledged, when he said, “ the heathens having not the written law ; but, doing the things contained in the law, are a law unto themselves ; which plainly shews that the law is written in their hearts, their consciences accusing, or else excusing them.” This observation, which experience taught him to make, is another glaring inconsistency in the Christian system, for if God has written his law in the heart of every man, is it reasonable to believe that he would make a particular communication of it to any one ?—could it
answer

answer any good purpose?—would it not subject him that received it, to ridicule, or suspicion of being an impostor?—it could be of no use to himself, nor to any one else. Surely no man of common sense can believe that God would send a man to tell him what he himself had already made known to him. The detection of this falsehood leads to the discovery of the whole mystery of iniquity ; for, as God has revealed his law to every man, and the heathens have power to do the things contained in the law, what becomes of the absolute power of the devil over the unconverted ?

In addition to the account above given of the devil's irresistible power over unbelievers, it is said, in allusion to man, Christ, and a devil, that “when a strong man, armed, keeps his castle, none can spoil his goods, but when a stronger than he comes, he shall bind the
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the strong man, and then he shall spoil his goods.” Man is here represented under the unlimited power of a devil, without even the possibility of being extricated, until a stronger than he, Christ, comes to his assistance, and delivers him ; so that a devil is the sole cause of every species of wickedness that is committed by man, before he is emancipated from his yoke. And as “ the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” implying every stratagem the art and malice of a fallen angel can invent, to seduce and bring into bondage again, those that have been released ; should his long experience, superior knowledge, and spiritual advantages, give him the victory over a weak, inexperienced or unfaithful convert, he then re-enters him, “ with seven other devils worse than himself.”—Eight devils, it may well be supposed, are bad company enough

enough for one man, but they were nothing when compared to the two thousand, that were cast out of a maniac, and entered into as many swine, which ran violently down a steep place into the sea and were choaked, to the great loss of their owners. The most, therefore, man can have to answer for, according to Christian doctrine, is his resignation to his fate, while under the power of the devil, which no human being can resist, or unfaithfulness after being delivered from him, in not successfully repelling his attacks to bring him again into captivity. This is the doctrine of the second revelation, or New-Testament, or rather new fabrication, which it is said, was intended to explain the mysteries of the first, but in fact to put the reins of power and imposition into new hands. It was a device the impostors judged expedient to adopt, for had they rejected the first fabrication

fabrication as false, men's eyes would have been opened, and they never could have succeeded in an attempt to impose another human system of religion upon the world, as divine.

Reason at length began to make its appearance among the Jews; and grew exceedingly troublesome in its remonstrances against the absurdity of supposing offerings of money,* beasts, &c. could be an acceptable atonement to God for sin; and the people, no doubt, began to suspect that the fine flour, beaten oil, wine, spice, doves, first fruits of every thing, the most choice, was meant for the accomodation of the priests, more than to atone for their sins; heavy complaints were made against the conduct of Eli's sons, who, on account of their wickedness, were called the sons of Belial; they went to such lengths as to threaten

en to take by force, the peoples' sacrifices while raw, and have it cooked by their servants in any manner they pleased. The conduct of Eli was condemned also, who, with his sons, were charged with making themselves fat on the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel. It is highly probable that it was such conduct as this, that induced the prophet Isaiah to bear testimony in the name of God, against all sacrifices and offerings of beasts, &c. "Who hath required this at your hand?" asked he, "bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me;—put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well; let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." However, such were the difficulties in all probability, that

that the pretended revelations of Moses, and the prejudices of the people, presented to his mind, that he found himself under the necessity of substituting something in the room of their daily sacrifices, that might appear plausible and satisfactory to the people. Accordingly he (or the devisers of Christianity) prophesied that God would provide an atonement for them, and that all they had to do to obtain his favour, prosperity, and happiness, was to forsake their evil ways and unrighteous thoughts, and return unto the Lord. But however rational this new doctrine was, it must be allowed that Isaiah was inconsistent with prior communications said to be divine. For Moses announced to the people that God commanded sacrifices and offerings to be made by them, to atone for their sins, and pointed out in a very particular manner, the delicious things that should be offered day by

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day, morning and evening, at the door of the tabernacle. By which means the priests, who were numerous, their servants, and the tribe of Levi, which served as a standing army, to awe and force the people to submit to every imposition, were plentifully provided with the best of every thing the people possessed ; even their money was demanded as an atonement for their souls. This was their political mode of imposing a heavy taxation on the nation, to which they never would have submitted, had they not been deprived of the use of their rational powers, and plunged into superstition by the invention of miracles and revelations. If, as Christians inform us, God ordained offerings and sacrifices to be made by the Jews, as a type of Christ, how came the prophet Isaiah to order their discontinuance, about seven hundred years before their end was accomplished in the appearance of
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of their anti-type. In this affair, *which* is to be believed?—for no man in his senses can believe both.

In the works of God there is nothing inconsistent, nothing absurd ; the whole is either demonstrable or self-evident ; there is no part that contradicts reason. Whatever man cannot fully comprehend of the works of God, he has nevertheless a rational assurance of, it is only the infinite wisdom of the Creator transcending the finite wisdom of the creature ; it does not persecute, or do the least violence to reason, every thing of God is in perfect harmony with it. Christians, can you say as much for your doctrine ? no, you cannot, for it is the rational, enlightened, intelligent part of mankind that reject it, as inconsistent with the universal manifestations of God, through all nature, and hostile to reason. This you acknowledge, for you will not subject your doctrine to
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the test of experience or reason, but require all mankind to reject their reason as perverted by original sin, and at enmity with God. Out of your own mouth, you, your system, and doctrine, shall be condemned, for if that part of mankind, called heathens, by the light of nature or reason (for a mind deprived of reason is in a state of darkness and disorder) perform the law of God which "is written in their hearts," it is full proof that man's reason is not naturally perverted, nor at enmity with God.

But, as a retreating enemy avails himself of any kind of means to retard his victorious pursuer, so the advocates of Christianity have recourse to the most puerile shifts to defend their falsehoods. They say that "God has revealed his secrets unto babes, but has hid them from the wise and prudent of this world, that he has chosen the foolish and base things,

things, and things that are naught, to bring to naught the things that are." What things were they which was to be brought to naught? were they immorality and sin? no, for they were condemned and brought to naught by the nations called heathens. Sin, then, was not the object devoted to destruction; it was religion, derived from the divine internal system, through the medium of man's rational and moral powers; it was faith in this divine source of all truth, virtue, and religion, and this divine medium, that were to be brought to naught, to make way for a pretended supernatural system or medium of religion; it was every rational faculty of the soul that were to be subdued, chained down, and not permitted to act in its religious and eternal concerns, that despotic priests might have absolute dominion over the intellectual powers and conscience of man, and subject the world to their will. But in this they are dis-

appointed ; the sword of persecution is arrested from their grasp, the sceptre of power has departed from them, and they are forced to resign the crown and seal of royalty.

That the suppression of religion, and every thing good and virtuous, founded on rational principles, was what they aimed at, is a fact, which the Christian doctrine decidedly manifests ; all morality, best thoughts and words, most virtuous, charitable acts, and meritorious deeds, (which are the fruits of religion) without faith in their system and doctrines, are condemned as filthy rags, and declared to be an abomination in the sight of God, that doctrines fabricated on pretended miracles, and supernatural communications might be introduced, which are pointedly calculated to crush the rational powers of man, and degrade him to a level with the brute creation. They clash with the known
providence

providence of God, and represent him at variance with himself; they open a door for imposition, and at the same time preclude the possibility of detection, by rejecting and prohibiting the free use of reason, which is the only means of detecting imposture.

Nicodemus is mentioned as a good man, but he was told that unless he was born again, or in other words, unless he believed in the Christian system, he could not enter the kingdom of heaven. What became of those heathens when they died, who “did the things contained in the law” of God, which they had “written in their hearts?”—did they enter the kingdom of heaven, or did they not? it must be acknowledged they did. What then can this war of religions, or rather systems of religions, mean? God cannot be the author of both, he would not confound the understanding of his creatures, nor trifle thus with their salvation ;

vation ; he would not establish his law in the heart of man, with power to perform it, and an assurance of divine favour and future happiness, and then send men to him with new doctrines, making void the divine internal manifestation ; and, repugnant to reason and experience, to enable him to obtain that which he already possessed, with threats of damnation if he received not their system and doctrines as revelation from God. Can it be possible that God would require his rational beings to give their assent to any doctrine, without an understanding or rational conviction of its truth ? no, God has not created man to grope in darkness for the knowledge of good and evil, truth and falsehood ; nor are they exposed, when they improve and exercise the powers given them, to the impositions of ambitious, designing men ; nor to the unprincipled dogmas of superstitious, enthusiastic fanatic

fanatic bigots, whose ignorance and blind zeal render them the dupes and tools of imposture, and who zealously engage in the persecution and destruction of their fellow men, and think they render God service.

CHAPTER IV.

PARABLES, DOCTRINES, &c.

TAKE from that mass of inconsistency, called the word of God, those moral passages, pious precepts, and virtuous sentiments, that flow spontaneously from every virtuous heart, and which are therein blended with imposture, there remains nothing but absurdity, imposition, unparallelled wickedness and slaughter of the human race; sparing none but young women who had not known man, from mere motives of sensuality, and human policy. And Oh ! unparallelled blasphemy, all this complicated mass of infamy is attributed to God ! In that heterogeneous mixture of natural and supernatural accounts, of truth and falsehood, crimes of the deepest dye find ample support.

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Do priests wish to indulge the spirit of persecution, that mystery of iniquity will prompt them to the deed. In an insidious parable, therein contained, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a certain king, who made a marriage for his son, and sent his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again he sent other servants to call them, but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants and slew them. When the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. The inference to be drawn from this persecuting parable, is that the heads of that iniquitous doctrine, may send their ministerial servants to any city, to invite, bid or command the inhabitants to receive their doctrine, (the world is
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no stranger to their *civil* and *respectful* manner of inviting) and should they refuse, or shew any resentment at being called the children of the devil and consigned to hell, to consider them in league with the devil, hostile to their doctrine, enemies to God, and worthy of death.

This parable also authorises the dreadful evil of keeping up standing armies ; for the king , who is intended to represent God, had his armies in readiness. We are likewise informed that a certain man made a great supper, and bade many, but they all prayed to be excused—then the master of the house was angry ; and the Lord said unto his servants, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. These passages teem with the spirit of persecution and hypocrisy, and were in all probability the principle cause of the
bloody

bloody crusades and holy wars that have been carried on against unbelievers.

The key of heaven was given to Peter, that he might open and shut the door of heaven for the benefit of the Church, and to hold kings and princes in awful dread of its tremendous power ; the Mother Church, and some of the dissenting churches, have each got a key, and make use of them to this day ; but will not unlock the door of heaven for any one who believes not as they do. But it is certain that some of them have got false keys, and many believe all their keys to be false, and that when a man comes to the door of heaven, if all his evil desires and affections have been sacrificed to the righteous law of God, and he has atoned for his sins by a reformed life of virtue to the glory of God, that he will find a ready and welcome admittance into his kingdom.

The Mother Church however, enjoys without a rival, the power of forgiving sins, and selling indulgencies, which has formerly been a very brisk trade, and source of immense wealth and power to the Church. As this most presumptuous crime is now universally abhorred by the enlightened part of the world, it shews how exceedingly ignorant the people must have been, on whom the imposition was at first practised, and that they were not qualified to detect any imposition whatsoever. How then can it be expected that a doctrine, repugnant to reason and experience, inconsistent in itself, and hostile to the attributes of God, which originated among such a people, should be entitled to the least degree of confidence.

In this enquiry, the doctrine of Christianity is particularly attended to, with a view to shew its contradictions and inconsistencies, and how impossible it is
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for God to be the author of it ; no one man of common understanding could be the author of such jargon, much less an infinitely wise and perfect God. It appears therefore to be what it really is, the work of different men, performed at different periods, without a knowledge of the whole, or attention to the consistency of its parts ; of which the following is a striking instance. Christ, (as represented) speaking of the opposition his doctrine was likely to meet with, and to encourage his followers, says, “ these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also,”

To shew the inconsistency of these assertions, it is only necessary to mention

tion a few passages from the same authority which are in direct contradiction to them. With respect to the world's not knowing God, the apostle Paul, speaking of mankind universally, says, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them ; for God hath shewn it unto them ; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse." And with respect to sin, that the heathens perform the law of God " which is written in their hearts, their consciences accusing or else excusing them," of what ?—of sin. We are also informed in the Acts of the Apostles that, " there was a certain man called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much
alms

alms to the people, and prayed to God always.” We have likewise an account of a man called Enoch, who walked with God three hundred years, and of there being priests in the world, before ever Christians or Jews were heard of, or even Abraham was called, who washed the feet of three celestial spirits, and had the hospitality to set before them three measures of fine meal made into cakes, with butter, and a calf tender and good, of which they miraculously partook.

Admit that God did in this instance, as in a thousand others (according to Bible authority) violate the laws of nature, in causing heavenly beings to eat things carnal and corruptible, contrary to their nature; in what respect was it worthy of God?—was he glorified by it?—or could man receive instruction or benefit from the sensuality of Angels? On the contrary, would it not tend to

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confound

confound the temporal with the spiritual order of things, and perplex the human mind ?—It would be disrespectful to the enlightened reader, and a prodigality of time to enlarge even this short digression, in attempting to render the imposition more obvious than it already is. To return then to the subject ; David, that murderous adulterer, after injuring a worthy man, had him destroyed, that he might enjoy without restraint, his criminal passion. In this horrid scene two cases are presented, one of which must be admitted, and either of them prove David to have been deliberately wicked. A plot between David and Uriah's wife, must have been concerted for Uriah's destruction, that she might become the wife of the murderer of her husband ; or unparalleled outrage and premeditated villainy must be attributed to the infamous character and despotic power of

of David. In either case what is the world to think of the man, who could take to his bed, the wife of the man whom he had murdered, and find pleasure in the horrid union ?

It is impossible to conceive a wretch more abandoned, and lost to every feeling of humanity, and sentiment of virtue ; and yet he is called a man after God's heart ! Insulted Majesty of heaven, it is because thy eternal, perfect, unchangeable law is established in the intelligence of man, and leaves every one that sins without excuse ; and because this life is designed to prepare mankind as free moral agents for another, that thou appearest to leave them to themselves ; but thou art in the midst of them, and thy providence encircles them.

