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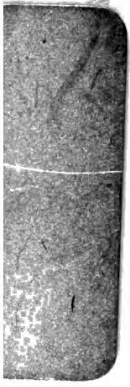
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The Mock Trial
of William Tunbridge

—
1823



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A
REPORT
OF THE PROCEEDINGS, IN THE
MOCK TRIAL
OF AN
INFORMATION, EXHIBITED EX-OFFICIO
BY THE
KING'S ATTORNEY GENERAL
AGAINST
WILLIAM TUNBRIDGE,
FOR THE PUBLICATION OF A BOOK CALLED
"Palmer's Principles of Nature,"
AS AN ALLEGED BLASPHEMOUS LIBEL UPON THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,
OF THE
JEWS AND CHRISTIANS,
BEFORE A
Packed Jury
AND
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE ABBOTT,
IN THE
COURT OF KING'S BENCH, GUILDHALL,
ON MONDAY THE 20TH OF JANUARY,
TO WHICH IS ADDED THE WHOLE OF
THE SUPPRESSED PART,
OF THE
Defendant's Defence,
AND THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE
COURT AT WESTMINSTER
ON
RECEIVING ITS SENTENCE,
ON
THURSDAY THE SIXTH OF FEBRUARY, 1823.

London:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY R. CARLILE, 5, WATER LANE,
FLEET STREET.

1823.



COPY OF THE INFORMATION.

Of Michaelmas Term, in the Third Year of the Reign of King George the Fourth.

LONDON to wit: Be it remembered, that Sir Robert Gifford, Knight, Attorney General, of our Lord the King, who for our said Lord the King, prosecutes in this behalf in his own proper person, cometh here into the Court of our said Lord the King, before the King himself, at Westminster, on Wednesday next, after the morrow of all souls; in this same Term, and for our said Lord the King, giveth the Court here to understand, and be informed, that *William Tunbridge*, late of London, Labourer, being an evil disposed, and wicked person, and disregarding the Laws and the Religion of this Realm, and impiously, and profanely devising, and intending to bring the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt among the liege subjects of our said Lord the King, on the thirtieth day of August, in the Third Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Fourth, by the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of Faith, at London, in the Parish of Saint Mary-le-Bow, in the Ward of Cheap, unlawfully, and wickedly did publish, and cause to be published, a certain scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane libel, of and concerning the Holy Scriptures, and the Christian Religion, containing therein, amongst other things, divers scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane matters and things, of and concerning the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion; in one part thereof, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say, "Moses and Mahomet governed their followers with a rod of iron, and a military despotism, they were savage and ferocious men, crafty and intriguing, and they knew how to subject to their will, the stupid, but unfortunate, followers who were devoted to their views. If Jesus (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) was more mild, benevolent, and temperate, it was because he had less power, and because his disposition was less cruel and resentful. His followers, when clothed with power, have not paid a very high compliment to their master, for the history of their conduct evinces the most malignant design; and the earth has been drenched in blood to defend that system of Religion, of which the meek and lowly Jesus (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) is reputed to be the author. The Christian Religion is a compound and combination of all the Theological writings of the followers of Moses and Jesus, (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) we have no

evidence that either of these men wrote any part either of the Old or New Testament. From Genesis to the apocalypse of St. John, a vast variety of fact, fable, principle, wickedness, and error is exhibited to view. The book, (meaning the Holy Bible) though bound together, appears to be in many respects discordant; the historical part has no accurate connection, the moral part is distorted, deficient, or wicked; the doctrinal parts are either unintelligible, or contrary to moral and philosophical truth." And in another part thereof, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say: "The last resort of the believer must be to the authority and command of his Majesty, who has kindly interfered for the purpose of rendering divine and holy, a book (meaning the Holy Bible) whose indecency and immorality shocks all common sense, and common honesty." To the high displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal of the Christian Religion; to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity. And the said Attorney General of our said Lord the King, who prosecutes, as aforesaid, for our said Lord the King, further gives the Court here to understand, and be informed, that the said William Tunbridge further impiously, and profanely devising and intending, as aforesaid, afterwards to wit, on the same day and year aforesaid, at London aforesaid, in the Parish and Ward aforesaid, unlawfully and wickedly did publish, and cause to be published, a certain other scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane libel, of and concerning the Christian Religion, containing therein, amongst other things, certain scandalous, impious, blasphemous and profane matters and things, of and concerning the Christian Religion, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say:—"This story of the Virgin (meaning the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) and the Ghost, (meaning the Holy Ghost) to say no more of it, does not wear the appearance of much religion, and it would not, it is presumed, be difficult in any age or country to find a sufficient number of men who would pretend to be Ghosts, if by such pretensions they could obtain similar favours, especially with the consoling reflection superadded of becoming the progenitors of the pretended Saviour of a wicked and apostate world. How absurd and contradictory are the principles, and the doctrines of this Religion! (meaning the Christian Religion) in vain do its advocates attempt to cover this transaction with the machinery of Ghosts and supernatural agents. The simple truth is, that their pretended Saviour (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) is nothing more than an illegitimate Jew, and their hopes of salvation through him rest on no better foundation than that of fornication or adultery." To the high displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal of the Christian Religion; to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity. And the said Attorney General of our said Lord the King, who prosecutes, as aforesaid, for our said Lord the King, further gives the Court

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Saviour Jesus Christ) and Paul, are none of them good moral characters, it is not probable therefore that they were selected by the Creator as the organs of celestial communication. In the Old Testament, national and individual justice is disregarded, and God is made the accomplice of crimes, which human nature abhors. The maxims of the New Testament are a perversion of all correct principles in a code of moral virtue. The whole system is calculated to take man out of himself, to destroy his confidence in his own energies, to debase his faculties, vitiate his social affections, and brutalize the most useful qualities of human existence." And in another part thereof, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say: "Moses, Mahomet, and Jesus (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) can lay as little claim to moral merit, or to the character of the benefactors of mankind as any three men that ever lived upon the face of the earth. They were all of them imposters, two of them notorious murders in practice, and the other a murderer in principle, and their existence united has perhaps cost the human race more blood, and produced more substantial misery, than all the other fanatics of the world." To the high displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal of the Christian Religion; to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity. And the said Attorney General of our said Lord the King, who prosecutes as aforesaid, for our said Lord the King, further gives the Court here to understand, and be informed, that the said William Tunbridge, further impiously, and profanely devising, and intending as aforesaid, afterwards (to wit) on the same day and year aforesaid, at London aforesaid, in the Parish and Ward aforesaid, unlawfully and wickedly did publish, and cause to be published, a certain other scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane libel of and concerning the Holy Scriptures, and the Christian Religion, containing therein, amongst other things, certain scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane matters and things, of and concerning the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion, in one part thereof, according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say: "Moses, Mahomet, and Jesus (meaning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) can lay as little claim to moral merit, or to the character of the benefactors of mankind, as any three men that ever lived upon the face of the earth. They were all of them impostors, two of them notorious murderers in practice, and the other a murderer in principle, and their existence united, has perhaps cost the human race more blood, and produced more substantial misery, than all the other fanatics of the world." To the high displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal of the Christian Religion; to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity. And the said Attorney General of our said Lord the King, who prosecutes as aforesaid, for our said Lord the King, further gives the Court here to understand, and be informed, that the said William Tunbridge, further impiously, and profanely devising, and

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The Defendant pleaded Not Guilty in Michaelmas Term, 1822.

REPORT,

&c. &c.

THE following persons were called into the box, as the Jury:—

John Stow, of St. Mary at Hill.
Alexander Adam, of Lower Thames Street.
Richard Dendy, of Monument Yard.
Thomas Webb Whitmarth, of Rood Lane.
Philip Perring, of Bishopgate, within.
Henry Pounset, of Thames Street.
Stephen Moxon, of Martin's Lane.
William Prest, of Lawrence, Pountney Hill.
F. Fowler, Talesman.
W. L. Grace, Do.
J. Pocknell, Do.
G. R. Taylor, Do.

The Defendant made the following protest after the names of the Jury had been called over, and before they were sworn.

MY LORD,

I MOST solemnly protest against my being tried by the Jury empannelled in the box, not from any charge which I have against any one of the Gentlemen, but, because they have been packed, or nominated, which ever you like to call it, by an Officer of the Crown, who is my prosecutor in this case, and which is contrary to all the principles of law, justice, and equity.

Mr. Shepherd stated that this was an information filed by his Majesty's Attorney General against the Defendant, for publishing a libel on the Christian religion, contained in a work entitled, "Palmer's Principles of Nature.

The Solicitor-General shortly opened the case for the Crown. The Attorney-General in the exercise of his official duty, had felt bound to bring this Defendant to trial, for assisting in the dissemination of calumnies against the Christian religion, which no principle of toleration could justify or excuse. The work had been sold at a shop, No. 5, Water Lane, which bore the name "J. Carlile," in which the Defendant would be shown to officiate. The sale had not taken place in the ordinary course of trade, but by means of machinery, which the parties absurdly thought would protect them from the penalties of the law. The Learned Solicitor-General then referred

to the apparatus, which was afterwards more minutely described by the witnesses. He thought the evidence would be sufficiently cogent to fix the Defendant as the secret agent by whom the book was conveyed to the purchaser; but at all events he would be shown to have aided in the publication, and to have shared in that guilt, of which the parties were evidently conscious. Of the character and tendency of the passages indicted there could be no doubt, and of the criminality of the Defendant he apprehended there would be as little. He then detailed the case, and observed, that it was the bounden duty of the Jury to put a stop to the infamous, daring, and systematic warfare maintained by the Defendant's employer against the laws; he also reminded the Jury that the Defendant in this case did not stand in so favourable a situation as others whom he had prosecuted for vending this libel, because, at the time some of them sold it, four or five verdicts of Juries had not (as was now the case) pronounced it a libel. He understood that there would be some objection taken to the proof of publication, but he hoped he should shew the Jury, that the Defendant, if he was not the person who delivered the book to the buyer, it was given through his agent, and if a man do an unlawful act through his agent, he was as answerable in law as if he had done it himself.

William Smith, examined by Mr. Raine, said, I belong to the Police Office at Bow Street. On the 30th of August I went with Purton and Duke to a shop, No. 5, in Water Lane, to purchase a pamphlet. The shop is on the left-hand side; I went down on that side, and Purton and Duke on the right. They went into a public-house nearly opposite the shop. Before I came to the door, I saw the Defendant (Tunbridge) standing there, looking towards Fleet Street. He went into the shop; Purton went down the Lane to look into the window; then I went into the shop. On the left-hand side, as you enter, there is a partition, running by the side of the shop, with a door into the shop. At the back part of the shop there is another partition. When I went into the shop, the Defendant (Tunbridge) and a boy were there. I asked the Defendant first, as I believe, for the "Black Dwarf;" he said he had but one, and that was rather soiled. I told him "that would do." He delivered me the pamphlet, for which I paid him 6d. I then asked him for "Palmer's Principles of Nature;" he said he did not sell it, but I might get it there—pointing to the partition, where I saw a list of books and a kind of dial, like the face of a clock, with a handle and numbers.

There were corresponding numbers to the list, and likewise the name and price of each book, and also a spout. While I was looking at the list, the Defendant came from behind the counter, and turned to the left, and went into the passage, turning from the street. Before he left the shop, I had seen "Palmer's Principles of Nature" on the list, with a number affixed to it, and its price. I then went to the dial, and moved the hand to the corresponding number, and attempted to make it stand there, but it fell down. The boy said,

that would do; if I put the money into the spout, the book would come. I accordingly put in two half-crowns, the price of the book, and in a few minutes the book came through the spout. I took the book, and found it to be "Palmer's Principles of Nature." I left the shop, and went towards Fleet Street. In going, I looked back and saw the Defendant (Tunbridge) at the door watching me. At the corner of Water Lane, I was joined by Duke and Purton. The book now produced is that which I bought. On the door posts was the name of "Carlile."

Cross examined by the Defendant—Has belonged to Bow Street three or four years; was before a calico-drawer; has been in the Post-office, and then went into the velvet painting fancy trade.

Defendant—You say you purchased it of me, and I told you where you would get it?

Lord Chief Justice—You must conduct yourself with decorum.

Witness answered in the affirmative. Asked for the pamphlet about the Bishop of Clogher and the Soldier, and also a book published by Cobbett; purchased it for Purton, who belongs to the Bow Street Office; will swear that the mark on the book is his hand writing; purchased the book because he knew that there was a conviction on it before; will not swear that the Defendant sold it him, but that he told him where to get it; does not know the Defendant would have sold it if he had known him to be a Police Officer; has read "Palmer's Principles," p. 24.

Defendant—Did it induce you to feel contempt for the Holy Scriptures?

Witness—It certainly did.

On being asked to explain, witness said he felt contempt for the book.

On a further explanation, the witness said it produced no effect on him whatever.

Defendant—Did it cause you to break the public peace?

Witness—No.

John Purton, examined by Mr Guerney.—I am also an Officer of Bow Street. On the 30th of August I went with Smith and Duke to the house in Water Lane. I had been there several times before, and noticed the house into which Smith went. "Carlile" was painted on the door-posts. I had been there by direction to see what was going on in the shop. I had several times seen the Defendant in the shop. He then appeared to be acting as the proprietor. I have seen persons make purchases there, and receive the books through a hole in the shape of a book, from behind the petition. At those times the Defendant was not in the shop, but I have seen him there half an hour or so before, and afterwards when I have looked in, the books have come through. On the 30th of August I walked down the lane with Duke before Smith went in. As I passed I saw the Defendant in the shop. We arranged what we should do; Smith gave us time to go into the public-house and then

went into the shop. When we were in the public-house, we had a perfect view of the front of the premises, I saw Smith go in and come out; he went towards Fleet Street, before he reached Fleet Street we saw Tunbridge come out of the shop door and look anxiously after Smith. He afterwards went in, and Duke and I left the public house and joined Smith. Tunbridge did not come into the street from the time of Smith's entrance till his departure. When we joined Smith, he showed us the book he had purchased, and we went together to Bow Street.