It is the noble affection of the soul, that God desires, and not a constrained
homage,

homage, therefore not the least degree of force is discernible in the providence of God towards man. Love and goodness may beget love, but force never can ; a school-boy may be chastised for inattention, and an offender for his crimes, and it may have the desired effect ; but to inspire the sentiment of love, very different conduct must be pursued. How do these obvious truths agree with the above persecuting command ; “ go out into the high-ways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in,” or with the tyrannical denunciation, “ he that believeth not,” though contrary to his reason, “ shall be damned !” A word or two more of David shall suffice for the present. After Nathan had spoke to him in a way of similitude respecting the affair of Uriah and his wife, he condescended to say “ I have sinned ;” this shews the inconsistency of the above assertions ; David

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was convinced of sin, and the heathens, as above mentioned, was convinced of sin also, and yet Christ has said, “ If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.” Nothing can more plainly appear than the absurdity and falsehood of the assertion ; it is a complete detection of a real, or fictitious impostor. If mankind “ had not had sin” he had “ not come and spoken unto them,” it will follow, that it must have been for want of information, and that all who died before and since he came, and all that may hereafter die, without having heard of him, and of what he has spoken, could not, nor cannot have sin to answer for ; being invincibly ignorant of that knowledge necessary to render them liable to the imputation of sin, and accountable for their conduct. As to the world’s not knowing God, and having a cloak for their sins before Christ came ; the declarations

tions of Paul, grounded on nature, pointedly contradict. They are quoted above, and shew that God has manifested himself to all mankind from the creation of the world, as fully as a state of probation will admit of. The words of the apostle are explicit, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto to them" not only "his eternal power and Godhead" but good and evil also, with a consciousness of the necessity of doing the one and avoiding the other, in order to answer the end of their creation, and enjoy an assurance of happiness hereafter; for, says the apostle, "so that they are without excuse." It is seen then, that the testimony of Christ, and the testimony of Paul contradict each other, and cannot both be true. However, as the account of Enoch in Genesis, and that of Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles, are in favor of Paul,

and

and the experience of all the world likewise, Paul must be acquitted of the falsehood, and of course it will fall, probably, not on the real, but fabricated author of the Christian system. It is therefore obvious that man believed in his Maker and in his law, and worshipped him from a true principle of faith, love and piety, before the author or authors of the Christian system, had an existence, otherwise the pious and God-like disposition of benevolence, which so richly dwelt in Cornelius, could not have been experienced by him, nor by thousands of others in every age of the world, who doubtless were no less charitable and devout. How then, can it be believed, that God after making known to man, all that his present state can admit of, and sufficient to leave him without excuse for the commission of sin, would make void his divine work in the soul, so congenial to the nature
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of man, and founded in reason, in order to introduce a miraculous and supernatural system, contrary to nature, reason and universal experience. Making salvation depend on man's rejection of all the good his gracious Creator had enabled him to perform, as "filthy rags" and delusive works of a devil; and, on his embracing the greatest absurdities as revelation from God, upon no better authority than the testimony of men, capable of imbibing the worst of principles, and who had it in their power to practise the greatest impositions on a people, sunk to the lowest depths of ignorance and mental degradation, by the artifice and despotism of priests and kings, whose prime object always was, while they had power, to enslave mankind and subject the world to their will. And as the success of their deceptions schemes depended on the ignorance of the people, they carefully adopted

adopted such systems of religion as absolutely prohibited investigation and the exercise of reason. By which means the understanding, designed by the Almighty for the receptacle of knowledge, became unoccupied, except by darkness, while sensuality and superstition debased every faculty of the soul. To this degraded condition of human nature, must be attributed the consummate folly of rejecting the rational and infallible manifestations of God, for the absurd fabrications of men ; who, being placed in a state of trial, must of necessity be fallible, and capable of deception ; a circumstance that reprobates the idea, and makes it impossible for man to be a medium of divine communication, on which the eternal fate of the world is to depend. The means employed to convey such intelligence, must be pure, infallible, and incapable of deceiving ; such only are the opera-

tions of the spirit of God. Every mind bears the divine imprint, and every rational being can testify from experience of the manifestations of God, independent of human assistance. They, like their great Author, are universally the same through all nations, kindreds and tongues; and, were well disposed men to be assembled from every nation in the world, they would perfectly agree in every virtue necessary to constitute the just, the merciful, and truly pious man; such are the peaceful, uniting and blessed effects of the religious principles God has implanted in every man.* How different are the effects of the

* The celebrated Mr. Rollin, speaking of the universal belief of all nations in God, and of national religion, says, "they never vary in regard to the foundation of this belief. So general, so uniform, so perpetual a consent of all the nations of the universe, which neither the prejudice of the passions, the reasoning of some philosophers, or the authority and example of certain princes, have ever been able to weaken or vary,—can proceed only from a first principle, which shares in the nature of man, from an in-

the systems invented by man, not only as they respect the worship of God, but as they relate to the temporal interest and welfare of nations. Jews, Christians, and Mahometans, have each a different system, founded on different revelations, and so implacable is their enmity, that they would extirpate each other from the earth if they had the power. Superstition and intolerance are the sure consequences of supernatural systems ; for not being founded in reason

herent sense implanted in his heart by the Author of his being ; such was the source and origin of the religion of the ancients ; truly worthy of man. Can any thing be more admirable than these maxims of Cicero ? That we ought above all things to be convinced that there is a Supreme Being, who presides over all the events of the world, and disposes every thing as Soverergn, Lord and arbiter ; that it is to him mankind are indebted for all the good they enjoy : that he penetrates into, and is conscious of whatever passes in the most secret recesses of our hearts ; that he treats the just and the impious according to their respective merits ; that the true means of acquiring his favour, and of being pleasing in his sight, is not by the use of riches and magnificence in his worship, but by presenting him an unfeigned and profound veneration."

reason and nature, they cannot be understood, and are embraced by their converts in ignorance, the source of bigotry and persecution. All agree that there is but one divine system of religion, and each contending adversary boasts the possession of it, declaring all others false, or superceded, and the adherents to them in league with a devil. But as miracles trample on reason and common sense, neither argument nor proof of any kind can be adduced ; terror, confiscation, fire and sword, are the only means of conviction. These are the engines of destruction, that have been employed to compel the world to receive supernatural systems ; Jews, Christians, and Mahometans, have used them successfully in their turns, banishing peace, humanity, and the universal love of man, out of the world. When the conduct of Christians is considered,

sidered, the divisions and persecutions that have taken place among them, on account of their different doctrines and modes of worship, pointedly hostile to each other, but all equally supported by an authority, said to be of God; the mind is lacerated with horror, contempt and pity, at the impious presumption of the impostors, the despicable credulity of their infatuated dupes, and the degraded condition of human nature. The doctrines of infallibility, and power of man to forgive sin, are held by the original Church, and as firmly established as any doctrine founded on the Bible, but rejected by the host of dissenters, as repugnant to scripture. The doctrine of purgatory or amelioration of spirits, imprisoned in eternity, embraced also by the first Church, can be proved or disproved with equal facility. Predestination, or election of one part of mankind to be saved, and inevitable destruc-

tion of the other, without any respect to the conduct of either, is a favourite doctrine with some sects, and supported from scripture ; while others view it as a flagrant violation of the attributes of God, and incompatible with free salvation ; and from the same source of human invention, at once prove it false, and establish an opposite doctrine.* As well may we hope to find pleasure in pain, health in sickness, or peace in war, as to expect mankind will ever be reconciled, whilst the cause of their most inveterate hatred, contentions and divisions, exist.

It is obvious, notwithstanding the garb of humility which the authors of
Christianity

* How exceedingly applicable is Sterne's remark, he says " imposture is all dissonance ; let what master soever of it undertake the part, let him harmonise and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another ; and whilst we have ears to hear, we shall distinguish it : 'tis truth only which is consistent and ever in harmony with itself."

Christianity endeavoured to assume, that their designs were of the most ambitious and despotic kind ; their assumption of unerring, immutable power, and prerogative to forgive sin, open and shut heaven, were calculated to rob God of his glory, to rivet the fear of man, not of God, upon the minds of the people, and prostrate them in abject slavery and ignominy at the feet of their spiritual tyrants. This was the condition of Christendom until Luther's partial exposure of the impious device, which encouraged many to renounce the doctrine and authority of the then only Christian Church in the world. Thus the spell of priest-craft was broken, and a way made for enquiry ; but as the world has never been so happy, as to be without ambitious despots in power, and a rational system of religion by no means calculated to keep man in ignorance, subject to imposition and oppression,

oppression, every engine of Church and state have been set to work, to support a supernatural system, in order to extinguish the divine and luminous principle of reason, and brutalize the intelligence that God has implanted in the heart of man. The example, however, of the first dissenters, put it out of their power to prohibit, without glaring inconsistency, the investigation of doctrines, and of affixing such meaning to them, as might be deemed least repugnant to common sense. So that among the numerous contending sects, the whole system of artifice, has been proved false and absurd.

Its hypocritical or infatuated advocates have rendered the fraud notorious, which, like all other corrupt institutions, has operated to its own destruction. The fiery, intolerant, unnatural monster, having no place in the affections

fections of the people, supported only by craft, superstition and bigotry, was soon stript of her usurped power and self importance, and reduced to the contemptible condition of a political tool, subservient to the intriguing schemes of courts and ambitious purposes of despotic governments, in order to be protected by them from the attacks of reason, and the voice of truth. Had this not been the case, had she been the friend of virtue, and enemy of vice, had she bore testimony against the luxury, licentiousness and iniquity of courts, and men in power ; in short, had she not been an enemy to virtue and the people, and in league with vice and oppression, she would not have shared in the destruction, when the indignation of an enslaved and insulted people, rushed forth as a mighty torrent, and swept the corrupt government of France, with her tools and sycophants into oblivion.

Christianity

Christianity commenced its career with spiritual persecution, which highly recommended it to the notice and favour of powerful and ambitious men, who embraced with avidity the artful device, and extended its intolerant principles and spirit, to the persons and property of men. Gibbon, in his history of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, speaking of Christianity in the reign of Constantine, says, “ the example of the emperor, with the hopes of wealth and honours, soon diffused the Christian religion among the obsequious crowds which fill the apartments of a palace. The conversion of those who possessed birth, power or riches, was soon followed by dependant multitudes. The Goths and Germans, who enlisted under the standard of Rome, revered the cross which glittered at the head of the legions; and their fierce countrymen received at the same time the lessons

sons of faith and humanity ; the faint murmurs of the Pagans were silenced by a military force, and the irresistible power of the Roman Emperors was displayed in the important change of the national religion. The persecution of the Jews soon followed the conversion of the Christian kings ; that exiled nation had founded some synagogues in Gaul ; but Spain, since the time of Adrian, was filled with their numerous colonies. Their wealth might possibly invite the pious avarice of their masters ; and Sisebut, a Gothic king, who reigned in the beginning of the seventh century, compelled by the menaces of confiscation and torture, ninety thousand Jews to receive the sacrament ; the reluctant proselytes were not permitted to abandon their native country, but were constrained externally to profess a religion which they despised." But reason at length gaining ground, has tamed the monster,

monster, which now seems contented in being permitted to exercise that spiritual intolerance, it began with,—“he that believes not, shall be damned,”—damned for not believing falsehood and absurdity, to be truth and consistency! damned, for not believing the infinitely wise and good Creator to be foolish and wicked.

CHAPTER V.

*J O B.*

HOW is the book of Job to be received?—as a history of facts, or inspired fiction, designed to illustrate the ways of God for the instruction of man? or should it be considered as the reverie of a disordered brain? The latter is highly probable; but that it is either of the former, is impossible. Admit for a moment the existence of a devil, is it a fact, that he among the sons of God, presented himself before the Almighty, and that God was moved by the instigations of Satan, against Job, “to destroy him without cause.” This is the acknowledgment that God is represented to have made in his second conference with the devil, after he had committed to his power and malice all that Job possessed,

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sessed, excepting only his own person, when a most dreadful destruction ensued. His seven sons and three daughters were cut off, and all his servants, who were very numerous, put to death by the sword, and by “the fire of God from heaven,” except four, that escaped to convey the sad tidings to Job.

Three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, (the he-asses seem to have been forgotten) were carried off by banditti, and seven thousand sheep consumed by “fire from heaven.” Is it a fact, notwithstanding this scene of causeless horror and devastation (unless to gratify a malicious fiend) that God resigned Job’s person into the hands of Satan, to suffer all that his enmity and malice could inflict. “My flesh” says Job, “is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome.”

loathsome.” All, certainly, will agree, (the greatest bigot hardly excepted) that these things are not facts, and that the reasons for rejecting them as such, will apply with equal force against these being received as inspired allegories. They have no relation to any thing, real or profitable, nor a similitude of the ways of providence with man, but are immoral and wicked in themselves, and pernicious as to any kind of application. Not a doubt can remain of the whole book of Job, being a fictitious, human production, profane, inconsistent and ridiculous ; particularly the five last chapters, which are ascribed to God. If the deplorable situation of Job, to whom these chapters are addressed, is considered, not the shadow of a doubt will remain respecting the character of their author. The numerous questions therein contained, are puerile, and foreign to the subjects to which they are applied.

applied. What had Job in his wretched condition, to do with behemoth's moving his tail like a cedar? and withbut let it here be suppressed, nor let modesty be offended by the mention of such indecent and unprofitable stuff. The interrogations put to Job respecting the wild goats and hinds, and the remarks on them are highly impertinent; those relative to the leviathan are no less so. In short, the whole book of Job is a medley of nonsense, profanity and inconsistency; it would be weakness to attribute it to any man of common sense; but to ascribe it to God, would demonstrate the greatest irreverence, and perversion of the human understanding.

CHAPTER VI.

*ESAU AND JACOB.*

WHATEVER confidence man may place in miraculous accounts, it is his duty to guard against countenancing or supporting any thing that is dishonorable to God. But how are men to perform this duty?—is it by rejecting reason, the only means of detecting falsehood, and of discovering truth?—Answer, ye enemies of reason, ye revilers of the distinction of human nature, ye who dishonour God, and wish to deprive the world of the means of exposing your folly, and the impositions you advocate. You dare not say it is, but are compelled by the force of truth, to acknowledge, that reason, the greatest of all God's work in man, is the only

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guide

guide in search of truth. Let us then proceed with our heavenly guide to the consideration of a few more circumstances contained in the Bible, and said to be of divine inspiration.

The account of Esau and Jacob, as it respects one of the greatest religious personages of the Jews, and forms a part of the foundation of their own, and of the Christian system of religion, merits particular attention. It is said that the elder of those twin brothers was destined to serve the younger before they were born, and consequently to be deprived of his birth-right, and all the blessings appertaining thereto. How far this order of things, and the means used to accomplish them, can be ascribed to divine inspiration, may be seen by reading part of the twenty-fifth chapter of Genesis, from the twenty-ninth verse to the end ; and from the beginning of the
twenty

twenty-seventh chapter of the same book, to the end of the twenty-ninth verse. There we find Jacob, the pretended favorite of God, as void of humanity as a brute, refusing his brother, who had come from the field hungry and faint, and at the point of death, the least refreshment ; nor would he afford relief until he had extorted an oath from him, and obtained his birth-right as the purchase of his pottage. There, a mother, or rather monster, treacherously plotting with one son against the other, instructing him in falsehood, how to impose on his father, who had grown dim with age, and borne down almost to the grave. To such a height in wickedness had Jacob arrived, that he dared to call on God to sanction his imposition on his father ; for being asked by him, how he found the venison so quickly (mistaking the kid Jacob brought him, for Esau's venison) he answered,

answered, because the Lord thy God brought it to me ! Is the Almighty just, and will he respect the persons of men ?—is he merciful, pure and holy, and can he be the author of cruelty, treachery and imposture ?

With respect to Esau's serving Jacob, as God is represented to have ordained, it is obvious that it never came to pass ; on the contrary, Jacob, soon after his perfidious conduct, went from his father's house, and remained in a distant country for twenty years. And when he returned to his native land, it was with great fear of the consequences of his villainy, and with the most abject submission to Esau ; bowing to the ground seven times until he came near to him, repeatedly calling Esau his lord, and professing himself his servant ! The reception he met with, shewed Esau to be a noble character, a good man, and worthy of a better subject. Let the reader,

reader, if he pleases, read the sequel of Jacob's history, and follow him and his sons into Egypt : and reflect on the conduct of his inspired son Joseph, who gathered up the people's corn of the seven plentiful years, and in the seven years of famine that succeeded, got all their money, flocks, herds, houses, asses and lands ; and finally, this man of God, compelled them to sell themselves to Pharaoh, and become his slaves, for their own corn, to save them from perishing. If justice and mercy are the attributes of God, the avarice, tyranny, and oppression, here exhibited, cannot be of divine inspiration ; consequently, the authority of the Bible is unfounded, and the system of religion founded on it, must be false.

CHAPTER VII.



MOSES.—PART FIRST.

WE frequently hear from the pulpit of the singular meekness of Moses, and of his distinguished character as an inspired historian, law-giver, and ruler of the Jews. An attention to the following particulars will shew, with what propriety those qualifications are conceded to him, and the degree of confidence due to pulpit declarations. The first act of his life that stands recorded, is that of murder. The circumstances attending the horrid deed, do not extenuate, but aggravate the crime. He spied an Egyptian, smiting, or fighting with an Hebrew, one of his brethren, and, without enquiring the cause, he looked this way, and that way, and when

when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.* On the day following, he beheld two men of the Hebrews striving together, and he said to him that did the wrong, wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? His conduct on this occasion, if we may judge from the severe retort he met with, was not of the meekest kind; “who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?” was the answer he received; which awakened the meek man to a sense, if not of his guilt, at least to the fearful consequences of it, and he fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.† Was ever murder committed so wantonly, or with so little provocation? Profane history (foolishly so called) gives no account of an act more characteristic of a ferocious ruffian, void of
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* Exod. ch. 11. v. xi. xii. † Exod. ch. 11. v. xiii. xiv. xv.

the least degree of philanthropy, or the love of God. All his desires centered in himself, and he regarded the Hebrews only as the means of accomplishing his ambitious designs; which were to incite them to a horrid massacre of the Egyptians, and then conduct them, with their spoil, to a distant country, and exalt himself at the head of a nation, as will hereafter appear. And, although he failed in his first attempt, made on his own authority, he afterwards succeeded in the name of God, by means of imposture, and the ignorance and superstition of the people. It is worthy of particular remark, that he prudently waited till all the men were dead that sought his life, before he returned to Egypt; a precaution, which it cannot be supposed the Almighty was under the necessity of taking. But, it was highly expedient for Moses, who required time to prepare the minds of the Hebrews,

brews, to massacre and rob the Egyptians, and who had a life stained with blood to preserve from the avengers of their murdered countryman.

The account of the plagues, said to be inflicted on Egypt by Divine power, through the instrumentality of Moses and Aaron, the spoiling the Egyptians of their jewels and raiment, and the miracles performed at the Red Sea, contain such gross profanity, inconsistency, deception and falsehood, that they cannot be viewed by a mind unpervverted, and escape detection. The account is as follows : Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent ; the wise men and the sorcerers, who were the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. The waters of Egypt, their streams, rivers, ponds, pools, and even in their vessels of wood, and vessels of stone, were turned to blood, the

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fish

fish died and the river stank ; and the magicians did so with their enchantments. Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the land ; they came into Pharaoh's bed-chamber, and on his bed, and into the peoples houses, ovens and kneading-troughs ; and the magicians did so with their enchantments. Aaron stretched out his rod and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and beast ; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt : This display of power in creating vermin that are engendered in filth, and of all kinds the most mean and detestable, the magicians were not permitted to imitate, and which terminated the exhibitions of their enchantments. But the plagues and destructive miracles came on in rapid succession, swarms of flies, murrain, boils with blains, hail and fire, locusts,

custs, darkness for three days which might be felt, and all the first born of man and beast in Egypt smote in one one night. The Hebrews, in obedience to the command of Moses, which he said he received from God, borrowed of the Egyptians, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, with a design to carry them off as spoil; and finally, Pharaoh, and all his host, were drowned in the Red Sea.*

If these things are not fabulous, but realities, with what propriety can it be expected that the Egyptians could have entertained such elevated sentiments of the benevolence of God, as are expressed in the following lines ?

“ Wide as the Sun his bright dominion spreads,
Heav’n-born Benevolence her bounty sheds,
She, meek ey’d goddess, quits th’ angelic sphere,
To banish grief, and dry the human tear.”

They experienced, according to the account,

* The account of the plagues, &c. may be seen in Exodus, ch. vii. viii. ix. x. xii. xiv.

count, nothing but implacable wrath and wanton cruelty, from the time Moses returned to Egypt, until he conducted the Israelites through the Red Sea. The cause assigned for the indiscriminating vengeance poured out upon a whole nation, represents the glorious Creator and Father of the Spirits of all men, premeditating the destruction of his creatures, and as void of benevolence, mercy, and love, towards the Egyptians, as a fabricated devil is said to be towards all mankind. “For, now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence ; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power ; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.”* Admit for a moment, in order to expose the imposture, and
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* Exodus, ch. ix. ver. 15, 16.

render it obvious to men of the weakest capacity, that it had pleased God, to make a further manifestation of himself to the world than he had already done of his power, which we see in the immensity of the creation ; of his wisdom, which we see in the order by which the whole is governed ; of his beneficence, which we see in the abundance with which he fills the earth ; and of his mercy, which we see in his not withholding that abundance, even from the wicked. Would he have done it in a way contrary to his infinite goodness, contrary to all his divine attributes, and contrary to his providence, universally experienced by all ages of the world ever since? Are men to reject all these important, well-known facts, and rely on a vague story, that defames the great Creator, clashes with his works and providence, and insults the understanding of man ; a story that origina-

ted in obscurity, and has been thrown into the world by no one knows who? It may be expected that the advocates of Christianity, particularly those whose principles and judgment are governed by their interest, will oppose every palliation and conjecture they may hope will save this fabulous part of the foundation of their system from detection, rather than sustain the loss of opulence and grandeur, by an acknowledgment of its falsehood, and submission to the voice of reason and truth, which, were it not for fabulous systems, would unite all good men in one faith and worship of the Supreme Being. And it appears that nothing but a rational system, founded on the manifestations of God in nature, can banish from the world the different supernatural systems, that have thrown mankind into a state of religious confusion ; mars the union of society, are often the cause of the most destructive

destructive discord among friends and relatives, and the ruin of families.

The advocates of imposture, influenced by interest, prejudice or bigotry, will endeavour to support it, regardless of the consequences, while there is room for a single conjecture, be it ever so puerile. They will perhaps conjecture that the translator of the sixteenth verse of the ninth chapter of Exodus, above quoted, mistook the meaning of the original, and that God 'did not "in very deed," raise up Pharaoh to punish him and the nation, in order to shew his power, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth ; but that the end for which the plagues were inflicted, was the deliverance of the Hebrews from their captivity and bondage in Egypt. But would the subject, if considered in the light the conjecture places it, appear less absurd, than when viewed according to the plain sense
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and words of the Bible, as quoted ? it certainly would not.—When, according to the story, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and requested him, by divine authority, to let the Hebrews go three days journey into the wilderness to worship God ; he, very properly, required proof of their authority. Whereupon Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent ; and the magicians of Egypt did in like manner. Aaron smote the waters with his rod, and they became blood throughout all the land ; and the magicians did so with their enchantments. Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters, and frogs covered the land ; this also the magicians were empowered to do. Who gave them power to perform these miracles ? it will be answered, “ the devil.” Was it, or was it not agreeably to the will of God ? to this the conjecturers are at a loss how to reply ; “ if we say it was not, we shall be asked why God did

did not, as he had the power, prevent them from opposing his will by imitating his judgments, which could only tend to confound and deceive the people, frustrate the purpose they were intended to accomplish, and cause unnecessary judgments to be inflicted ; representing God, cruelly tormenting his creatures to gratify the enmity of the devil. And if we say it was agreeably to the will of God, we shall make him the principle, and the devil and the magicians, nothing but mere passive instruments in the deception." Thus, in whatever way the story can be considered, profanity and fabulous nonsense are the result.

That God authorized the fraudulent conduct of the Hebrews, in spoiling the Egyptians of their jewels and raiment, would be setting the world so bad an example, and so replete with meanness and

and injustice, that it need only be mentioned, to be abhorred by every enlightened mind, as a most detestable falsehood. It is possible for a story to be so connected, and all its parts so consistent with each other, as to preclude the possibility of proving it false ; though there should be no doubt of its being so ; but when just principles and known truths are made the foundation of a fabric of lies ; nothing but inconsistency and falsehood will appear throughout the whole. Thus, with respect to the counter-miracles, the plagues, and fraud above stated, we are certain of the falsehood ; because God is said to be their author, and we know that he will not deceive, and that he is merciful and just. So, likewise, respecting circumstances relative to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, natural and supernatural causes are confounded in the same act, to effect the same object ;

ject ; and clashing in their effects, completely destroy the credibility of the story. “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea ; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea, upon the dry ground : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.”* It appears from the passage here quoted, that the sea was forced back towards its source by means of a strong east-wind, which continued for one night, leaving the bottom of the sea where the Hebrews passed, dry land, which was the natural effect of a natural cause, and could not have left the waters as a wall on either hand, much less on both. But it is said, that the waters were divided, and were a wall unto the Hebrews,

* Exodus, chap. xiv. ver. 21, 22.

Hebrews, on their right hand and on their left; an effect which nothing but a supernatural cause could produce. Here are seen, different causes with their different effects, most violently clashing, and no possible way of reconciling them, and clearing the account of falsehood: For, if it is true that the waters were divided as a wall on the right hand and on the left, by a miracle contrary to the order of nature, then the account of the sea going back by the natural cause of a strong east wind, until it became dry land, must be false; in short, both accounts cannot be true. And, as it is impossible for God to be the author of falsehood, the bible cannot be a book of inspiration, nor of divine proceedings; but a compilation of fabulous stories, imposture, effusions of enthusiasm mixed with historical events, and with the pious sentiments and writings of religious men; for such
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there always have been in all ages and nations under heaven.

Mankind have invented many systems of religion ; but there never was, nor never can be more than one religion, and but one way of obtaining it, which is, by withdrawing the affections from all worldly objects as man's chief good and source of happiness, and placing them on spiritual and heavenly objects, and by unreserved, faithful, and cheerful obedience to all the convictions of the divine law, which is established in human intelligence, with ardent desires and sincere exertions, to bring every thought, word, action, disposition and feeling, into a happy conformity to the imitable perfections and will of God. This is genuine, vital, saving religion, acknowledged by all mankind, and beside it, there is no other; and the divine principles which produce it (when improved by men as moral agents) are

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implanted in human nature universally, and without which there could be no religion in the world. Men, therefore, deceive themselves, when they attribute their virtue, religion, and hopes of future happiness, to an unnatural system.

All external mediums, or systems of religion, are human, designed to unite and form mankind into religious communities, and ought to be founded on, and agreeably to, the internal medium which God has manifested in the intelligence of man ; which principally consist in the divine law, reason, and the understanding. This divine medium of religion, virtue, and of all moral good, which every individual is in possession of, has been perverted by the fabricators of systems to the great embarrassment and oppression of the rational power of the moral world ; very similar
to

to the evil effects produced by the perversion of first principles, in forming constitutions and systems of civil government. Pretended miracles, supernatural communications, dreams, visions and dogmas, which contain no rational principle whatever, are made the foundation of the Christian system ; which, like an unprincipled tyrant, spurns the test of rational investigation, and demands a blind, implicit confidence ; consequently, the Christian system, with respect to its foundation, can afford no light nor rational information to those who believe in it, and their faith must be merely nominal, since it does not originate in the understanding, but in ignorance. The impostorous system has been so adorned with truths from the natural and divine source of Religion, that men who have embraced the system, and experienced the happy effects of those truths, became

came so prejudiced in its favour as to render it almost impossible for them to discover the deception, or behold the deformed imposture, hid under the lovely appearance of truth, and the beauties of religion.

CHAPTER VIII.

*MOSES.*—PART SECOND.

WE have now to view the conduct of Moses in the wilderness, on the other side of the Red Sea, where we find him ridiculously endeavouring to govern the people, who were about six hundred thousand in number, exclusive of children, without the least assistance, even in hearing their smallest complaints. Whilst he was thus occupied, Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, paid him a visit. "And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, what is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning until evening?—the thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear
M 2 away,

away, both thou and this people that is with thee, for the thing is too heavy for thee ; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel.” “ So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.”* From these circumstances it is clearly seen, that Moses, as a ruler of the people, was not appointed and inspired by the Almighty, otherwise he could not have stood in need of the counsel of a Pagan priest ; unless it can be made appear that the heathen was more inspired than Moses, or that inspiration is no security for prudence and good sense ; neither of which, it is presumed, will be contended for by the advocates of Moses and of Christianity ; it is, however, very strange, that Moses, who, but a little before, was to Aaron instead of God, † should, without

* Exod. ch xviii. ver. 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

† Exod. chap. iv. ver. 16.

without any cause being assigned, or appearing, suddenly become a mere man, and inferior to a heathen in point of understanding. Let it not be supposed that Moses was as ignorant as his conduct indicates, but rather that his impracticable plan of government, was the effect of unbounded ambition, and jealous fear of letting any one share the power he possessed.

His character as a law-giver, was inhuman, unjust, and exceedingly wicked. Who can read the following law, said by him to be given by the Almighty, and not be convinced of the imposture? “And if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his money.”* This law placed such of the poor and needy part of mankind

* Exod. xxi. ver. 20, 21.

mankind as became servants, on a level with the brute creation ; giving the rich, however cruel, unjust and tyrannical, a power over their servants, so nearly equal to that which they exercised over their herds, as scarcely to admit of distinction. The master was to be punished if the servant die under his hand ; but what kind or degree of punishment was to be inflicted, the law does not express, and was left to the inhuman tyrants to determine : and, as the law considered servants in common with the beasts of the field, to be their master's money, the punishment would have been so inconsiderable, as to render it of little or no consequence to the master ; whether his servant died under his hand, or a day or two after ; but had a man been determined to kill his servant, and avoid any kind of punishment, the nefarious purpose could easily have been accomplished. The law was pointedly
calculated

calculated to gratify the most vindictive disposition, and put it in the power of the most abandoned character, after employing his servant in acts of villainy, to take his life, previous to the expiration of his servitude, to prevent an exposure of his infamy. Man is placed in this probationary state, to be qualified for another, and as the work is great, and requires much knowledge and experience, sixty years and upwards are given to make preparation for the awful and important change. Nothing, then, but the welfare of society, can justify the depriving a man of life; the law, therefore, that gives one man power over the life of another, is hostile to the order and design of creation, and cannot be of God. The law was not only inhuman and contrary to the order of God, but inconsistent with the following law, said to be given by the same authority, “If thou buy an Hebrew servant,

servant, six years he shall serve, and on the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.”* According to this law, which was of equal authority with the former, a servant’s life could not be the “money” or property of his master; six years service was all that could be purchased, consequently to deprive a servant wilfully of life, or by inhuman treatment, would be a violation of this law, and manifest the greatest injustice and tyranny. To conjecture that either of those laws was falsely translated, would invalidate both, for they are in the same chapter, and doubtless translated or written by the same person, their authority the same, and must stand or fall together.

That part of the conduct of Moses, which comes next under consideration, may be seen in the thirty second chapter

* Exod. xxi. ver. 3.

ter of Exodus ; in which he is represented pleading, and interceding with the Almighty for the people ; who, on an account of their idolatry, God had determined to consume. He, however, overcame the purpose of God, “and the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” But alas ! the inspired, meek man, turned and went down from the mount, and “stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the Lord’s side ?—let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out, from gate to gate, through the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses ; and there fell of the
people

people that day, about three thousand men.” Did the tremendous falsehood he uttered, in saying that God commanded the people to be slain, and the massacre that followed, characterise the meek, inspired man? If the people sinned, and God had remitted the punishment he thought to inflict, did it become a meek inspired man to oppose the decision of the Almighty? a decision too, which he himself appears to have hypocritically obtained. Some may conjecture that Moses was unacquainted with the magnitude of their offence, when, by expostulation, prayer and supplication, he obtained a remission of the evil which God thought to do unto his people; and that when he returned to the camp, and saw the molten calf, and that Aaron had made the people naked (that is to say, had stript them of the jewels of gold, which they had spoiled the Egyptians of) that
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the meek man's "anger waxed hot," and he resolved to inflict that evil on them, which he through ignorance had prevailed on God to repent of and remit. This palliation, perhaps the best that can be offered, cannot be admitted, for the two following reasons : First, because it cannot be supposed, that God would make void his purpose, on account of the interposition of any man, much less of one ignorant of the cause thereof. The second reason is, because God had given Moses a circumstantial account of the full extent of their wickedness, previous to his intercession for them ;* these reasons would prove such a conjecture entirely groundless. It appears impossible to clear Moses of the crimes of falsehood, imposture and homicide, unless it is proved that the story has been altogether misrepresented by fabulous tradition,

* Exodus, chap. xxxii. ver. 8.

tion, and collected as real history by some ignorant person, who did not see the falsehood and absurdity it contained; which proof, the advocates for the inspiration of the bible, will probably not take the trouble to produce.

There is another circumstance connected with this story, that should not be omitted, and is as follows. Aaron informed Moses, that he said unto them, “whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off; so they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf,”* which was a very miraculous event, and only to be effected by a power, in appearance, not inferior to Omnipotence. To this, the advocates of imposture will probably answer, that God knowing them to be in a state of incorrigible wickedness, gave them up to their own desires, and permitted a devil to perform the miracle,
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* Exodus, ch. xxxii. ver. 24.

to fill up the measure of their iniquity, and render them fit objects of his consuming vengeance. Should any seeming plausibility appear in such a conjecture, it will vanish under the following considerations. Had God determined to destroy the people on account of their incorrigibleness, and to that end had permitted an act of a devil, inapplicable to any other purpose, the angelic host could not have influenced him to alter his determination, much less a Moses, who stood in need of the instruction of a Pagan, and who was capable of uttering a most horrid, and blasphemous falsehood in the face of heaven. The *man* is considered weak, who, after forming good resolutions, relinquishes them through persuasion; and shall presumptuous imposture be permitted to put God on a level with erring mortals? The miracle was performed agreeably to their wishes, and
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how were they to know that it was the effect of an evil power, and permitted by God, for the purposes assigned in the conjecture? They were taught to believe in one God only, and the doctrine of a devil had not been heard of for ages after their time. They must therefore have considered the miracle as wrought by the Almighty, which could only tend to destroy their confidence in Moses, and in whatever he had communicated to them.