On cross-examination by the Defendant, the witness said, I have been a Police Officer; but have been also employed by the Constitutional Association, and the Society for the Suppression of Vice, to purchase books. I authorised Smith to purchase this work for the purpose of prosecution, by direction of Mr Stafford. The public house is not a hundred yards from the shop; I do not believe it is fifty, but I will not swear to the distance. I never saw "Palmer's Principles of Nature" exposed to sale in the shop; but it has come to my knowledge that you have sold two others, one to Smith.

On re-examination, the witness said the public house is lower down than the shop. We placed ourselves there, because we could command a perfect view of the shop. It is four or five doors lower down than the shop.

Robert Duke, examined by Mr. Litterdale, said, I am one of the Bow Street patrol, and went on the 30th of August to Water Lane. I have been there before, and on these occasions have seen a little boy in the shop. I never saw the Defendant there till the 30th of August. I have seen people purchasing books there; some of which were delivered from behind the counter, and others from behind the screen, through a hole at the back of the shop. On those occasions I have seen persons look at the list of publications, and move the dial; and afterwards the book has come down to them. The witness proceeded to give a similar account of his visit to Water Lane to that given by Purton.

On cross-examination by the Defendant, the witness said I do not know that the shop is Carlile's, but I believe it is yours; I did not see you at the door before Smith went in.

The Defendant contended for his right to have the whole of the information read.

The Lord Chief Justice said this was not usual, nor generally important to the interests of the Defendant; but that the first count should be read, and any other parts the Defendant thought material.

The Defendant acquiesced. The first count of the information was then read: and the Lord Chief Justice stated the substance of the others.

Mr. Abbott then read the passages which were charged in the information as libellous. (See Information.)

The case for the prosecution being closed, the Defendant appealed to the Jury to know whether it was necessary for him to enter on a

defence of the work, when there was no direct evidence of his having published the book in question; after a short pause, during which time the Jury remained silent—

The Defendant said, as the Jury seem satisfied, although there is no direct evidence against me, I must proceed with a very long defence.

DEFENCE.

Gentlemen of the Jury—Elihu Palmer, the author of the book which is now very unwisely, and illegally submitted to your opinion, was one of the greatest moral and philosophical writers, that has yet appeared among mankind, within that period of human existence of which we have any historical knowledge. He was one of those great luminaries which the late spirit of discussion and conflict of opinions has thrown upon the surface, to assist in the noble task of uprooting superstition, and of planting in its place the tree of science and knowledge. By writings and by public discourses, he laboured assiduously to give morality a commanding situation among mankind; to disentangle it from the foul weeds, and to extricate it from the meshes of superstition. Before I have finished my defence; I hope to convince you, that he has not laboured in vain.

I come to the defence of his “Principles of Nature” well stored with his information, and I will lay before you such a body of philosophical reasonings, such powerful arguments against prosecutions for matters of opinion, that on this head alone, no honest intelligent man will, I am sure, refuse me a full and honourable acquittal of the unfounded charges of malice in the information.

Independent of this part of my defence, I will shew in the clearest manner, that there is no law whatever, by which you can try me; and that you cannot return a verdict of Guilty against me without perjuring yourselves.

You seem to say, how is it then, that so many verdicts of Guilty have been given in similar cases; and some upon this very book too?

I answer, I will shew you, that the law has been made for the occasion, or has been perverted by the Judges, and that the Juries have been perjured through their perversions and their own ignorance. Precedent should not be put for *law*; nor is custom *law*, when it can be shown to be ill-founded. Neither ought it in any case to be law, since, in all political cases, in all cases in which power is concerned, custom and precedent will always be made use of, in favour of power and for the subjection of the people.

I will defend myself, and that *fully*, and after my *own manner too*. Prejudice is a baneful influence to combat, and if my expressed opinions, Gentlemen, do not immediately tally with yours, bear with me until you have heard the whole of my argument. There never was, there never will be any such a thing as a standard for the regulation of opinions. You may as well attempt to controul the atmo-

sphere, to fix the temperature of the air, to forbid the motions of the sea, and to contend for uniformity of seasons and of weather, as to struggle for uniformity of opinions among mankind. I confess to you, that I have no opinions that I value, or that I am wedded to, unless it be from the impression that they are correct, and that no one will impeach them. Let the Attorney, or Solicitor, General shew me, that the opinions, of which I stand here the advocate, are erroneous; I will throw them up as worthless, and proclaim my conviction that they are so. If, however, you, to gratify them, give me up for punishment, without such an answer, you will commit the grossest injustice. Depend upon it, persecution never yet changed the opinions of any man, nor will it change mine. Persecution may irritate, but it cannot convince. If my prosecutors were not blind with prejudice, or besotted with rage, they would discover that they lose ground by every such prosecution as this now before the Court. It is notorious, Gentlemen of the Jury, and echoed from every corner of the country, that Anti-Christian opinions and principles are spreading in a ratio with the prosecutions brought against them! We, who hold that such opinions and principles are paramount to all others, rejoice, though we suffer, at the effect of those prosecutions. Our courts of law have witnessed samples of spirit in this cause, that have equalled the best of the Christian Martyrs, and I can assure you, from my own knowledge, that the volunteers to fill the gap made by persecution, and to defend those principles, are sufficiently numerous to keep every court of law in the country constantly employed, if these prosecutions are to be continued. This spirit will never be put down. A small degree of historical knowledge and of human nature will suffice to convince any person of this fact. Professing, as we do, to stand on philosophical grounds, and willing as we are to settle the right or wrong of the matter by free and fair discussion; the attempt to put it down by punishment, only serves to kindle a fire in our bosoms, that would have never been felt in the absence of such oppression, such abuses of law, and of courts of law.

I proceed to analyse the information and the charges against me. It charges:—

First. That I am an evil disposed and wicked person.

Second. That I disregard the laws and religion of this realm.

Third. That I have sought to bring the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion into contempt.

And Fourth. That I have done this to the high displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal of the Christian Religion; to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of the King, his Crown and Dignity.

This, Gentlemen, is the frame work of the information, on which I shall fully expatiate; but there is the substance, the extracts from the book yet to be analysed, which will open a vast field for defence; because, it is my duty to defend every sentence in all its bearings,

and to endeavour in the fullest manner, that it does not corroborate the charges of the information, and that not a sentence has been extracted which is obnoxious to any law of the land.