Of the numerous, fabulous and absurd stories that have obtained the confidence of the ignorant in every age of the world, there are few, perhaps, that have not originated in some real occurrence. It is therefore highly probable, that there was such a man as Moses, that he was taken into Pharaoh's hospitable family, and liberally educated; that he became ungrateful and ambitious, and as a means of gratifying his
thirst

thirst for power, endeavoured to gain the confidence of his countrymen, and render himself popular among them. To this end he killed the Egyptian, but finding his conduct disapproved of by his countrymen, and his life in imminent danger, fled for safety to the land of Midian, where he married the daughter of a Priest; and becoming acquainted with the wonder-working power of superstition, resolved, on hearing that the king, and all who sought his life, were dead, to make a second attempt, on supernatural ground, and on the pretended authority of God; and found that which he could not effect by natural means, was with ease accomplished by the aid of supernatural imposture, and the wild-fire of blind enthusiasm. It is also probable, that he induced the Hebrews to believe, that God had commanded them to slay the Egyptians at the dead hour of the night, and plunder

them of their jewels and raiment, (which were the only articles they could carry off with convenience and expedition) and then fly to a distant country, and as the chosen people of God, become a free and independent nation. Should it be objected, that the people could not have been induced to believe such cruelty and injustice to be authorised by God, the objection will be instantly removed by a consideration of the holy wars, massacres and persecutions which have taken place under the Jewish, Christian, and it may be added, without the least disparagement to either, Mahometan dispensations, or systems of imposture. It is likewise probable, that Moses did separate the tribe of Levi from the people, under the pretence of attending on the priests, the ark, the tabernacle, and the numerous offerings that the people were compelled to make, through the means of dreadful threats,
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and their superstitious fears of being cut off for the neglect of any ordinance. Moses might think proper to impose, and call a command of God. The tribe of Levi being the twelfth part of the nation, were entirely supported by offerings, and served as a standing army under the command of Moses, to awe the people into submission to the most oppressive measures.

Something of this kind it is likely had caused murmurings and expressions of resentment among the people, of which Moses, that scourge of mankind, being informed, sent his armed assassins into their camp, perhaps in the night (for it must be supposed, the people had something else to do in the day-time than lounging in their tents, as they had not only themselves, but also Moses, the priests, and tribe of Levi, to provide for) and slew about three thousand of those deluded and unfortunate men,

men, who fled with him from the land of Egypt.

From the above particular and faithful enquiry into the character and conduct of Moses, no doubt can remain of the impropriety of considering him a meek and inspired man ; but that he was, as is clearly shewn, a murderer, impostor, robber, and a tyrant.

CHAPTER IX.

*CONCUBINE, &c.*

WITH respect to the character and conduct of the nation, after the death of Moses and Aaron, when the tribes had separated, and taken possession of their respective portions of the country, (the predecessors and rightful owners of which, they had plundered and destroyed) the account next to be considered contains a complete representation, leaving not the shadow of doubt of their acting under the influence of imposture, superstition and enthusiasm, just as Christians and Mahometans have done, and are still doing, as far as the enlightened, civilized state of the world will admit of. Witness, their intolerance and horrid crusades in former ages, and the extravagant

agant and ridiculous conduct of those ignorant, enthusiastic persons, who call themselves the only true ministers and people of God, even in the present enlightened age. How exceedingly characteristic of enthusiasm it is, to hear a man before a congregation, assembled to be rationally instructed in the principles and knowledge of truth, virtue and religion, cry out in a fit of enthusiastic intoxication, "He is come ! he is come ! the Saviour of the world is come ! sinner open your heart, let the Son of God enter ; he will bind the strong man armed ; he will cast out the devil, and set your ransomed soul at liberty to serve the living God." This is the rant of enthusiasm and doctrine of imposture, it is not reducible to any moral principle, or good purpose whatever ; it cannot therefore enlighten or convey instruction to the mind, it cannot strengthen the intellectual powers
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of man, and give him fortitude to bear the trials and adversities inseparable from a probationary state.

The account above alluded to, may be seen in the xix. xx. and xxi. chapters of Judges, which states that a Levite had a concubine of a meretricious character, who eloped from him and went to her father ; that he went thither and had her restored to him ; that on his way home, he arrived in the evening at Gibeah, a city inhabited by Benjamites, and sat down in the street, there being no man that would give him lodging. However, it so happened, that an old man took him into his house, which was soon beset by men of the city, who commanded the old man to bring forth the stranger, that they might know him ; and he said unto them, “ Behold ! here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine ; them I will bring out, and humble ye
them,

them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you; but unto this man, do not so vile a thing. But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them: and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning; and, when the day began to spring, they let her go.”* And her lord rose up in the morning to go his way; and behold, the woman, his concubine, was dead at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the thresh-hold. He took her up upon an ass, and gat him unto his place, where he divided her into twelve pieces, and sent them into all the coasts of Israel; which brought

* We are informed that the old man offered his daughter and the Levite's concubine to the Benjamites, in order to save the Levite from their base outrage, but that the men would not hearken unto him: and then, in direct contradiction, that they received the concubine from the hands of the Levite himself! As a drop, compared to the ocean, so is this absurdity to the mass of falsehoods and fabulous nonsense to which it belongs.

brought together of the tribes of Israel, four hundred thousand footmen that drew the sword. And, having resolved on war, they asked counsel of God, and enquired which of their tribes should go up first to the battle against the Benjamites? And the Lord said Judah should go up first. And there fell of the Israelites the first day, twenty-two thousand men. Again they enquired of the Lord, and were commanded to renew the battle; and there fell of the Israelites the second day, eighteen thousand men. And they enquired if again they should go out to battle? and the Lord said, go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. Then on the third day, the Israelites formed ambuscades round about Gibeah, and went up against the Benjamites as at other times, and when they were drawn from their city, the men of Israel rose from their places of concealment, and

inclosed the Benjamites round about ; they set fire to their city, and smote all the inhabitants with the edge of the sword ; and there fell of the Benjamites that day, twenty-five thousand one hundred men. The whole tribe was cut off, except six hundred men, who fled to the wilderness and abode in the rock Rimmon, four months. The men of Israel also smote the men of every city, and the beasts, and set on fire all the cities that they came to.

They then lamented before the Lord, that there was a tribe cut off from Israel, for they had sworn by the Lord, that none of them should give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. They also made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the Lord to Mizpeh, saying he shall surely be put to death. And they said how shall we do for wives for them that remain of Benjamin ; seeing we have sworn by the Lord

Lord that we will not give them of our daughters to wives ? And they said, which one is there of the tribe of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the Lord ? and behold there came none to the camp from Jabesh-Gilead. And the congregation sent thither, twelve thousand men, and commanded them to smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead with the sword, with the women and children, and utterly destroy every male, and every woman that had lain with man. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male ; and gave them to the Benjamites for wives. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain ? Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh, yearly, on the east side of the high-way..... and they commanded the Benjamites to go
and

and lie in wait in the vineyards ; and if the daughters of Shiloh came out to dance, to catch every man his wife, and go to the land of Benjamin.

In this account the Israelites are represented as acting under the immediate direction of God ; but in no instance does the inspiration or miraculous interposition of God appear. If the tribe of Benjamin merited punishment, and God had commanded the Israelites to wage war against them, would he have permitted forty thousand of the Israelites to fall by the sword of the offending tribe, on the two first days of battle, their whole force being little more than half the number of the slain ; and on the third day conquer them by stratagem ? It is obvious, either that God took no part in their quarrel, out of the established order of nature, or, that he resolved to punish the innocent more severely than the guilty ; for there fell
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of the tribe of Benjamin, twenty-five thousand, one hundred ; but of the tribes of Israel, forty thousand and thirty men were slain.

It is strange, that reasonable beings should be so regardless of the high importance of consistency, and the propriety of their faith, as to believe God the author of those horrid scenes of slaughter and of ambuscades, the mere stratagem of weakness and cowardice. But can any one hesitate to reject the idea of God's authorising the destruction of Jabesh-Gilead ? If the men of that tribe deserved death, for not going up to Mizpeh, in order to join in the war against Benjamin, could that justify the massacre of all the women and children, except the young women who had not lain with man ? And what was the cause of this exception of young women ?—were the tender offspring, and infants in their mothers' arms, less

innocent than they ? Ye, who boast of a supernatural portion of the spirit of God, by which you say the things of God are made known to you, can you inform us ?—you decline the task, and think to apologize for your preposterous credulity, by calling all such apparent absurdities, unsearchable mysteries. It is therefore obvious, that with all your supernatural wisdom, and gifts, you know no more of your Bible, than those who justly consider it a shameful jumble of historical facts, fabulous tradition, natural religion, and imposture.

It is certain that every effect has its cause, and that whatever happens in nature, man is privileged to investigate, and form an opinion of, according to the best of his understanding. It appears then, from the above account, that tyranny, superstition, persecution and policy, were the principle motives that influenced the conduct of the Israelites.

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It was the most sanguinary tyranny that caused the cities of the Benjamites to be set on fire, and all the inhabitants to be destroyed. It was the intolerant, persecuting spirit of superstition, that caused the tribe of Jabesh-Gilead to be cut off for not going “up to the Lord.” It was the policy of consummate wickedness that influenced the Israelites in their determination to destroy the mothers and children of Jabesh-Gilead. They well knew, had they been spared, that nothing was to be expected from the widows of those they had murdered, but an invincible enmity and abhorrence; that an account of their infamy would be handed down, from one generation to another, and that a day of dreadful retribution might arrive. They also knew, if they saved the children, that the expence and trouble of raising them, would devolve on themselves; which would have been an act of humanity

manity that their superstitious, intolerant hearts were incapable of. The young women, from whom no danger, trouble or expence was to be apprehended, they saved, and gave to the remnant of Benjamin for wives. But two hundred of the tribe being yet unprovided for, were accommodated by kidnapping the daughters of a neighbouring tribe ; a measure, devised and commanded by the elders of the congregation of Israel. If there ever was a time when such conduct was just, there must since have been a great change in the moral system, in the nature of man, and in God himself ; for such conduct in the present age of the world, would be condemned as a flagrant violation of all laws, human and divine.

There is an instance of gross hypocrisy and inconsistency in the account under consideration, that ought not to pass unnoticed. Four months had elapsed

sed after the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, when the Israelites pretended to repent before the Lord of what they had done by his command, and to be deeply concerned on account of a tribe being cut off from Israel. And they, having sworn, not to give their daughters to Benjamin, appear to have been at a loss how to procure wives for them, and restore the tribe to their nation. When suddenly, they seem to have recollected a great oath they had made concerning him that came not up to the Lord, and after the lapse of four months, discovered that there came none to the camp, from Jabesh-Gilead. Whereupon they sent twelve thousand chosen men, with orders to destroy Jabesh-Gilead, another of the tribes of Israel. This will stand as an unquestionable proof of the inconsistency and hypocrisy of the rulers of Israel, in pretending to repent before the Lord, that there was

a tribe cut off from Israel, and then in the most unjust, inhuman, persecuting manner, deprive the nation of another.

A faithful representation has been given of the conduct and apparent motives of the Israelites, with respect to the above account. And is this the nation that pretended to enjoy the partial respect of an impartial God, and considered even to the present day, by those who are blinded by prejudice, interest, superstition, or enthusiasm, to have been the chosen people, and peculiar favorites of heaven. By that nation, the beneficent Parent of the universe is represented as regardless of the preservation of every other part of the human race; authorising them to destroy the inhabitants of extensive countries, and possess themselves of those fields they never cultivated, and of those vineyards, flocks and herds, which they neither planted nor raised.

Is it possible that any man can consider these things, and be so unmindful of the respect due to himself as a rational being, and reverence to the *glorious Majesty of Heaven*, as to attribute such unparalleled wickedness to God.

Had it been possible to convey to the human mind, consistent with a state of probation, stronger proof of the existence of the Supreme Being, of the nature of his attributes, of his will concerning man, of the immortality of the soul, and of the happy consequences of a virtuous life, both in this world and the next, than had already been manifested in nature, and it had pleased God to make choice of a nation, as the means of accomplishing such gracious purposes, would he have authorised conduct subversive of those very objects intended to be effected thereby? conduct subversive of love, mercy and justice, and of all order. On the contrary,
would

would not a people thus chosen, and acting under the immediate direction of God, have been merciful, inoffensive, of amiable conciliatory manners, exemplary in their conduct, and worthy the praise and imitation of all men. Although this is what might reasonably be expected from supernatural means, appointed by the Almighty for the promotion of religion ; yet it is an absurd idea, absolutely inconsistent, and hostile to a probationary state, in which the will and affections of the soul are to act with freedom, uninfluenced by the absolute certainty of supernatural communications, and in which the love and attainment of piety and virtue are the sublime qualifications that fit the soul for heaven.

Religion is founded on the divine law, the innate sense of good and evil which God has established in human nature, admirably suited to man's present state, and

and a most striking manifestation of the infinite wisdom, power and goodness of God, against whose internal law man cannot transgress without feeling himself wounded, guilty and degraded, nor without a conscious violation of the will of God, and of his own understanding. He knows that vice renders him unhappy in this life, and has a rational conviction, that without virtue he cannot be happy in the next. These are the strongest inducements to virtue and piety that can possibly exist, and are derived to every man immediately from God; but impostors have deceived mankind, and cause them to attribute to their invented mysteries and supernatural communications, what they have in reality received from God in the order of nature. The law of God and the principles of all knowledge necessary for man's present welfare and eternal happiness, are essential parts of his intelligence,

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gence, and it is by the faithful improvement of them, that men become wise, virtuous and happy. In the public and private exercise of the divine principles implanted in man, the rational and pure worship of God consists; and it is by uniting the sublime and heavenly precepts and doctrines, that naturally flow from the internal source of all moral good, virtue and religion, with imposture, that has disguised the artifice, and given it importance with the ignorant and superstitious, who are never taught to consider or understand the powers of the human mind; but on the contrary, are diverted from that most important concern, by the imposition of absurd doctrines, founded on miracles and mysteries, repugnant to reason, and the eternal, unchangeable attributes and laws of God; which, instead of conveying knowledge to the understanding, mock the intelligence of man, and confound

found his reason. Reason is to the soul, what the eye is to the body :— without bodily sight we grope in utter darkness, or are led by others we know not whither.) The mind, likewise, when deprived of the free use of reason, is in profound darkness with respect to those objects from which that heavenly ray of celestial light is shut out.) Impostors have availed themselves of this solemn truth, and found means to cause mankind to renounce their reason with respect to their religious faith, and blindly and most absurdly profess a firm belief in things, the truth or falsehood of which, they are most artfully and wickedly deprived of the means of discovering. Thus the mind is enslaved, the principles of moral agency retarded in their operations, and man made the easy victim of ambition and imposture.

CHAPTER X.

OBSERVATIONS.

TRUTH has arrested falsehood, and its advocates render themselves ridiculous in attempting to rescue it ; one who knows the bible cannot stand the test of reason, will tell you that the man who believes nothing but what he can comprehend, worships his own understanding and not God ; that, what the bible contains is spiritual, and too sublime for man's perverted reason to investigate, or depraved understanding to comprehend, and that reason (the divinity in human nature which directs the soul to heaven) must be rejected as the agent of a devil, and enemy of God and man ; that then, and not till then, can man receive the gift of faith, and the spirit of God, to enlighten his understanding,

derstanding, and make known the mysteries of God, recorded in the bible, which are hid from unbelievers. This doctrine was artfully devised by crafty priests, in order to silence reason and baffle common sense, that they might securely impose upon the world, and render mankind subservient to their pleasure. Gross falsehood appears on the face of it ; for, if men are to believe things unnatural, absurd, and repugnant to common sense, then is reason, the only source of light to the understanding and judgment, of no use ; nor can man refuse his assent to any thing however false, when it is required under the mask of mysterious sanctity. Time also has lent its aid, and the imposture stands self-detected ; more than eighteen hundred years have elapsed since the doctrine was first introduced, and believers, to this day, know no more of its mysteries than unbelievers,

who, they say, are blind, and void of all spiritual discernment or knowledge of them. Christians, do you not see yourselves the dupes of imposture? if you do not, surely you are not only spiritually blind, as you cannot understand the mysteries of the bible; but rationally blind also, as you persist in adhering to palpable absurdities. Bigotry, superstition and prejudice, prevent you from seeing this truth; but reason, experience and common sense, but above all, duty and reverence for God, will not permit unbelievers to credit your falsehoods. So inconsistent are those deluded advocates of artifice, that you may hear them in direct contradiction to their doctrine, intoxicated with enthusiasm, cry out in the language of Doctor Young; "Believe, and shew the reason of a man; believe, and taste the pleasures of a God; by reason's wounds your faith can only die." This

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is the rant and exultation of enthusiasm ; for it must be confessed, that had the Doctor have said, believe, and reject the reason of a man, believe, and taste the pleasures of enthusiasm, by reason's wounds your faith can only live, he would have said the truth, or at least have been consistent with the Christian doctrine.