As to the first of the four foregoing charges, which states that I am an evil disposed and wicked person, I ask, Gentlemen, what evidence has been offered on the part of the prosecution; what has been done to shew that I am such a person as the information describes? The only evidence you have before you is, that I, who am the servant of a bookseller, did sell a book, which I found in my employer's stock. I have lived with other booksellers beside Mr. Carlile, and I can tell you, Gentlemen, what I presume you cannot be ignorant of, that either of your booksellers, or any bookseller in London, would have taken an order from a respectable person for "Palmer's Principles of Nature" and would have sold it. It is a notorious fact, and when such charges are brought against me for your judgment, it ought to weigh with you, that there is no book in the store of any bookseller in London, however reprehensible, and there are some very reprehensible; but the most respectable bookseller in London would get for a friend or a good customer. Here, Gentlemen, you have no evidence that I have sold another copy of this book, but to this Police Office for the prosecution, who came and asked for it in the character of a friend! Gentlemen, I put it to your consciences to say, whether your libraries are free of every book of this description; and I will leave you to say, whether the sale of a book so evidently moral and philosophical throughout, as I will prove this book to be, is sufficient ground for imputing wickedness and an evil disposition to me.

I will shew you, that I have been, and that I am free from every thing that can be construed to be malice in the sale of the book, and having done this, I shall leave you no alternative but to respect your oath and acquit me of the charge in the information.

The sale of the book I do not deny; but I assert, that I acted morally, and was in duty bound to sell it to all enquirers, on the ground that I was employed to sell whatever was on my employer's catalogue or in his stock; and further, from my own knowledge, that "Palmer's Principles of Nature" is a highly moral and philosophical work, and a credit and an honour to any publisher.

I will read to you, Gentlemen, every sentence in this book, that you may be fully aware of its whole contents, there is not a sentence in it that I will shrink from defending, or attempt to pervert from its plain meaning. I will shew you, Gentlemen, that the book libels nothing and disputes nothing but what is notoriously false and corrupt. I will shew you that the Attorney General is the enemy of philosophy and truth in filing this information against me, for selling a volume that abounds in both. I will shew you that it is he, not I, who is the evil disposed and wicked person. I will shew you, that in instituting this prosecution, the Attorney General has been guilty of a breach of public morals, and that he has attacked, mali-

ciously, the public welfare; for if that welfare centers in any one thing more than another, it is the cause of free discussion, where that discussion, as in this book, is carried on morally and philosophically.

Having premised thus much, and having promised you that in exposing the contents of the volume I will shew you that the evil disposition rests on the side of the prosecution, and not my side. I shall proceed to enquire, in what sense I have disregarded the laws and religion of this country.

The issue, as it's called, which you have to try, and which I call upon you to try, as you have sworn you will try it, by the evidence which the Attorney General has brought forward in its support, and not by his declamation, not by his clamour, not by his description of the work, not by his deceptive talk about religion and morals (which I will shew you to have no connection with each other) but solely by the proofs which he has laid before you, whether I and the book I have sold, do merit the epithets he has applied to us in the written accusation. I call upon you to look for proofs that I am a wicked and evil disposed person, and that the publication of this book is unlawful; and I call upon you, if you cannot find proofs of its unlawfulness, proofs by evidence to give me a verdict of Not Guilty, for in the absence of such proofs, which you have sworn "*to well and truly try,*" a verdict of Guilty will be an act of perjury.

Now, Gentlemen of the Jury, what proofs has the Attorney General laid before you that I am an evil disposed and wicked person? And further, what proofs, *above all, that the publication of this book is an unlawful act?* The only evidence he has laid before you is, that I have sold a copy of a book called "*Palmer's Principles of Nature,*" of which I am informed, 3000 copies have been sold within the last four years, and of which several editions have been sold in America, where it was written. I tell you candidly, that I have sold several copies of this book, and I tell you too, that there is nothing unlawful in the matter. This, Gentlemen, is the great point for you; there is nothing unlawful in selling the book. Has the Attorney General given you any proof that it is unlawful? He has not, and he cannot do it. He calls the book a libel, and you will be gravely told from the Bench, that, in the opinion of his Lordship, the book is a libel on the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion. But I will save his Lordship the trouble.

I will anticipate him, and tell you, as gravely, that it is my opinion, that the book is an attack upon the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion! There, Gentlemen, is candour for you! But I will tell you more! I will tell you, that the publication of what my prosecutors call a libel, is not unlawful; and that there is not an atom of law that can be applied to the matter! That, Gentlemen, is telling you more than the Attorney General or his Lordship either will tell you; for although they know it, they will not tell you so; but I will tell you so, and not only tell you so, but I will prove it! Now then, this is a point for your consideration.

What is a libel, Gentlemen? A book, and what is a book but a libel? Every book is a libel, and the libel trade is the most beneficial to the interests of the community, of all the trades that are carried on! Why, Gentlemen, without dealing in libels you could not have learnt your A, B, C, and the rest of the alphabet! Your very horn covered books, Gentlemen, if your grandmothers belonged to the old school, and were a credit to the "good old times," were libels? You have been brooding over libels all your life time! It is a singular fact, Gentlemen, that though we are accustomed to hear in this court, so much nonsense about every kind of libel being unlawful; yet, in several other courts, the records of the proceedings are uniformly denominated libels! The Attorney General has published a libel in filing an information against me. Aye Gentlemen, and one that is unlawful too! for he has, according to his own definition, published a false and scandalous libel? He has published a libel of and concerning me, that he cannot prove; whilst I can prove the truth of every assertion, of every allegation, of every inuendo, that is to be found in the libel that I have published! He dares not say that my book is a false libel. He dares not discuss the contents of that book either publicly or privately with me. No, he wants to deter me and others from all publication of it, because, and only because, it contains unanswerable arguments against a system of fraud and imposition! But we will shew him the futility of his attempt. If the libel could be confuted by discussion, he never would have asked your assistance to help him to get rid of it!

No, Gentlemen, he would have left it to the good sense, to the intelligence of the country to suppress it; but now, he wants your aid to check, as he pretends to imagine, the propagation of arguments that are calculated to generate intelligence, and to improve the general state of the public mind and the public morals!

It is charged and admitted, that I have libelled a book called the "Holy Scriptures;" that is, I have published a book that is a treatise on the contents of another book. And what has this to do with the law? What is a book, that it should claim the right of being exempt from criticism? A book or libel, written or printed, is nothing more than a delineation of some human mind, or minds, and criticism on whatever is made public, is a moral and very important duty; it all belongs to discussion, and from free discussion comes every thing that is valuable to societies of human beings. Give the right fair play, and it will triumph over every thing that is wrong and erroneous. But your verdict, Gentlemen, is not a matter of discussion, nor will it, in such a case of enquiry as this, stamp any thing either as right or wrong. It will not do to come into a court of law, in these days, and tell us, that the book called the Bible, is a work produced by something more than human power, and that its character should preserve it from all criticisms. The very assumption is a gross and scandalous imputation upon the power it falsely professes to respect! Such a book ought to be as open to examination as any other, for, wherever we search into the workings of the

Almighty, we find every thing that is admirable, delightful, and instructive.

Did you ever, Gentlemen, hear of any thing being libelled in the animal, the mineral, or vegetable world? You will say, no. Then why should that which is nothing more than the emanation of human minds be exempt from examination? It is all a practical delusion, and it shall be overthrown! The first verdict of "Not Guilty," in those trials, will be received with shouts of joy! It will be a circumstance that will be marked as an epoch in human affairs; it will be the dawn of free discussion, of a power to disperse those mists of prejudice which obscure and impede the working of intelligence among mankind. Intelligence is the moral sun; and is as important to humanity and human comforts, as the physical sun itself! The book which I have published was expressly written to strengthen this great moral orb; to open a way for it among the foul and filthy prejudices in which the great body of mankind is now wallowing, and to assist in drying up the sources of corruption, superstition, and falsehood!

Law, Gentlemen of the Jury, can have no relation to books, further than, as they may be private property, and as the character of any individual may be falsely traduced therein. Now, my employer had a moral right to the property of the book in question, and I had a moral right and a moral duty to dispose of this for his benefit. This is not disputed. Then upon the other point, where the law protects the person from calumny and misrepresentation, I am also free from any charge of a breach of the law. There is not a sentence in the book I have published, disrespectful to any living character. To say it is unlawful to comment on the lives of persons who have been dead two or three thousand years (if ever such persons were in existence) is an outrage upon common sense; particularly as there are here no relatives, no descendants to feel pain at the attack; and the persons alluded to were the inhabitants of a far distant country. There is no definable law to bring against such a book as I have published. Law is a compact among mankind to preserve property, character, liberty, health, and life. Now the book I have published, has not in the slightest degree, injured the lawful property of any individual, destroyed his character, or endangered his liberty, his health, or life. There is no one standing before you, Gentlemen, to complain of any thing of the kind. You have no evidence before you, that I have committed the slightest breach of law. No breach of any law, has even been pointed out to you; much less proved! Yet it is upon evidence alone that you can rest a verdict, and upon which you are sworn "well and truly to try." You are told that you have sworn upon the very book that you are called upon to protect from the criticism of my publication, but I tell you, Gentlemen, that the book on which you have sworn, makes no part of your oath.

Lord Chief Justice—You have taken upon you to tell the Jury more than you are authorized.

The Jury concurred with his Lordship, that in being sworn upon that book they admitted the truth of it.

The Defendant proceeded—If you were sworn to pronounce this book a libel, I have been prejudged before being heard.

An oath is a solemn affirmation, subject to a formality in its delivery; but the oath itself is a thing independent of the formality, for the law exempts the Quakers from the formality, which it imposes upon you, not being Quakers; and the affirmation or oath of the Quaker, though not admitted in criminal cases, has the same weight in civil cases as an oath, with all the formalities prescribed by law. My object in touching upon this matter is, to shew you, that the abstract part of an oath is a mere affirmation in this case, to say and to do that which is right and true, and a distinct thing from the formality of making you promise well and truly to try whether I have offended the law of this country and a true verdict to give on the evidence which shall come before you. Verdict signifies a true saying, a just inference; and, if when a jury says guilty or not guilty be not a verdict, the Judges will refer the matter to another Jury in the form of a new trial. Your oath, then, Gentlemen of the Jury, relates to nothing but the evidence that shall come before you; and your verdict must be founded on the evidence you have heard of the breach of a known law. You have sworn upon a book, which is a formality the law, or custom, prescribes; but it is only to impress you more strongly with the necessity of abiding by the law, that you are sworn at all. An oath in law is a presumption, that there is not sufficient integrity in the human character to speak the truth without some species of compulsion, some moral dread of departing from it.

This explanation, will, I trust, Gentlemen, place the matter in a proper light between us, and shew you, that you sit in that box as a Jury sworn, to try whether I have committed a breach of the law of this country; and that you have no present power to try any other question, in any other manner. You have no power to become critics upon books in that Jury box. If I shew you, that the volume, called “Palmer’s Principles of Nature,” contains not a sentence that is a breach of law, and if I shew you more explicitly that the extracts from that book, exhibited on the face of the record, do not form a breach of law; you are sworn to give me a verdict of “Not Guilty” and to send the Attorney General home to learn the law of the land before he exhibits another information upon such or upon any other matters. This, then, I undertake to do, in a manner that shall leave my prosecutor no means of answering me. I will drive him to declamation, as foreign to the subject under trial, as the publishing of this volume is to the breaking into a house, robbing it, or wounding, or killing a man

I lay it down as an axiom in jurisprudence, that nothing but pro-

perty or personal injury can come justly under the denomination of law; or in other words, that law relates to nothing that cannot be recognized as personal safety, or personal or general property. I will shew you, Gentlemen, that no kind of religion can come under the denomination of property, consequently, that it cannot come under the influence of law; and further, that the book which the information calls the Holy Scriptures, or the sentiments of that book, are no man's property; and that no man can justly bring it under the power of law. I have not stolen a book, I have not pirated the contents of a book; but the head and front of my offending is, that I have published a book which questions the assertions contained in another book, every part of which is at least more than a thousand years old. This questioning then, I will shew, is not a breach of law. But the beauty of the matter is, that this book called the Holy Scriptures, is a collection of the writings of men, ages ago, in a far distant nation, or nations, and though we seek to protect it from all criticism, we persecute the very people, as irreligious idolators, from whom we have borrowed the major part of this book called the Holy Scriptures, and to whom we acknowledge this holy revelation expressly and exclusively applies!

This is one of the thousand anomalies which attends the attempt to make religion come under the power, protection, and influence of laws, to which it bears no relation.

These prosecutions come with a very bad grace since the year 1813, when the legislature enacted that it should be no longer unlawful to impugn the Trinity, that is to say, to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, or of all three Gods in the Christian Creed.

It is well known and understood that the act was meant to be a partial act, and to be confined to the relief of the sect called Unitarian Christians; but the wording gives it a much greater latitude; and as the sect of Unitarian Christians are not expressly mentioned, we the Deists, nay Atheists, even, are entitled to protection by it, and to a forbearance of all persecution for matters of religious or anti-religious opinions. The title of it expressly states, that, it is *An Act to relieve those Persons who impugn the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.*

Lord Chief Justice—No such thing; it is an Act passed only to relieve them from penalties incurred under a former statute.