Man is not spiritually dead, neither is he deaf nor blind, as the Christian doctrine represents him to be : he has a grateful sense of the kind providence of God, and his soul is alive to the feelings of humanity, and principles of virtue and piety, and has also the will and power to practise them. He enjoys the conscious reward of virtue here, and the firm assurance of happiness hereafter ; and all this while improving his nature by obedience to the divine internal law, in the free and faithful use of reason, not by rejecting it, but as
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the Christian doctrine says, while children of the devil, led captive by him at his will ; a doctrine, the falsehood of which is in the power of every man experimentally to prove. Man also hears the voice of reason and of conscience, which is the voice of his God, and can discern truth from falsehood ; but the enlightened, upright man is dead to the spirit of imposture, he is deaf to the voice of deceit, and cannot see truth, the fair image of heaven, in the face of falsehood, the foul offspring of fraud and oppression. This is the experience of every one that is free from prejudice, bigotry and superstition, and enlightened by the free exercise of reason, living at the same time a virtuous life ; for it is impossible to come to the certain knowledge of any truth from a speculative view, or while the mind is perverted by the pursuit of improper objects.

Religion is founded on the immutable and eternal basis of reason, and it is the privilege and duty of man, to be governed by its dictates. Whatever is unnatural and inconsistent with the moral system, and attributes of God, is the work of iniquity, disowned by the Almighty in his providence, in his established laws, and unchangeable order of nature. Was a rational system of religion, founded on the manifestations of God established, (an event anticipated by millions) the wisdom, virtue and fortitude of its possessors, would evince the superiority of a system founded on reason, that enlightens the understanding, to those founded on mysteries, no less absurd than incomprehensible, which can only serve to embarrass the mind, obscure truth, and keep mankind in ignorance. If there is any truth in Christianity, none within the sound of its doctrine, and not within

within its pale, far less those that reject it as false, have power to resist the temptations of the Christians' devil ; they are led captive by him at his will, and every desire, thought, word and action are governed by him, and that continually ; in a word, they are dead to all good, and alive only to evil ; yea, the devil is their father until converted to Christianity. But as to the right way of conversion, they are left in profound darkness, and with the best desires, (according to sectarians) may miss the way, and be damned at last. One hundred different ways prescribed by as many different sects of Christians, when one only can be right, leaves but a poor chance, and presents a discouraging prospect to those who wish to become religious. It is held most firmly by the Mother Church, that the Holy Ghost giveth life to no one without her pale ; and all her numerous,

ous dissentious offspring have followed her example in a greater or less degree.

If mankind are under the absolute dominion of a devil, and the way to escape from him rendered so difficult and uncertain by the inspired expounders of Christianity, human laws are very cruel and unjust, in punishing men with severity for crimes, which they are compelled to commit by the irresistible power of a devil ; for until the true effectual call is received, (there being false ineffectual calls too, according to some expounders) man cannot be considered a moral agent, nor accountable for his actions. Where is the man to be found, that cannot bear testimony to the falsehood of this doctrine of Christianity ? Who, from the earliest period of his remembrance, cannot recollect innumerable instances of having good desires, good thoughts, good resolutions, and
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of performing good actions ? Who, has not, since the maturity of his understanding, successfully resisted many evil desires, and happily overcame powerful temptations or incitements to transgress the internal law of God, by the natural power given to every moral agent ? But those evil desires, temptations or incitements did not originate in the influence of a devil, but in the perversion of things, good in themselves, and in trying circumstances inseparable from a state of trial, (for which this world is evidently designed) essential to the existence of moral agents, and to the perfection of human nature. If facts are here justly represented, of which every one¹ may determine from his own experience, then is the doctrine of a devil, of the fall of man, and of a Son of God, absolutely false, and Christianity nothing more than a fabricated, human system.

Although

Although genuine religion is not yet rescued from the adulterous systems of imposture and superstition, and presented to the world in her native charms and dignity, yet we have reason to believe that there are many virtuous and pious men, who experimentally know that the internal system of God is the only source of religion, and that all external systems which are human, ought to be formed agreeably thereto.

The account of the late Nathaniel H. White, Esq. is a striking and sublime illustration of the subject, of which the following is an extract. “To an intellect, vigorous and acute, was added an integrity, which no temptation could seduce, no fear could overpower. This honesty of mind, which seemed to pervade every word and action of his life, never forsook him, and would frequently display itself with peculiar vivacity in the minutest circumstances of

his conduct. His language was on all occasions, a pure and perfect transcript of thought. No considerations of politeness or friendship, could reconcile him to so much as a momentary disguise of his feelings, when a sense of duty prompted him to reveal them. Could any austere and misanthropic bigot have witnessed some of the last hours of Mr. White ; could he have been at his bed side at that awfully critical moment, when death approached ; could he then have seen those celestial smiles, which gave to his face an expression of divine beauty ; could he have heard him, in a voice of heavenly composure, charge his weeping friends to dry their tears, for he was happy ; such a spectacle might have mitigated his zeal for the defence of those mysterious and incomprehensible ideas which scoff at philosophy, which slander morality, which are at war with nature ;

nature ; in a word, which presumptuously separate the closest, the most coherent combinations of reason, and perplex and intercloud the purest and brightest systems of the understanding.”

One twentieth part of the evidence already produced against the truth of the bible and the Christian system, as revelation from God, would be sufficient to condemn, before a judiciary tribunal any cause whatever, that would come within the limits of human comprehension ; and nothing can possibly save the Bible and Christian system from being condemned as impositions, but positive proof that they were not designed by the Almighty to be understood by man, but that they were revealed from heaven for the purpose of confounding his reason and understanding. We leave the advocates of the Bible and of the Christian

tian system to adduce this proof if they can, or torture their imaginations for conjectures, and proceed in the examination.

CHAPTER XI.

*ISRAEL NUMBERED.*

IN Exodus, thirtieth chapter, eleventh and twelfth verses, it is thus written. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, when thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord.”* It is obvious, according to this passage, that to number the Israelites could be no offence, as it was mentioned with approbation by the Almighty ; but behold the sad reverse. In 1st. Chronicles, twenty-first chapter, first, seventh, and fourteenth verses, it is as follows ;—“And Satan stood up against Israel, and

* The ransom required was half a shekel of money.
Exodus, chap. xxx. ver. 16.

and provoked David to number Israel. And God was displeased with the thing ; therefore he smote Israel. The Lord sent pestilence upon Israel : and there fell of Israel, seventy thousand men.” It is admirable to see with what dexterity those inspired Bible makers can change the nature of things, and even God himself. At one time numbering the people, when it answered the purposes of the priests, was proper and commendable ; at another time, when numbered contrary to their schemes, or without their consent, it was a horrid sin against God. But if it was a sin to number Israel, and their number was taken by order of David their king ; by whom was the sin committed ?—by the king, who had power to have his order executed, or by the people who had no power to prevent it ? surely, if in this case sin was committed, it could not be by the people,

ple, but by the king. Then why was the innocent people punished, and their guilty king suffered to escape? This passage is not only hostile to that which precedes it, and to justice, but at war also, with the following one from the same authority. "The fathers shall not suffer for the sins of the children, neither shall the children suffer for the sins of the fathers, but every man shall suffer for his own sins." Here are three passages quoted from the Bible, which successively and pointedly contradict each other, and clearly demonstrate the folly and absurdity of believing God their author. Ye infatuated priests and advocates of imposture, how long will you wear the garb of truth, and persecute her cause? You have heretofore been considered the mere dupes of artifice; but the world will no longer attribute your attempts to support obvious falsehood, to blind credulity,

lity, but to the prostitution of every virtuous rational principle, to the influence and love of that wealth and power which you derive from your adulterous and insincere services.

CHAPTER XII.

*PROPHECY.*

WITH respect to prophecies, they are of the nature of supernatural communications, which in the foregoing and succeeding parts of this work, are demonstrated to be inconsistent with a probationary state, with moral agency, subversive of virtue, of the free voluntary worship of God, and of every affection necessary to qualify the soul for heaven. These are principles established by the Almighty, from which it is demonstrable that all accounts of supernatural communications said to be made to the world, through the instrumentality of man, are false.

As to the modes of fulfilling pretended prophecies, they are scarcely worth noticing, the fulfilment might have been fabricated

fabricated as well as the prophecies, or the fabricators might have realized their fraud by bringing forward a real victim as the son of God, and preparing him for a sacrifice to imposture. But it is more than probable that the unpopular doctrine of some religious enthusiastic person, had cost him his life; and that false rumor and misrepresentations respecting him, were the ground of the fabulous story of a crucified Son of God, on which, imposture, superstition and enthusiasm, fabricated the doctrine of Christianity. To prove the divinity of this imaginary God, and founder of a new system of religion, it was natural for its proselytes to convert into prophecy of him, every allegory, allusion, or presage, however foreign to their purpose, that were not too securely guarded against perversion, by a close connection, and exclusive application to their subjects. To attach adequate importance

tance to this ambassador from heaven, and to the catastrophe that ensued, a childish story of a reptile is rummaged up, which was invented by some foolish inquirer after the original cause of sin, and death ; not knowing that a moral agent, in a state of trial, has power to pervert the blessings of God, and in so doing commit sin ; and ignorant also of the necessity of the death of the mortal body, that the soul after the object of its probation is accomplished, may rest with God, and enjoy the fruits of its pious labours. A mere serpent, however, could not answer the purpose ; imagination therefore went to work, and finally after four thousand years had elapsed, it was miraculously discovered, that a devil had entered into the serpent, who caused the first man to sin, for which sin all mankind were damned before they had entered their state of probation, or had committed the least offence. Thus

impostors

imposters and fanatics make God to damn his innocent creatures, to procure business for their ambassador, the mere creature of fable, artifice, and superstition.

When the gross abominable impositions that were practised by priests in the first establishment of Christianity, and for ages afterwards, are considered, we shall cease to wonder at imposture, and of the facility of its success in those times, when superstition and darkness enveloped the nation. The people were led by their priests, nor had they any other means of information ; there was but one book in the nation, and that in the hands of their priests, so that they could, without the least difficulty, or danger of detection, write in it whatever they pleased. This book, we are informed in 2nd. Kings, twenty second chapter, also in 2nd. Chronicles, thirty fourth chapter, was found by
Hilkiah

Hilkiah the high priest, in the house of the Lord, in the reign of Josiah, King of Judah, who was eight years old when he began to reign, and eighteen when the book was said to be found. The high priest gave the book to Shaphan the scribe, who read it before the king ; and the king rent his clothes, and commanded Hilkiah the high priest, Shaphan the scribe, Alikam the son of Shaphan, and two others, to enquire of the Lord concerning the words of the book. And they went unto Huldah, the prophetess, who dwelt in Jerusalem in the college ; and they communed with her, and received from her the answer of the Lord, with which they returned to the king. Then the king assembled all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, both small and great ; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the

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house of the Lord. And all the people stood to the covenant. Then followed a revolution of the priesthood in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem ; they slew the priests upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them. Now is there not good reason to conclude, that this book, said to be found in the house of the Lord, was fabricated by the high priest and the scribe, and imposed upon their young, inexperienced king, as a covenant and law revealed of God, in order to revolutionize the nation. The generation that existed at the time of discovery, knew nothing of the book, from which it is inferable that the time of its being lost (if lost at all) must have been one hundred years at least ; and it is incredible that a book of such importance should be lost in the house of the Lord, for such a length of time. The perfect ease with which the young king might have
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been imposed on, the revolution and massacre of the priests that immediately succeeded the promulgation of the book ; are circumstances that strongly indicate a premeditated design, and impress the mind with a well grounded suspicion, that the book was devised for its accomplishment.

CHAPTER XIII.

APOCRYPHA.

TRUTH and consistency pervade the universal order of nature, and the more we know of this order, the more we admire its perfection, and adore the infinite wisdom of the glorious Author. The pure and perfect law of God is so strikingly inherent in human intelligence, and his rational, moral, internal system so manifest, that no falsehood or fraud can escape when the means of detection are properly exerted. Man is convinced of evil, when conceived in his mind, and if brought to maturity, and ushered into the world, the public mind is as competent to the detection of it, (if of a public nature) as the mind of the individual with whom it originated. So true is this observation,
that

that an error is seldom introduced into any art or science which is not discovered ; or a violation of the law of God, as it respects the temporal interest of society, that escapes with impunity ; nor can the violation of his law, against the spiritual interest of the world, elude the light and force of truth, if not opposed by the impenetrable shield of blind prejudice, or perversion of the will and affections of moral agents.

Among the numerous means of detecting fraud and imposture, respecting the Christian system of religion, is the cutting off, and rejection of a considerable number of the books of the bible, and denominating them apocryphal ; for it is obvious, they are no less entitled to confidence as written by inspiration, than those preferred and called the bible. The style of both are the same, and the subjects in several instances connected ; the words, “ Thus saith the

Lord,"—" And the word of the Lord came unto me saying," are in the apocrypha as well as in the bible ; both stand on equal ground, with respect to divine authority, and it is impossible on any just principle whatever, to reject the one and not the other ; they must stand or fall together. But behold the gross inconsistency or falsehood of the compilers of the bible ; they have assigned as the cause of their rejection of those books termed the Apocrypha, the doubtfulness of their authors ; when it is obvious they knew no more of the authors of the books they made choice of, than of those they rejected. The authority of Lord Bishop of Landaff, a distinguished advocate for the Christian system, will certainly be sufficient to prove this fact, who, in his apology for the bible, addressed to Thomas Paine, makes the following concession respecting the authors of many of the books of
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the bible. “It would indeed” says the bishop, “have been an enquiry not unworthy your notice, in many parts of your work, to have examined what was the opinion of the learned men, respecting the authors of several books of the bible, you would have found that you were in many places fighting a phantom of your own raising, and proving what was generally admitted. Very little certainty, I think, can at this time be obtained on this subject ; but that you may have some knowledge of what has been conjectured by men of judgment, I will quote to you a passage from Dr. Hartley’s observations on man. The author himself does not vouch for the truth of his observations, for he begins with a supposition.—‘I suppose then, that the pentateuch consists of the writings of Moses, put together by Samuel, with a very few additions : that the books of Joshua and Judges were, in like manner,

ner, collected by him ; and the book of Ruth, with the first part of the first book of Samuel, written by him ; that the latter part of the first book of Samuel, and the second book, were written by the prophets who succeeded Samuel, suppose Nathan and Gad ; that the books of Kings and Chronicles, are extracts from the records of the succeeding prophets, concerning their own times, and from the public genealogical tables made by Ezra ; that the books Ezra and Nehemiah, are collections of records, some written by Ezra and Nehemiah, and some by their predecessors ; that the book of Esther was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transactions there recorded, perhaps Mordecai ; the book of Job by a Jew, of an uncertain time ; the Psalms by David, and other pious persons ; the books of Proverbs and Canticles by Solomon ; the book of Ecclesiastes by Solomon,

omon, or perhaps by a Jew of later times, speaking in his person, but not with an intention to make him pass for the author.”

It is then admitted by the first authorities, and advocates for the Bible, that the books attributed to Moses, also the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes, making in all twenty-two books, rests entirely on suppositious authority ; several of them, indeed, have not the credit of being written even by supposed authors, but are abandoned, and left to shift for themselves. It is therefore certain, that the books which compose the Apocrapha, were not rejected on account of the uncertainty of their authors, but on account of their fabulous and ridiculous contents. And for the same reason, had the compilers of the Bible been consistent

consistent, and respected the attributes of God, they would have rejected their whole collection, as books written by inspiration. Stronger proof of the imposition of the Bible, no reasonable man will require, than the fabulous nonsense contained in several of its books, which the dissenters from the mother Church inconsistently, if not hypocritically, pretend to reject as productions of doubtful authority. In them we read, that sparrows muted warm dung into Tobit's eyes and blinded him. That an Angel informed Tobias, that the smoke of the heart and liver of a fish will repel a devil, or an evil spirit.—That an Angel was employed in trudging about with bags of money.—That an Angel took Habakkuk, a prophet in Jewry, by the crown, and bore him by the hair of his head, to Daniel in the lion's den, with a mess of pottage for his dinner.—That a maid had been given to seven men, who were all killed in the marriage chamber,

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by a wicked spirit that loved her ; but Tobias her eighth husband made a smoke with the heart and liver of a fish, in the marriage chamber, the smell of which caused the amorous devil to flee away. These passages ridiculous as they are, are not more absurd, but far less numerous than those contained in the books selected for the Bible ; the only difference is, that those in the Bible are generally of a more tragic, diabolical character, many of which are particularly noticed in this examination.