Defendant persisted these were the words of the preamble of the Act in question. Thus did the legislature themselves permit the impugning the truth of the doctrine of the Godhead of the Trinity, which the Solicitor General told the Jury was part and parcel of the law of the land, and that it was a libel so to impugn. He would prove the truth of the Bible was no part of the law. There could be no such law as would compel men to admit the truth of any system of religion. No man could claim a property in religion, and therefore there could be no principle of law recognising the protection of that in which no man had any property or right. The legislature had sanctioned the denial of the Godhead of the Trinity.

The Act was expressly entitled, "An Act to relieve those who denied or impugned the truth of the Holy Trinity."

Now the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the doctrine of the Christian Church, and the foundation of the Christian Religion; therefore, this Act states, as plainly as words can state, that it is lawful to impugn the Christian Church, or the worship of the Christian's Deity. All our Judges are fully alive to the loose and unguarded wording of this act, and to get over the dilemma in which it has placed them, when such mischievous informations as this come before the Court for trial, to support the Attorney General, they bring up a phantom which they call common law to overpower this statute; that is, they tell us in plain language, that the laws made by the Parliament are not sufficiently powerful to abrogate the laws, called common laws made by them, the Judges!

But you, Gentlemen of the Jury, are the final judges of the law, in this, and in every other matter, and it is for you to say, whether you will bend to this monstrous judicial assertion, that the laws made by the Parliament have no power to controul the laws made by the Judges! This is a plain statement of the matter; and I claim from you, that you will act upon your oaths, and a true verdict give, according to the evidence, of a breach of a law. I call upon you to respect the laws made by the King, Lords, and Commons, and to disregard those made by the Judges. Common law is Judge-made law, and as far as it relates to the Christian Religion, has been vamped up without the least parliamentary sanction. In fact, all written laws upon the matter would be null and void, because, the words *Christian*, *Christianity*, or *Christian Religion*, cannot be shewn to relate to any thing in existence, so as to be compounded into a law, that must relate to actions, and to beings.

I desire no better proof, that it is impossible to make any kind of law that relates to opinions only, than the Act of the 53d of George the Third, respecting the Trinity; if such laws are meant to controul opinions. That act evidently tolerates the Atheist in impugning the Deity, or in denying the existence of a Deity; for the Christian acknowledges no God but the Holy Trinity, and that God, the Parliament have made it lawful to impugn! Yes, the British Christian Parliament allows any British Citizen to impugn their Almighty God! This is a great humility in Christians to be sure, and is a proof of what sort of reverence they feel for the great Architect of the Universe. The Deist, and Atheist steers clear of all these anomalies, he acknowledges one great and infinite active power in nature, but he would not arrogantly assume the power to lay down laws or rules concerning other men's opinions of that Almighty Power.

From these few observations, Gentlemen, you may see how ridiculous is all law that pretends to support religion! How vain the man or men that would controul the opinions of others upon such an undefinable matter! How wicked to inflict fines and imprison-

ment upon such pretences! Put a stop to such wickedness, Gentlemen! You have now the opportunity! If you miss that opportunity, the voice of reason will soon command attention to it.

I have now, Gentlemen, I think, cleared myself of the two first charges in the indictment; and I flatter myself, that I have shewn you, I am not an evil disposed and wicked person; and that I have not disregarded the laws of this realm; but I will offer you a few further arguments upon this subject.

It is almost become a proverb among our judges and lawyers, that "Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land," but often as this has been dinned into our ears, I will shew you, Gentlemen, that it is not a true saying, and that Christianity has no connection with the laws of this country. To do this (and I have a right to do it, and to discuss the matter as to its being or not being a question of law) I must begin by enquiring, what is law? And what is Christianity?

Law is a compact between the members of the community for the mutual preservation of property, and the enforcement of good morals. In no sense of the word, *law*, can it be made to apply to any thing else.

Christianity is not a property; it has no properties, nor can one man administer it to another. Religion altogether, forms nothing in the character of property, or of morality; one man cannot rob another of his religion. One man cannot injure another man's religion. Therefore it can have no relation to law. There can be no offence against law committed, unless some person can shew an injury done. The Attorney General has not shewn that I have done any man an injury; and pray, upon what ground can he seek to punish me; to throw me into a prison with felons, to destroy my health, and perhaps my life? Is it because I have published a book only? What harm is there in such an act? I dare him to shew the slightest falsehood or misrepresentation in that book: I dare him to shew even a philosophical error in that book: I dare him to impeach the morality of that book; and I dare him to write any thing half so important to the community.

But, he would suppress it, because it is a book above the reach of his narrow mind. It does not cajole the multitude about tithes and taxes, and the necessity of submitting to the wishes and instructions of those who are in power over them; but it opens their eyes to some of the robberies and the immoralities practised upon them. It is a book calculated to strengthen the laws instead of being an offence against them. It is a defence of public morals against the crafts, the abuses, and the immoralities practised under the name of religion.

The Lord Chief Justice here interrupted the Defendant, who declared that the Christian religion could not be libelled, because it was in itself libellous, absurd, blasphemous, and against law.

Defendant—I will conduct my defence in my own way, and not as your Lordship may please to dictate to me.

Religion or Christianity, what is it? Law cannot recognize it. Morality spurns it.

The Lord Chief Justice interfered and said, I will not suffer such expressions to be applied by any man in this Court to the Christian Religion.

The Defendant, however, proceeded to characterize the Bible as “a thing of fancy.”

It is a thing of the imagination only. It relates to nothing of which we have the slightest proof of existence. It is a thing of words, of fables, of fancies, of chimeras. It is not law, nor can it be connected with law.

The Lord Chief Justice—I will not hear such reflections as these, I have a duty to perform to the public, as well as to you: I am most anxious to give you a full opportunity of stating every thing which can tend to your benefit, but I will not, I cannot, suffer the Christian religion to be attacked in a court of justice where I preside.

Defendant—I am urging nothing irrelevant to my defence. It is not I, but the Attorney General, who provokes this discussion by bringing me here. It cannot be an offence against law to publish unanswerable arguments, or to say that the Christian religion is untrue; for the whole of Christianity rests upon the belief of a triune God, and the laws declare, that a man may, without a breach of them, impugn the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Lord Chief Justice—But I say it is an offence against law to say that the Christian religion is untrue.

Defendant.—Then point out the statute that makes it so.

Lord Chief Justice—I shall do no such thing.

It is not a property, it is not a quality, it has no modes, no degrees, no meaning. It is a nonentity. Every law has a physical relation, or any thing called law that has not, is null and void, and a matter into which a Jury is not competent to enquire. What can you find me guilty of? Publishing a book? That is no offence against law. Publishing arguments that cannot be refuted? That is no offence against law. Questioning the value and foundation of Christianity? That is no offence against law.

Lord Chief Justice—Yes, it is; I tell you so.

Not a man in this Court will attempt to expound in what Christianity consists, or shew it to consist of any thing that can constitute a law, a moral, or a property. Why, Gentlemen, you have nothing to try! You are sworn to try; and what? Why whether I have offended any known law. It is put in evidence before you that I have published a book; I support that evidence; and that is the only evidence before you. And what have you to try? The contents of the book? That is not your province, unless any living character

came into Court to say that I had defamed him, and that he had sustained damages by my act. Here there is nothing of the kind.