It is said, that the objectionable parts of the Bible, are the errors of translators ; if so, it would seem that the translators of the Bible into English, were not inspired like the seventy-two men we have an account of in Rollin's ancient history, each of whom translated the Bible from the Hebrew into Greek, in separate apartments, in seventy-two days ; and on comparing their versions together,
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not the least difference was found even in a single word. If it was necessary for these translators of the Bible to be inspired, which it certainly was if God was its author, would he not have inspired those men also, who translated it from the Hebrew or Greek into English? Certainly he would. But it is admitted God did not, and that the translators of the Bible into English, have committed errors, and rendered it in several parts objectionable. It therefore follows that God never inspired any of the translators, and consequently that he is not the author of the Bible. Had the Bible been written by inspiration, containing a law and guide for man's salvation, God would have preserved it in the world for ever free from corruption; this is a truth that can be maintained against all the sophistry in the world. For if the manifestations of God in nature, both in man, and out of man, which is unchangeable
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and eternal, and out of the power of erring and wicked men to corrupt, or devastation to destroy, are not sufficient for man's salvation, then it will follow, as sure as there is wisdom, truth, consistency and power in God, that if he inspired men to write the Bible as a law and guide for the salvation of man, that he would have preserved it free from the least alteration, corruption or error ; otherwise it could not be a certain revelation from God, and the world be dependant on fallible erring mortals for a pure law, and perfect guide for their salvation. Here, then, the business is at an end, for the learned advocates of the Bible are constrained to admit that it contains many errors, and that in several parts the sense is corrupted. Therefore, whatever may have been collected, good or bad, and put into the Bible, it is not there men has to look for the perfect immutable law and guide
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that God has given for man's salvation, but in his own heart; it is there God has deposited his divine law, the heavenly treasure, (a precious treasure indeed to them that obey it) where no power can approach to pervert or violate it, but the possessor of it himself. This is the true and only source of religion; it is natural and rational, and glorifies the attributes of God; it is this the truly religious Deist contends for, and which none but prejudiced, infatuated mortals will deny; who are so blinded as not to see, that the few general laws contained in the Bible, are but a partial transcript of the perfect law of God implanted in the hearts of all mankind, and which has been manifested in a greater or less degree, by all religious men in every age of the world, according to their advances in the arts of polished life, and the means they enjoyed of improving the rational powers of the

the mind. The imperfect copy of the law of God, in the Bible, is insufficient as a guide for man, in innumerable circumstances that occur in life ; indeed we know from experience that they are no material guide in any case whatever, particularly when man is in the greatest need ; that it is the internal principles which have been embraced, the feelings and disposition of the mind that determine the will, and guide men in all cases of a moral and religious nature. Say, ye who believe in the bible, and are truly religious ; ye, whose obedience to the internal law of God, has enabled you to subdue all things, and to regulate and bring all the powers of your mind into sweet subjection to his will, whose love of heavenly objects has raised you above the world, and placed it, in all its pomp, beneath your feet ; when adversity assailed you, and fiery trials, strong temptations, and conflicting passions

sions have wrung your agonizing soul, where did you find relief?—Was it not in your heart, while deeply engaged and attentive to what was passing there, your soul confiding in God, that deliverance came, and streams of consolation flowed from the mercy and love of God, as from a fountain, and chased away your sorrows?—This you know is the language of experience and truth, but you will not receive the salvation of God, nor give him the glory in his own way, the way of nature, but in the way that fable, imposture, superstition and enthusiasm have fabricated.

Were the impostorous parts of the bible expunged, it might then possibly have its use, as a compilation of human productions, collected without judgment or discrimination. But received as a book written by inspiration, it is difficult to conceive the extent of evil it has caused in the world, and will
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continue to produce, until rejected, and buried in oblivion, never more to confound the understanding and rational powers of man, by miracles, dreams, and visions, the source of superstition, enthusiasm and persecution, which has deluged the world in blood ; never more to set at variance the providence of God, or violate the sacred harmony of his divine attributes, nor divert the attention of man from the contemplation of the perfect law of God implanted in his heart.

Facts have been fairly stated, subjects of the last importance impartially investigated, and the result is, that the bible is nothing more than a portrait of the barbarous Jewish nation, and of mankind in their infant, simple, inexperienced state, groaning under the oppression of knavery, degraded and led astray by artifice and imposture. In that heterogeneous compilation, we be-

hold the moral law, and every principle of humanity violated by artful designing-men, who found means to induce an ignorant people, to regard their wicked, inhuman conduct, policy, and schemes, as authorised by the command of God : likewise ridiculous stories, that owe their origin to invention, and their preservation to blind superstition. The precepts of genuine piety, morality, virtue and charity, that flow from the principles God has universally implanted in human nature, are also blended with imposture in that fabrication, and used as a cloak to hide its deformity, and deceive the ignorant ; but an enlightened world, will strip imposture of its stolen ornaments, and expose it to universal contempt.

CHAPTER XIV.

HYPOCRISY.

IT is an horrid idea those men entertain, who say imposture had better remain, than, by an exposure of it, undeceive the ignorant, and interrupt the religious tranquillity of society. A sentiment more obnoxious to God, more hypocritical, more hostile to religion, more degrading and insulting to the great body of the people, is inconceivable. It shews a contemptuous indifference to the worship of God, which ought to be pure, and rationally engage all the powers of the mind ; but what purity or rationality is there in that worship which has imposture for its medium, and incomprehensible articles of faith for its doctrine ? If there are any in this enlightened age who worship God
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in this irrational manner, through invincible ignorance, they are excusable. But unprincipled hypocrites are they who see and condemn the imposture, and yet encourage the belief and practice of it, under pretence of great concern for the religious tranquillity of society. These are men that talk of systems of religion only, and are not interested in any, further then respects their mercenary views and temporal prospects; and, if not the most injurious, are the most contemptible characters in society. But these very men who can behold the moral and divine system of God dishonored, violated, defaced, and spurned in a manner out of the world, by imposture and superstition, their rights of reason and of understanding taken away, religion polluted, and not see it their duty to do any thing in defence of their spiritual and eternal interest, will, for temporal considerations, interested

interested and ambitious motives, disturb the tranquillity of society, and put the deadly weapon to their neighbour's throat. For similar causes, the heads of Church and State, will convulse the world, and deluge the earth with human blood.

Deceived, injured, insulted people, will you suffer deluded, or wicked men, many of whom you have placed high in office, in Church and State, and clothed with honor, wealth, and power, to keep you ignorant of the degraded state of your rational powers, and conspire with imposture to prevent you from enjoying the glorious and happy effects of the divine internal system. One truth, derived from that intelligent source of God, through the medium of our rational powers, will give light, knowledge and power to the mind, which a system that excludes reason, can have no pretensions to. A system
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of religion having no foundation in reason or nature, must in the nature of things be delusive, and would inevitably terminate in hypocrisy, profligacy, despair, madness or suicide, was it not for reason, which like its divine Author, operates unsolicited and imperceptibly, and saves the unconscious victim from the pernicious consequences of imposture.

CHAPTER XV.

*NON-RESISTANCE.*

THE doctrine of non-resistance, held by the society called Quakers, and by many individuals of other denominations, being founded on passages in the New-Testament, is of great importance to the world, and a proper subject for this examination. Much has been advanced in favour of, and against this doctrine, but nothing conclusive or satisfactory to the rational mind. Dogmas and inferences drawn from the perversion of first principles on the one hand, palliation and conjecture on the other, is all the proof that has been offered on this important subject. The advocates for the doctrine, remark, on the authority of the New-Testament, that the time will come, “when men shall
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beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and they shall not learn war any more"—“ For, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh ; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”—“ From whence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence even of your lusts that was in your members ?”—“ Whereas it was said of old, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Other believers in the New-Testament, who contest the doctrine, will not believe these passages mean what they say, and by the aid of conjecture, give them, what they conceive to be a rational meaning, or at least such as would better accord with their temporal interest, a consideration, which

which had it not occurred, they probably would not have doubted the plain meaning of the "sacred scriptures." But powerful interest will shake the faith of Christians, and remove their prejudices, when common sense, truth and reason are disregarded. The advocates for the doctrine of non-resistance do not stop here, they point out the wars of ambitious kings, of corrupt governments, the destruction of the lives and property of their subjects, in their iniquitous contests, and dwell largely on the wanton horrid outrages that follow the perversion of those principles and laws which God had established for the government and well being of the moral world. To these things the Christian that contests the doctrine, has nothing to offer, although his cause is just, but the mere puerility of palliatives and conjecture; representing their inspired book at variance with itself, in authorizing doctrines in direct opposition to

each other, resistance and non-resistance. He cannot, consistently with his faith, investigate truth and principles in nature, nor draw any rational inference or conclusion from them, that does not strictly agree with the bible. Thus the rational powers of a Christian are bound, and imprisoned in that book, and he has not the liberty of enjoying the beautiful order and harmony of nature, in which the wisdom of God is divinely displayed. Deluded Christians, your minds are shackled with the falsehood of imposture, and with the wild disorganizing dogmas of superstition and enthusiasm; you dare not, nay, cannot consistently with your profession, embrace the obvious truths, principles and laws, that God has naturally placed within your power. It therefore remains for a man of reason, unshackled by imposture, unbiassed by interest or prejudice, to decide the important question; and demonstrate the doctrine

doctrine of non-resistance to be hostile to the law of God, and to the spiritual and temporal interests of the world. In performing which, the unprincipled dogmas and fabrications in which they are contained, will meet the fate of the doctrine that is founded on them.

Let no one be so void of understanding as to imagine God has not formed the human mind with principles and powers capable of detecting imposture with the greatest certainty ; the contrary has been shown in many instances in this examination, and will now be shown with respect to the doctrine of non-resistance, and the above passages quoted from the New-Testament, on which the doctrine is founded.. The divine law, like God himself, is unbounded, it is given for the universal government of the world, and extends without exception to all circumstances and conditions of men.

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They that obey the law of God, from a principle of love, are the religious of mankind, who do not live in fear of, nor under the law of justice, but under the law of love, which governs the obedient will and pure affections of the good, and has for its immediate object the preparation of the soul of man for heaven, and is not satisfied with any performance unless it proceed from a due sense of duty and of love. They that do not obey the law of God from a principle of love, are the irreligious and wicked part of mankind, who live in fear of, and under the law of justice, which restrains the evil conduct of the wicked, and has for its immediate object the preservation of society in the peaceable enjoyment of life and property, that the religious and those desirous of becoming so, may not be prevented by the wicked and licentious, from meeting together for the purposes of

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of instruction, communion, and the worship of God. The law of justice cannot be dispensed with, and the man that will not support and enforce it as far as is in his power, does not do his duty to God, the world, or himself. Justice guards and protects religion ; without it the world would be in a state of universal anarchy, and it would be as impossible for man to become religious, as it would for a person tortured with excruciating bodily pain to reflect with composure on any subject. Is justice, then, so essential to the existence of virtue and religion (the attribute of God) to be abandoned by the virtuous and religious, and left to the protection of the irreligious and unjust?—No, it would be unnatural, and truth and justice revolt at the idea of such preposterous conduct ; and yet it is what the advocates of non-resistance contend for. It is hoped they will consider the subject

better, and so believe and act, as not to incur the charge of partial and inconsistent conduct, and that they will not only support and enforce justice against corruption in their own hearts, and in their own families, but in society likewise ; by the civil authorities they have, or ought to have in common with their fellow citizens appointed for the purpose. And that should any hostile power on earth invade their country, in violation of their rights, and of the sacred law of justice, they will not dastardly desert her cause, nor let their rulers fall victims to their superstitious folly. If it be objected, that as God is the only source of life, the right of depriving a human being of existence rests solely with him, that to enforce the claims of justice to the extent of actual war, the lives of men would be inevitably sacrificed, and that therefore to engage in war on any account whatever, must

must be unjust, and inconsistent with the law of God. It is answered, that man has no rights but those he has received from God ; that no right or power is withheld from him, that is essential to his preservation as a moral agent ; that with the gift of life, he has received the right to preserve and enjoy it, and that the man who violates this sacred right of his fellow creature, forfeits his own, not only to justice for the life he has taken, but also to society, with whom as a member he is unfit to exist. And when it is considered that the deprivation of life, forfeited to justice and society, may be temporal only, as criminals sentenced to death have time allowed them to repent, the punishment inflicted, if not rendered a blessing, will appear light indeed, when compared with the crime of an assassin, who sends his victim without a moment's warning, prepared or unprepared, into an awful eternity.

eternity. If, then, under the civil law, the law of preservation and of God, some crimes are so enormous and the perpetrators of them so depraved and injurious to society, that justice requires they should suffer death, shall the violators of the rights of nations, whose object is to make them the slaves of tyranny and ambition, trample on all laws human and divine with impunity, while there is power on earth sufficient to restrain and punish the oppressor? Certainly not—but let it be remembered that a people, whether in their individual or national capacity, whether in their private or public counsels and decisions, they must ever act on principles of justice, and from a due sense of duty, if they would truly sustain a religious character. The just will never act from motives of ambition, avarice, revenge, or hatred, and that which is generally termed honour, appears to them an iniquitous

tous combination of corrupt principles, and perverted sentiments, from the evil effects it daily produces, and from the character of those who profess to act under its influence ; the enlightened and truly religious, therefore, esteem nothing honourable that is inconsistent with the welfare of society, justice, reason, virtue and religion.

Ye contending nations, and ye who undertake to guide and govern them, be cautious of the motives that influence your conduct, let them be such as a virtuous, well informed mind would deem acceptable in the sight of God. Never involve your country in war, unless the cause in its nature and magnitude is such as would justify an awful appeal to arms, whatever consequences might ensue. Were these principles embraced by the nations that are peaceably disposed, there would be but little fighting

fighting in the world, unless a barbarous monster should rise up, like Moses of old, and wishing the destruction of every nation on earth but his own, induce them to believe him divinely commissioned for the purpose. But it is to be presumed, such a gross, impostorous event in the present enlightened, and in all succeeding ages, need never be dreaded.

Should it be objected, that all civil governments originate with man, their laws human, imperfect and corrupt, and under the direction of irreligious men : that therefore religious men who are subject to the spiritual law of God, are not bound to obey the inferior authority of man, contrary to the dictates of their conscience. The answer is, that civil, as well as religious governments, proceeds from the law of God, implanted in the human mind, from
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thence is derived conviction of the absolute necessity of temporal law to govern the wicked, as also spiritual law to govern the virtuous ; they are both essentially good, and all that is good is of God. So that the objection that civil governments are of human origin, is evidently unfounded. With respect to civil governments being under the direction of irreligious men, the laws human, imperfect and corrupt ; it is observed in reply, that in all establishments, civil or religious, there are among the public characters of either, men, good and bad ; and, as to human laws, which are doubtless always imperfect and oft corrupt, owing to want of experience, the imperfection of human nature, and too often to the perversion of the judgment and understanding, it is well known that these things exist both in Church and State. The principles of justice, virtue and religion

ligion are of God, but the application of them by man, in making laws, civil and religious, and in the improvement of their nature as moral agents, is human, and must in the nature of things, for ever be imperfect. The objection then is found erroneous ; but the inference which is improperly drawn from it, is correct, for men “are not bound to obey the authority” of either Church or State, “contrary to the dictates of their conscience;” or, in other words, farther than is consistent with reason and just principles : beyond which, compliance, under some circumstances, may become a matter of discretion, and prudence the best guide.

It is asked, “from whence come wars and fightings among you ? Come they not hence of your lusts ?” These are simple questions, and readily answered. It is admitted that all wars originate in
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lust, or rather ambition ; but does it follow that all who act on the defensive, act from a principle of lust or ambition ?—certainly not, for they may act from the best of principles,—of duty to God—of justice to themselves—and of love to all mankind. When a father corrects his child, is it because he is an object of hatred ?—When a member of society is punished as a warning to others, and for the general good, is it because of enmity to him ?—No ; nor does it follow that a nation is influenced by lust, malice or ambition, when they resist tyranny and oppression for the general good of the world. On the contrary it would manifest a criminal disregard for the welfare of mankind, for a nation possessing the means of defence, to submit without resistance to be enslaved by a corrupt oppressive power. And by such conduct become instrumental in the

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slavery and oppression of other nations, and in removing all prospect of deliverance or even alleviation of misery, far from the oppressed subjects of tyrants. It is justice, and not the abuse of it, that is here advocated ; those who disapprove of war when the cause is just, because corrupt governments have recourse to arms for the accomplishment of ambitious purposes, would be just as consistent in exclaiming against food and raiment, and all the blessings God has bestowed on man, temporal and spiritual, because many convert them into the greatest evils ; it is strange, that the evil consequences of things perverted, should be ascribed to their proper use, and become the cause of their rejection. It is therefore obvious, that before a man can justly refuse to obey his country's call to war, he must first prove the war unjust, or show sufficient cause for such belief.