The Attorney General tells you he does not like this book, his Lordship will tell you, that, in his opinion, the book is a libel, which is saying just as much as if he would say, the libel is a book. And what is all this to you? Where the Attorney General can find one person to say this is a bad book, I can find one hundred to say conscientiously that they think it is a very good and very useful book. And who ought to be the triers in this matter? Not a Jury: not a court of law. Leave it to the philosophical critic. Leave it to the searcher after truth. Leave it to the taste of the public.

What will be the use of sending me to a dungeon for selling a copy of this book? Will it put it down? Will it make those who hold other copies give them up or burn them? Will it be able to expel the work from this country? Never! It can do none of those things. It will not stop the sale; for though the edition for which I am prosecuted is out of print, others have reprinted the work, and my employer will reprint it. Nothing of this kind will ever be suppressed as long as there is a demand for a copy, and these prosecutions bring demands that never would have existed in their absence.

A book called the "Age of Reason" was prosecuted in the year 1797, and several times from that time, or from its first appearance to the year 1819; but what effect has it had? Why, when the prosecutions were not pending, the work sold amongst all the booksellers slowly as a standard work: if all booksellers would not sell it, some would, and the book has never been out of print from its first appearance in this country, to the present time; whilst now in consequence of the many late prosecutions, it is in rapid sale by different publishers, in different editions, and the demand is at the rate of from five to ten thousand a year, and has been for the last four years.

What I am stating Gentlemen are facts, which I could support by the most respectable witnesses, by printers, who have printed them, and by publishers who have published them. I have been several years in the book trade, and have been in the employ of the first concern of the kind, in the country; and I can state, without fear of contradiction, that there is no Deistical book that has ever been prosecuted, but what has been kept in constant sale. If not sold openly, all booksellers know where to apply for them, and any respectable man applying to a respectable bookseller, may, at any time, obtain any kind of book he may wish. The more they are prosecuted, the more they are called for, and this one fact makes those prosecutions the greatest of possible hypocrisies, even if they had a foundation in law.

The Attorney General calls upon you to put a stop to an evil; and if we admit it to be an evil; can you put a stop to it? You cannot! You may punish me, a bookseller's servant, but you cannot

reach the book. There is more than one Printing Press; there is more than one bookseller, in this country; and whatever they find profitable they will print and sell. The Printing Press is above the tyrant's reach; it will dethrone him; it laughs to scorn the interference of Attorney Generals, Chief Justices, and Special Juries, and even the gangs of Essex Street, and Bridge Street, who associate to check its powers.

A law may be made to build a church, to pay the priest a salary, to give him the tithes of the produce of the land and the agricultural labourer; but a law cannot be made to say that a man shall believe, that certain words have certain meanings which they have not. A law cannot be made and enforced that says, a man shall hold to certain opinions, and not enquire into their truth or falsehood. A law cannot be made to judge and decide on the contents of different books. To denounce a book as libellous, or a breach of privilege towards the members of Parliament, is now a ready way to convince the public that it contains unanswerable statements. What can be answered is never prosecuted. If the Priests, or the Government Scribes of the day, could answer any statements that may be set forth against them, the Printing Presses of the country would be all employed to that purpose; but all the Priests, all the Scribes, and all the Presses in the country, can never make us believe that three are one in number, and that one is the same as three.

Law cannot relate to any individual considerations, to religion, nor to any abstract opinions, though they be published; it relates to nothing between individuals, unless where the one receives an injury from another. You see no one before you, Gentlemen of the Jury, to shew you that I have done him an injury, consequently, you have nothing to try me for. Religion, being altogether a thing of the mind, and bearing no relation to property, nor even to public morals, it cannot be brought under the cognizance of the law. Let each of you, Gentlemen, ask himself the question, whatever may be the state of his religious mind, whether I, in publishing any book I have published, can do him an injury? You shall have the experimental part of this question, I will read the whole book to you, and then, if you do not feel an injury, that you are deprived of something valuable, you must honestly conclude that the reading of the book cannot have produced a different effect upon any other person, and you are sworn to acquit me of all malicious intention in its publication.

To whom can I have borne malice in this matter? Did I bear malice towards the Attorney General, and sell his agent the book to do him an injury? Will you believe such an unfounded assumption? To whom then have I shewn malice in selling this book, as an act of a servant, and as an act of fidelity to my employer? It is utterly impossible, Gentlemen, for you to return me guilty of the charges of the Information without perjuring yourselves! Yes, view

the matter which way you will, you have no alternative, if you act upon your oath, but to acquit me of the charge of malice exhibited against me. Unless you are prepared to say, that I sold that book maliciously to the Attorney General, or his agent, or both, with an intent to do them an injury, you are sworn to acquit me of the charge. Call the book mental poison, or call it what you like, have you any evidence that I have poisoned the mind of the Attorney General, or of his agent who received the book at my hand? Shall you be able to say, after hearing it read, that I have poisoned your minds?

Verdicts have hitherto been given in such cases at the nod and wish of the Judge, and the demand of the Attorney General, without any deliberation or consideration on the part of the Jury. Every Jury that have pronounced a verdict of guilty upon a similar case to mine, have quitted their box as perjured men. Perjured, because they pronounced defendants guilty of that, of which it was a moral impossibility that they could have been guilty.

If a man comes to me, as is usually the mode adopted in these cases, and professes great admiration for the principles espoused in "Palmer's Principles of Nature," and begs me to sell to him, as a friend, a copy of the work, can you find me guilty of selling that work to that man with a malicious intention? This is the only question you have to try, and upon this question you will have to give a verdict.

Upon the third point in the Information, or that I have sought to bring the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion into contempt, I shall defer my observations and explanations until after I have read the work, as it will form the conclusion of my defence.

The fourth charge, which says, that I have published this book to the high displeasure of Almighty God, to the great scandal of the Christian religion, to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of the King, his crown and dignity; is monstrous in the extreme! The real blasphemy, the practical profanation, that which detracts from the dignity of the Crown, is to be found in the record drawn up against me; in the form of that record, not in the extracts from my publication. I pronounce the Attorney General a blasphemer, in saying that I have incurred the high displeasure of Almighty God! He has laid before you, Gentlemen, a distinct evidence of his blasphemy; but he cannot prove any thing of the kind against me. How does he know, that I have incurred the high displeasure of Almighty God? Who or what has made any revelation of the kind to him? It is a false blasphemy, Gentlemen, I have not incurred the high displeasure of Almighty God; and I should be glad, if the Attorney General would devise some mode of trial by ordeal between us, that we may see which is most out of favour. I should not fear the result, and would readily enter into a combat with him, even if it was upon the late law process of "Wager of Battle."