Having

Having clearly demonstrated the doctrine of non-resistance to be unfounded and absurd, the mere visionary notion of blind superstition, some attention shall now be given to another subject, not altogether unconnected with the present one. Justice is the eternal unchangeable attribute of God, and whatever dispensations are just, must, under similar circumstances, forever remain so. But should the dispensations be reversed in their nature and principles, while the circumstances in their nature remained unchanged, the dispensations could not be just. This evident truth applied to the following changes, will shew whether they have proceeded from a perfect unchangeable God, or from the deceptious, superstitious, enthusiastic, inconsistent, changeable conduct of man, which has been witnessed in every age of the world. According to the revelation, or vision of St. John, there has been

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been war in heaven, and it was then lawful for Michael and his holy angels to fight against the devil and his angels ; but now it is unlawful for good men to engage in war on earth, against wicked men on any account whatever. At one time universal war, and destruction of mankind was necessary, even innocent infants in their mothers arms were a lawful sacrifice ; but now the most abandoned violaters of justice are not to be punished. Formerly, it is said, God made choice of a nation to propagate religion by the extermination of their fellow creatures, who were called heathens, with the sword ; afterwards the chosen nation were rejected, and the persecuted heathens became the favorite instruments of heaven in the establishment of religion ; and wonderful to tell, the principles and mode are entirely changed, they are not now permitted to resist evil, nor touch a sacred hair of the sinner's

ner's head, but whosoever shall smite them on the right cheek, they shall turn to him the other also. Invincibly blind must be the mind, that does not see the impossibility of God's being the author of those changes that are hostile to all order, justice and principle, not to be equalled for inconsistency and absurdity by any thing that can be found out of the Bible. No,—God, himself, by his immutable laws, declare they are not of him, and mankind are directed by reason and experience, to look for their origin in the rise and fall of nations, and of systems of religions, when imposture, superstition and oppression, universally reigned.

But the condition of the world is now greatly ameliorated, and in America, the blessed asylum of the oppressed, has free enquiry, truth and reason found protection. A providence of God so propitious to the world, will doubtless

engage the attention and efforts of men, religious and eloquent, and terminate in the glorious emancipation of the powers of the human mind, from the bondage of imposture, blind superstition, and unprincipled dogmas.

To prove an imposture, a circumstantial account of its origin is not necessary ; was the body of a man, after being buried in a pit, found covered with deadly wounds, there could be no hesitation in believing he had been murdered, though the circumstances and perpetrator of the deed were unknown. So likewise when doctrines and transactions said to be of God, are found to exhibit violations of the divine attributes, of experience, and of those laws and principles which God has implanted in the intelligence of man, as his sure, all sufficient and only possibly guide in the pursuit of truth, virtue and religion, the impostorous fabrication is at once manifest,

manifest, although the author and manner of the imposition are unknown. The infallible test of falsehoods of this nature, is the eternal principle of truth, which is rational, consistent, and unchangeably fixed as the foundations of heaven ; by it the works of man will be tried in eternity, and by it their works ought to be tried in this world. By the test of immutable truth then, let the changes above stated, be tried, and by it also let the following circumstances be tested.

The believers of the bible will admit that Isaac, the son of Abraham, and his immediate successor, was chosen as a principle character in the introduction of the Jewish dispensation of religion. His situation, then, in a religious view, was similar to that of Peter's under the Christian dispensation ; but how different the whims (for they cannot be called principles) that are exhibited in their
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respective human systems, falsely said to be divine. Jacob's horrid imposition, and presumptuous falsehood respecting the venison, when he answered his father, saying, "because the Lord thy God brought it to me," was attended with the most iniquitous circumstances, and of far deeper dye,* than the falsehood told to Peter by Ananias and his wife, respecting the price of their land. What was the decision of God on the occasion, as represented in the bible?—why, the most unfeeling, abandoned sinner met with no kind of reproof, and was received by the Almighty with the most marked approbation, as though he had acted meritoriously ; but Ananias and his wife were slain by the Almighty as the vilest offenders.

In the New-Testament it is said, "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right

* See Chapter vi. of this work.

right cheek, turn to him the other also.” It is there also said, that “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come,” &c. According to the parable the king’s servants were slain by “the remnant” of those that were invited to the wedding. But did the king who represented the kingdom of heaven, or doctrines of Christianity, adopt the doctrine of non-resistance? did he turn the other cheek to the smiter?—no, but “he was wroth: and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

It is likewise said, in that new fabrication, that Christ came to fulfil the law of God, which man had broken, that by his righteousness they might be justified. The law of God, said to be written on tables of stone, and given to Moses,

Moses, says “ thou shalt not steal ;”—did Christ fulfil this law, when he and his disciples went through the corn-field on the Sabbath day, and plucked the ears of corn ? And was it proper, on his being accused of doing that which was unlawful, to attempt to justify the act by pleading the sacrilege of David, who, by means of falsehood, robbed the house of God of the shew-bread, which was not lawful for any one to eat but the priests ? Is it not setting a bad precedent to justify an unlawful act of one person, by that of another ? If David was driven by hunger to violate the laws of his country, could the conduct of a weak erring mortal be an example fit for a God to imitate, or make use of to vindicate his own ? If Christ and his disciples did not choose to live by their own industry, and set the world a good example, they certainly had no right to prey upon the property of others ; and
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if true, as is represented, that Christ fed five thousand men on five loaves and two fishes, having twelve baskets full of the fragments to spare, he would in time of need, have acted more consistent as well as just, to have had recourse to miracle, rather than violate the laws of God and man, and give the world just cause to reject him and his doctrine. Can these inconsistencies be reconciled on the rational principles which God has given to man for his guide?—they cannot; therefore man cannot confide in them without degrading his nature, and rendering himself unworthy the character of a reasonable being. Return, O man, to your God in nature, resume the use of reason in your spiritual as well as temporal concerns, in all things believe and act rationally, and you will then become the enlightened, virtuous, upright, pious and rational people, God would have you to be. You will not then be induced

induced by the slavish fear of punishment to endeavor to sustain the character of a religious man, nor allured by the selfish consideration of reward, but your enlightened mind will be attracted by the beauty and excellence of virtue and religion, and your soul captivated with the adorable perfections and glory of God. Remember that not to use your reason is in effect the same as having none ; for this very reason, miracles, prophecies, and supernatural communications were invented, to silence the voice of reason, extinguish its light, that impostorous tyrants might lead the people in darkness, impose on them as they pleased, without the dread of detection from a rational investigation of their impositions.

CHAPTER XVI.

*THE TEST.*

“**A** good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” This proverb is frequently introduced by Christians, and esteemed by them an infallible test to decide the true character or nature of things. It is an excellent rule of judgment, derived from experience and common sense, and may properly be applied to all external systems of religion ; not to the perversion of them, but to their doctrines and natural tendency. What then were the doctrines and tendency of the Jewish system : and what its fruits ?—The Jews were taught to believe that they were the only people of God ; that all other nations on earth were rejected by their Creator ; that it

was their duty to destroy them, and possess themselves of their property ; which with their laws, prophecies, ceremonies, and numerous offerings, formed the civil and religious system of the Jews, which being imposed on the nation as divine, induced them to consider all their fellow creatures of other nations as heathens, cursed of God, and as such sought their total extinction. Such havoc, cruelty and brutality was committed by the Jews, agreeably to the express object of their system, that it is impossible there ever was a system in the world, productive of so much evil. “ Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.”

With respect to the Christian system, it likewise originated with the Jews, and by its fabricators declared also to be divine, and intended to supercede their old system. But whereas it had been pretended that the Jews were the
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only people of God, and all mankind beside accursed and devoted to destruction ; now they and their system are forsaken of God, and the remnant of the abandoned heathen invited to become his people. What a strange inconsistent being do these systems represent God to be ; why was not the numerous tribes and nations invited to become the people of God, before they were massacred and dispersed by the Jews ?—were they not men ?—had they not immortal souls to save ?—had they not the law of God implanted in their hearts, and a consciousness of good and evil ?—or were they all, contrary to all nations now in the world, incorrigibly wicked ?—No, it was not for any of these reasons they were not invited, but because it did not suit the nefarious purposes of the Jewish leaders. It was the property of those weak, defenceless tribes and nations, their houses, flocks, vineyards and
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and cultivated lands, the richest and best parts of the country, and security in the possession of them, they wanted, and not the propagation of religion among them. “Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.”

In the Jewish system, if so such a horrid fabrication may be called, nothing but glaring imposition is to be found ; but in the Christian system, which was fabricated in more enlightened times, are to be found many of those moral, virtuous, pious precepts and sentiments, which can only originate in man’s obedience to the divine internal law, and in his improvement of the principles God has implanted in human intelligence ; but they are so blended with the superstition, enthusiasm, and dogmas of imposture, that it is difficult to derive any benefit from them.

The doctrines, anathemas, dogmas, and parables of the Christian system,
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seem with the most sanguinary persecution, and would continue to produce outrages, horrible as those produced by the Jewish system, but for the prevention of the enlightened, tolerating disposition of the civilized world. Look at the unnatural, deformed, incomprehensible monster which tramples on the rational powers which God has given to mankind for their guide, and treats them as brutes, disposing all who partake of its spirit to do the same ; hear its fulminating declarations of war against the world. “There is no name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved, but the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—“He that believes not” (this declaration of man, which spurns and sets at nought the internal system that God has implanted in man, by which Jew and Gentile, Christian, Mahometan, and men of every description, become religious, vir-

tuous and moral) “shall be damned.” —“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” —“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed,” and the parable of the marriage of the king’s son is completely calculated to encourage keeping standing armies, persecution and tyranny. According to the letter and spirit of these doctrines, the Christians advanced with their cross, glittering at the head of the legions ;* and like the Jews, destroyed, and plundered all before them, until arrested by superior power, and then, like them, began to persecute and massacre one another on account of their different forms of worship and opinions, respecting the meaning of the doctrines of their human system. Whereas had the system not been imposed

* See Gibbon’s history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

posed on the people as divine, no such horrid effects could have resulted from it ; the system as human, would have been altered and improved, as man improved, and rendered conformable to the manifestations and attributes of God, which are the immutable, eternal standard of perfection, and guide of the whole world, in the performance of every duty, and attainment of every virtue. The internal system of God is the source of all religion, morality, charity and virtue ; not one good principle, sentiment, idea, or desire can be derived from any other, only as a medium possessing no principles in itself ; all external systems being human, can contain nothing good or profitable, that has not resulted from an improvement of the divine internal system.

Were Jews, Christians, Mahometans, and men of all other denominations or systems in the world, to take into consideration

deration the important truths contained in this work, and profit by them, they would then cease to hate and persecute each other on account of their external human systems; and the epithets of hogs, dogs and infidels, would no longer be applied to men who believe in God, love and worship him. Those men only would be considered infidels, who, in defiance of every moral demonstration, and rational proof, which is the strongest evidence that can possibly exist in a state of trial, reject belief in God, which illustrates all things, and renders the good man happy under all his afflictions; and in the perversion of their will, affections, and rational powers, embrace principles that reject the Creator of the universe, and involves their own existence, and all things, in confusion and total darkness, destroying every motive to virtue, all consolation of the afflicted, and utility in the existence of the world.

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.



THE author has lived to realize the efficacy and fulness of the internal and only religious system God ever gave to man, from which mankind universally, derive their religion, and knows from experience that man is formed with all the powers of a free moral agent, and that he has naturally not only a sense of good and evil, but power as a free agent to perform either. He is not influenced in his choice, nor prevented by any power or means, from being virtuous, but such as proceed from a perversion of principles, established by the Almighty, in this probationary state, for the trial of moral agents, and perfection of their nature; which principles consist in man's real wants, necessary passions, and propensities.

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In the exercise of the powers of free moral agency, man may, by the perversion of his wants and propensities, introduce an innumerable train of imaginary wants, inordinate ambition, lusts and desires ; and from these may proceed poverty, covetousness, theft, hatred, envy, malice, revenge, murder, and all the horrid crimes that men commit. From the moral and divine system, implanted in human nature, clear, powerful, rational, enlightening knowledge of all that respects man's duty to God, society, and his eternal interest, flow almost spontaneously into the mind of every unprejudiced, sincere faithful man. And such is the transcendant excellency of truth and virtue, such the prospect of an uninterrupted eternity of bliss, and such the goodness of God, the glorious author of man's being and happiness, that the man who is not rendered incapable of spiritual and
divine

divine affection by sensuality, will love God with supreme delight, and mankind as himself ; which probably is the highest degree of human perfection attainable in this life.

If, in a system of religion, inconsistency, contradiction, absurdity, disagreement with the divine attributes, with the nature of man, with the creation of the world, and with all the known dispensations of God, are sufficient to prove it false, then are the Jew's and Christian's system of religion, as founded on miracles, dreams, visions and supernatural communications, that appear to owe their origin to idle tales, ridiculous legends, fabulous tradition, imposture, and blind superstition, void of all claim to the confidence of the world. The light and knowledge of the truly religious among them, as also of all other denominations in every part of the world, are derived from God, in nature, through

through the medium of reason and the understanding, which God has given man for that purpose. This evident truth they reject, and blindly ascribe to the medium of an absurd system of imposture, the blessings which they receive themselves immediately from God, the rational system of religion founded on the manifestations of God, in the creation and government of the universe, and on his moral and divine law, that operates upon the mind with irresistible conviction, and leaves every man without excuse, is consistent in all its parts ; in it the attributes of God are seen to harmonize ; man as a free moral agent, the world as a probationary state, and all the dispensations of God, happily unite.

The perfect agreement that universally exists among all men who are truly religious, with respect to essentials, whatever their nominal distinction or systems may be, and the universal confusion

fusion and war that prevails among all pretended supernatural systems, demonstrate that they are not of God ; and that the principles and means by which men become enlightened, virtuous and religious, are not in them, but implanted in human nature by the God of nature, and experienced in the fulness of their blessed effects, by all who sincerely repent and unreservedly sacrifice the whole body of sin, by constant watchfulness and exertions to bring every passion, propensity and desire, into perfect obedience to the divine law within man. It is by conformity to the will of God, from a principle of love, that the human soul becomes spiritual, and heir of eternal life and happiness.

Stronger demonstrations of the existence of the Supreme Being, of the immortality of the soul, of the reward of virtue and punishment of vice, cannot exist, than are found in nature, nor an

assurance of eternal things, greater than that produced by faith. Certain knowledge in a probationary state would be hostile to the freedom of moral agents, to the love and voluntary worship of God, and wellbeing of civil society. Suspend a sword over a man's head, and let him know the moment he deviates from a certain rule of conduct, it would pierce him to his heart, the certainty of his fate would operate with such imperious violence as to render the decision of the will rather the effect of necessity than of free choice; nor could the noble sentiment of love, that originates only in perfect freedom of will possibly exist. Were mankind in a state of certainty with respect to their final end, one part of the irreligious would be overwhelmed in desperation, rage and madness, while the daring offender, as far as civil authority could be evaded, would give full scope to violence and outrage. But our
infinitely

infinitely wise and glorious Creator has established a very different order of things, making a rational faith which is derived from God, in nature, the ground of our love and obedience. Apply these incontrovertible facts, to miracles, prophecies and all supernatural communications, and there is not an enlightened unprejudiced man in the world, but will see that God never made use of such means for the establishment of religion. How then ought the world to esteem those accounts of miraculous communications and supernatural displays of divine power, that represents the Almighty as having had recourse to means subversive of the end they were intended to accomplish, inconsistent with the present order of things, and with the temporal and eternal happiness of man? violating the moral law, and probationary state of moral agents; inasmuch as miracles would operate with such powerful coercion on the human mind, as to supercede

supercede the use of reason, and prevent man's acting from a sense of right and wrong, which is the indispensable privilege and duty of man, and without which man could not be a moral agent. And inasmuch as every man that witnessed such miracles, would be a probationer on the ground of certain knowledge (which in fact could be no probation at all) while all mankind beside would be probationers in the proper sense of the word, on the ground of faith agreeably to the order God has established.

Ye advocates for imposition cease your unavailing clamors against a rational and natural system of religion, founded on the divine internal system, and against God in nature; lay your hand upon your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, and acknowledge that although impostors may be bunglers and inconsistent, the God of infinite wisdom, truth,

truth and power never can. And know, that religion and a gracious God, can be found in nature only. There, mankind found the divine unchangeable law of God, indelibly impressed upon their hearts two thousand six hundred years (according to accounts) before the gross Mosaic law was imposed on the Jews as revelation of God ; there, all nations in the world, have ever found the knowledge of their duty ; and there, in the secret recesses of an honest heart, Christians, Jews, Mahometans, and those of all other denominations, commune with truth, and enjoy the consolation of religion. This universal truth (such is the effect of prejudice) not one sect of the numerous contending supernatural systems of religion, will apply to themselves, but will readily apply it to all others. Thus the falsehood of all supernatural systems of religion is clearly demonstrated, and that out of nature,

no principle or truth whatever can be found. “What a monster is prejudice; that depraves the best of hearts, and puts the voice of nature every moment to silence !”

The author has done his duty in making known to the world the result of his experience and enquiries. And it now remains for a rational world to act with propriety, and carefully avoid believing any thing derogatory to their character, and inconsistent with the attributes of God. It remains for them to determine whether they will continue to prefer a false system of religion, that has no foundation whatever, in reason, nature, or the attributes of God, (which cannot possibly enlighten the mind, and must inevitably produce superstition, enthusiasm and persecution*) to a true system of religion founded

* A certain Bishop, in the author's hearing, in his address to the throne of mercy, before a large assembly,

founded on the attributes of God, and on the moral and divine system established in the intelligence of man ; which, when attended to, enlightens the mind with divine experimental truth and knowledge, and prepares every obedient soul for eternal life, in the mansions of everlasting joy.

arraigned the ministers of the Episcopal Church, and prayed fervently that God would “mend them, or end them.” In this prayer are seen the essence of ignorance, of enmity, and of the spirit of persecution. Had the Bishop possessed the understanding necessary for the station he assumed, he would have known that God will “mend” none against their will, nor “end” their existence before the term of their probation is accomplished. And had his heart been right in the sight of God, or had not bigotry, and the spirit of persecution been its inmates, he would not have irreligiously prayed for the destruction of any human being however depraved, much less for the ruin of men who worshiped God in a manner different from that which he preferred, and whom he might judge less holy than himself.

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Bank of Wisdom

For the first time in human history the language of civilization is being changed from writing that can be read with the necked eye, to an electronic format that can only be read with special electronic equipment. It is the intent of the Bank of Wisdom to convert to electronic format as much old Scholarly, Historic and Freethought material as possible. We believe there are certain kinds of necessary historic, religious and philosophical information that may be left out of the data banks of the future, factual information that challenges or disproves current ideas and beliefs that the established powers of our society rest upon. Such suppressed information will be necessary for future generations to use to build an upward evolution for their society. The Bank of Wisdom intends to preserve that needed knowledge.

**Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom**

**Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
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**There is no superstition in Wisdom,
And no wisdom in superstition.**

APPENDIX.



A RATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF FAITH,

FOUNDED ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD,
MANIFESTED IN THE PHYSICAL SYSTEM
AND GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSE,
AND ON THE DIVINE INTERNAL SYS-
TEM IMPLANTED IN HUMAN INTELLI-
GENCE; IN WHICH ARE THE PRINCIPLES
OF ALL GOOD, CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS;
OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, TEMPORAL AND
SPIRITUAL.

1st. **I** BELIEVE in a Supreme Being,
because in the universe I behold intelli-
gence, wisdom, and infinite power ; and
because this faith illustrates all things,
but without it, every attempt to account
for the order of creation is irrational,
and envelopes the subject in total dark-
ness.

2nd.

2nd. I believe God exists independent of all material systems of worlds; because it is evident from the existence of unintelligent matter, that intelligence is not an essential property thereof.

3d. I believe the matter, as well as form of this world, is the effect of God's power; because it is not more difficult to conceive that he created inanimate matter, than that he created living beings out of it.

4th. I believe that in the Supreme Being dwells the attributes of justice, mercy and love; because they are seen in his government of the world, and that many of the intelligent part of creation possess these qualities in an eminent degree.

5th. I believe the intelligence, or soul of man, possesses divine principles, which fully accomplish the will of God in the salvation of all men, who are obedient

dient to their internal voice ; because it is known by experience, and acknowledged by the world, that the law of God is written in the heart of all mankind ; and that it is evident from the confusion of all systems of religion not founded on principles in nature, and from the impossibility of moral or rational proof of the truth of any of them, that they are not of God, and that it is not from them man derives his light, essential principles and doctrines of religion.

6th. I believe the soul or immortal spirit of man, when the body dies, enters into another state of existence either happy or unhappy, as the consequence of a virtuous or wicked life, while an inhabitant of this world ; because God's attributes of mercy and love, are not fully experienced in this world by the virtuous, nor his justice by the wicked ; and, therefore, that this life is a probationary state, and preparatory to another.

7th.

7th. I believe the soul of good men, and their identity, will exist for ever ; because their nature is immortalized by the divine principles they possess, and inseparably united to the source of eternal life ; their adoration and love of God, their truth and virtue, cannot be annihilated, but will flourish in progressive bliss, while heaven and the Angelic host have being ; and without identity, there can be no conscious experience of happiness, or misery, as the reward of virtue, or punishment of vice.

8th. I believe the nature and manner of the punishment of the wicked, is a subject that belongs not to a religious faith ; because it would be void of utility, a matter of idle curiosity, and therefore highly improper ; and because it is only essential and therefore only proper for man to believe that the virtuous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished.

9th. I believe all accounts of supernatural revelation, said to be communicated to the world through the medium of man, are unfounded ; because that which God has revealed in nature, and implanted in the heart of every man, is sufficient for the information, and welfare of man here, and his happiness hereafter ; and it would be absurd to admit that the success of God's designs, and the salvation of man, should depend on the intervention of erring mortals. it would also be unjust, and the height of presumptuous folly, to say man shall be damned if they believe not the assertion of frail beings like themselves, liable to be deceived, and capable of deceiving ; assertions too, which are at war with nature, and contradict man's most self-evident conceptions of truth and falsehood.

10th. I believe man is born with a nature, agreeable to the will of God,

and absolutely necessary for a state of trial ; because without a nature capable of good and evil, man could not be a moral agent, nor deserving reward or punishment ; and therefore man is not sinful and obnoxious in the sight of God, until he renders himself so, by the misapplication and abuse of his moral powers in the commission of known sin.

11th. I believe man is always at liberty to do good or evil ; because he could not otherwise be a free agent, nor accountable for his actions.

12th. I believe no infernal being ever had any thing to do with man, to tempt or force him to sin ; because such doctrine, implies a state of things impossible to have existed ; it represents God as having appointed an invisible powerful fiend, to tempt, torment and allure mankind to destruction ; or that his power was not sufficient to prevent a malicious, obnoxious monster, from
venting

venting his unprovoked malice against the human race ; and because there is not an evil that man commits, but what proceeds from causes in nature, and originate in the perversion of principles established in the order of creation, perfectly good in themselves, and designed by the Almighty, for the trial of moral agents, and for the perfection of their nature.

13th. I believe prayer to God, in the manner it is generally performed, is the mockery of ignorance and superstition ; for God has established laws and principles in man, and it is by obedience to those laws, and the improvement of those principles, men become wise, virtuous and happy ; and that sentiments of love, adoration, thanksgiving, and praise, are the only public offerings that can be acceptable to God.*

14th.

* Prayer is the language of the unhappy, the imploring supplicating cry of a soul to God, for mercy and forgive-

14th. I believe it an indispensable duty, enjoined by the manifest object of God,

ness, under a deep sense of sin, ingratitude, and unfaithfulness, feeling its wretched, ruined, hopeless condition, without an inward consciousness of the pardoning mercy and love of God. These things take place in the secret recesses of the soul, they come not under the observation of man, and form no part of public worship.

When a congregation assembles for public worship, it is always considered, that it will be performed by the religious part of the community, who enjoy the fruits of the divine internal system, according to their improvement of it, or devotion to God. If they are deficient in the blessings of religion, knowledge, humility, patience, resignation, fortitude, peace and love, these are not to be obtained by the prayers of hypocrisy, but by a more sincere, faithful, cheerful obedience, and performance of every duty, in every station, and transaction of life. The proper objects, therefore, of public worship, is to thank, praise and adore God, for his infinite goodness, mercies and blessings bestowed on his ungrateful, sinful creatures, as well as on his loving, but imperfect worshippers and people; to let the goodness of God induce them to renew their resolutions to live more to his glory, the benefit of mankind, and purity of their own souls. To warn the wicked of the awful consequences of sin, as it respects their present welfare, and eternal happiness. To instruct, admonish, and counsel the ignorant and unfaithful; and at all times, to render the place of public worship pleasant and delightful, for "the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and her flowery paths are peace."

God, in the creation of the world, and which the state of man requires, that all nations should set apart certain days of rest from all temporal employment, and sacredly devoted to the public worship of God, that all men, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, bond and free, might have an opportunity of profiting by the improvement and experience of their fellow men, and of being instructed in the knowledge of every obligation and duty in life; and that the dedication of every seventh day, appears most convenient and proper.

15th. I believe it impossible for any created being fully to comprehend God; because he is infinite, and an endless inconceivable source of progressive knowledge and happiness to finite beings.

REMARKS
ON THE UNION OF
CHURCH AND STATE.

IT is not easy to conquer the early prejudices of education in favor of the Bible ; which the careful inculcation of its story, during our infancy, hinders our seeing in a proper light : so that relations which would shock humanity, and excite contempt, in what is called profane history, are read without any emotion but that of reverence in this. The union, or rather conspiracy, of Church and State, is the principle cause of this phenomenon in the moral world ; by their combination the most unbounded oppression is exercised ; men are not allowed to think for themselves, nor speak the dictates of reason ; truth, obvious as the Sun in his meridian splendor, if opposed to the doctrine of our clerical lords, or unmasks
the

the falsehoods and impositions they practice, will cause a price to be set by their colleague, on the head of the man that publishes it.

History informs us, that “tribunals have been established, with powers of condemning to the stake whoever should be suspected of making use of his reason; that hypocrisy covered Europe with executions at the stake, and assassinations, and that the monster, Fanaticism, maddened by the wound it had received, appeared to redouble its fury, and hasten to burn its victims in heaps, fearful that reason might be approaching to deliver them from his hand.” Imposture, thus protected and enforced by the combined power of despotic kings and pontiffs, has been received by the unenlightened, deceived and oppressed world, as sacred mysteries of God, and handed down from one generation to another, with the most profound

found ignorance and veneration. The industrious part of society are robbed of the fruits of their labour to enrich their spiritual and temporal tyrants, and to support them in luxury, idleness and pomp, while the people are not suffered to retain of their hard earnings, more than will barely enable them to drudge on in the servitude of their cruel oppressors.

Revolutions, and new forms of government, in the present state of things, have the semblance of freedom, but in reality are only a change of masters, who soon become as ambitious and tyrannical as those under whose oppression they themselves had groaned. Yet there is a propitious time, after a nation has thrown from their necks the galling yoke of their old lords, before their new masters have formed their chains, when they may forever free themselves from both temporal and spiritual tyranny,

ny, by the annihilation of the union of two powers, which always have, and forever will, while suffered to remain in league together, corrupt themselves, and subject the world to bondage. A power capable of gratifying the most unbounded ambition, ought not to exist; and the nation that neglects its destruction, when in the order of providence, the power to effect it is put into their hands, would merit reproach rather than commiseration, when groaning under its oppression. The nature and end of religion being love, virtue, and happiness, is so very different from that of civil institutions, that to unite the power and influence which religion has over mankind with political power, must, in the nature of things, produce the worst of consequences. How great, then, must the folly of uniting them appear, when it is considered that no possible good can be derived from their union.

union. A government will always receive proper support from the nation that instituted it, while they have relatives to protect, property to defend, or the principle of self preservation dwells in human nature. The principles of virtue and of religion are implanted in the heart of man, by the Author of his being, and must exist while man exists, independent of any power on earth; as well might man attempt to create a world, as to destroy the order of nature decreed by the Almighty. It is therefore clearly seen, that a system of religion that stands in need of human authority for its support cannot be of God; and as Judaism, Christianity and Mahometanism, have all been united to civil and despotic power, and the lives of millions sacrificed in their several establishments, it strongly indicates them all to be the invention of impostors. It is certain they are not all divine, and as they

they are all founded on mysteries equally hostile to reason, and destitute of proof, it would be reasonable to conclude them all human, but partial to prefer either.

The knowledge of the laws of nations, their situation, produce, commerce, customs and manners, which men of liberal education, and enlightend minds possess, render them the only persons qualified to make laws for a nation, and manage their civil, commercial, and political concerns; and such are the men appointed to the important trust of the liberties, rights and welfare of nations. But who can calculate the magnitude of the evil that must inevitable result from requiring, as a necessaay qualification; that they should declare on oath, that they believe the Christian system of religion to be of divine inspiration; when it is well known that all the enlightened part of mankind, are
either

either convinced of its falsehood, or entertain strong doubts of its truth.* It is impossible for any thing to be more pointedly and powerfully calculated to fill all the departments of government, with perjured, unprincipled characters.

No nation, perhaps, was ever blest with the counsel and patriotic labors of men more eminent for their talents and virtue, than those who formed the constitution of the U. States of America ;
with

* Bishop Watson, in his "Apology for the Bible," in answer to a work opposed to supernatural systems of religion, observes, that "infidelity is a rank weed" (that is to say, that disbelief in supernatural systems is prevalent) "it threatens to overspread the land; its root is principally fixed amongst the great and opulent;" and candor would have added, learned and enlightened. Strange, that a system said to be divine, should, contrary to all knowledge and experience of things rational, be rejected by men of improved, liberal minds, and owe its very existence to ignorance and bigotry. It is manifest that such systems are pointedly hostile to freedom of thought, enquiry, and man's free agency militating against the very order established by the Almighty. Perhaps no defender of a cause ever retreated more

with those great and good men, the tried friends of their country, it was an object of the first importance to guard the seat of power against corruption, and and every species of persecution. They therefore wisely resolved not to establish any system of religion, nor interfere in the spiritual concerns of the people; well knowing

shamefully than the Bishop has done on the occasion; hear the retreating suppliant. "If this little book," his Apology, "should chance to fall into their hands, (meaning merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen) after they have read your's, and they should think that any of your objections to the authority of the Bible have not been fully answered, I entreat them to attribute the omission to the brevity which I have studied; to my desire of avoiding learned disquisitions; to my inadvertency; to my inability; to any thing rather than an impossibility of completely obviating every difficulty you have brought forward." Such language from a laymen would be pitiful, but for a Bishop, who receives a large, if not an extravagant income for supporting the cause, a man to whom all the contending, persecuting sects in Christendom look up for defence of their general system (which they themselves have torn to pieces) to make such concessions, is in fact to abandon the cause.

knowing, that mankind, with respect to their faith, and the conscientious performance of religious duties, are accountable to none but God : and that it will always be the interest and will of the people, to give their support to those candidates for office, whose worth and talents have the strongest claim to the confidence of their country. But the legislatures of several States of the Union have thought proper to disregard their worthy example, and have made laws for the establishment of controvertible articles of faith, as the test of religion, and of title to office, under their respective governments ; which is nothing less than religious persecution in political disguise ; the spirit is the same, but the mode of operation is reversed ; formerly it punished the body and purified the soul, now it lavishes honor, wealth and power on the former, and corrupts the latter. Men who abhor the imposition
of

of Christianity, may be induced to swear they believe in it, rather than forego the golden bait that promises every gratification. They may also think such conduct justifiable, as it would be in defence of those rights, which an unjust persecuting law would otherwise deprive them of.

The object of civil government is the temporal welfare of society, and its laws respect men's actions only. But the object of religion, is the spiritual and eternal happiness of man, and its laws extend to the secret recesses of the soul, with divine energy and irresistible conviction. It is love that qualifies a soul for heaven, which like the glorious object of its worship, embraces in affection, earth, and heaven. Religion is the voluntary act of the will, and admits of no violence ; the imposition of oaths and compulsory measures, shew a persecuting spirit, and instead of religion, produce

duce hypocrisy. It is therefore incumbent on a free people (if they wish themselves and their posterity to remain free,) while they have the power of regulating their government, to annihilate the union of the authority and influence of Church and state; which would prove an effectual check to civil power, and the clergy, instead of being the tools of oppression, would become the watchful guardians of the rights and liberties of the people.



ERRATA

- Page 93, line 10, for, he had, *read*, had he.
 98, — 18, for, national religion, *read*, natural religion.
 111, — 5 for, against these, *read*, against their.
 192, — 11, for, and of, *read*, and at.
 234, — first from the bottom, for, which is, *read*,
 which are,