That conduct which would confer the greatest dignity upon the Legislature and Chief Magistrate of this country, would be to abolish all laws that constrain opinions, and form a bar to full and free discussion.

It is abominable, that one class of a community should have the power to set up as an arbitration over the opinions of another class; and that too from selfish motives. There is no liberty where there is a war against opinions, though they never can be conquered by force of arms, or of punishment, or by any other power than the force of argument elicited by free discussion.

I shall now, Gentlemen, proceed to read to you the whole of the volume, for the publication of which I am brought here. Interruptions have been made in former attempts of this nature; but those interruptions are contrary to law. I am determined to read the whole work, word by word, because, it is the only kind of evidence that I can offer you. If I were to call witnesses and ask their opinion of the book, or its parts, the Judge would interfere and stop the proceeding; therefore, I shall assert my right to make the book speak for itself. You cannot judge of the book by the extracts taken into the Information; you can only judge of it as a whole; and in cases of this kind, every jurymen ought to have read deliberately the work which he has to try, before he enters the box. These cases are not like law cases; this is not a law case at all. You are called upon to express your opinion of the contents of a book, and it becomes more a case of equity, than any thing else. You ought, like the Lord Chancellor, to keep doubting until you have the whole matter fully in your mind, by taking home a copy of the book for that deliberate consideration which cannot be given to it in a public arena like this Court.

“ *PRINCIPLES OF NATURE; or, a Developement of the moral Causes of Happiness and Misery among the Human Species.* By ELIHU PALMER.

“ I’ll not be made a soft and dull-ey’d fool,
To shake the head, relent and sigh and yield
To Christian intercessors.” SHAKSPEARE.

“ Prove all things.” 1 THESS. v. 21.

PREFACE.

“ God, to remove his ways from human sense,
Placed Heaven from earth so far, that earthly sight,
If it presume, might err in things too high,
And no advantage gain.” MILTON.

“ THE establishment of theological systems, claiming divine origin, has been among the most destructive causes by which the life of man has been afflicted. History furnishes an awful picture of the sad and fatal effects of fanaticism among the nations of the earth; but history furnishes only the exterior; there is a deeper internal wound, which superstition has inflicted in the bosom of society, subversive of all moral sympathy and the fairest traits in the character of man. The sincerity with which many upright minds are attached to the Christian religion, can form no substantial objection against an unqualified investigation into its truth or falsehood.

If it be founded in truth, it will stand the test of every examination—it will stand the test of all future ages, and become immortal. It is a point of justice to observe, that this work has been written under the misfortune and embarrassment of a total loss of sight. This, in the estimation of candid minds, will form at least a partial apology for verbal incorrectness, or the want of better arrangement in the construction of sentences; but it is not offered as constituting any kind of apology for errors of opinion or principle. On this head the fullest examination is invited; and, if any one can point out in what respect the principles herein advanced are inconsistent and erroneous, the author will be among the first to reject and condemn them. But this must be done upon the ground of evidence, and not of authority, as the latter bears no relation to truth. The great moral and political questions which now agitate the world, cannot be settled by an appeal to the authority of law books, theological books, or the decisions of ecclesiastical councils; they rest upon the broad basis of evidence, and by this principle alone they must be determined. The circumstance that the author was once a public speaker in the cause of Christianity, which is here opposed, so far from forming a reasonable objection against the perusal of this work, ought to become an additional motive of attention; for it was by a candid and attentive investigation into the character of revealed religion, that he became convinced that it was neither true nor divine. It was, therefore, a duty, which he owed to the integrity of his own mind, and what was deemed the best interests of human society, to abandon that system, and assume a higher and better ground—that of Nature, and the immutability of her laws. If any one should be disposed to censure on this account, let him remember that there is more honour and much more utility in the relinquishment than in the retention of errors. The new chapters contained in this edition are intended to awaken a spirit of philosophic inquiry in every description of adherents to the ancient regimen, and to induce them to pass once more in review the religious theories to which they have been so strongly attached. The principal design of the author, through the whole of this work, has been to give to moral principle a basis as durable as time, and as immortal as the specific succession of human existence; and to render the sentiment of virtue, as far as possible, independent of all the theological reveries of antiquity.

CHAPTER I.

The Power of Intellect, its Duty, and the Obstacles that oppose its Progress.

THE sources of hope and consolation to the human race are to be sought for in the energy of intellectual powers. To these, every specific amelioration must bear a constant and invariable reference; and whatever opposes the progress of such a power, is unquestionably in most pointed opposition to the best and most important interests of our species. The organic construction of man induces a strong conclusion that no limits can possibly be assigned to his moral and scientific improvements. The question relative to the nature and substance of the human mind, is of much less consequence than that which relates to the extent of force and capacity, and the diversified modes of beneficial application. The strength of human understanding is incalculable, its keenness of discernment would ultimately penetrate into every part of nature, were it permitted to operate with uncontrolled and unqualified freedom. It is because this sublime principle of man has been constantly the object of the most scurrilous abuse, and the most detestable invective from superstition, that his moral existence has been buried in the gulf of ignorance, and his intellectual powers tarnished by the ferocious and impure hand of fanaticism. Although we are made capable of sublime reflections, it has hitherto been deemed a crime to think, and a still greater crime to speak our thoughts after they have been conceived. The despotism of the universe had waged war against the power of the human understanding, and for many ages successfully combated its efforts, but the natural energy of this immortal property of human existence was incapable of being controlled by such extraneous and degrading restraints. It burst the walls of its prison, explored the earth, discovered the properties of its component parts, analyzed their natures, and gave to them specific classification and arrangement. Not content with terrestrial researches, intellect abandoned the earth, and travelled in quest of science

through the celestial regions. The heavens were explored, the stars were counted, and the revolutions of the planets subjected to mathematical calculation. All nature became the theatre of human action, and man in his unbounded and ardent desire attempted to embrace the universe. Such was the nature of his powers, such their strength and fervour, that hopes and anticipations were unqualified and unlimited. The subordinate objects in the great mass of existence were decomposed, and the essential peculiarities of their different natures delineated with astonishing accuracy and wonderful precision. Situated in the midst of a world of physical wonders, and having made some progress in the analytical decomposition of material substances, and the relative position of revolving orbs, man began to turn his powers to the nice disquisitions of the subtle properties of his mental existence. Here the force of his faculties was opposed by the darkness and difficulties of the subject; and superstition, ever ready to arrest and destroy moral improvement, cast innumerable difficulties in the way, and the bewildered mind found this part of the system of nature less accessible than the physical universe, whose prominent disparities struck the understanding and presented clear discrimination. The ignorance and barbarism of former ages, it is said, furnish an awful intimation of the imbecility of our mental powers, and the hopeless condition of the human race. If thought be reflected back for the purpose of recognizing through a long night of time, the miseries and ignorance of the species, there will be found, no doubt, powerful causes of lamentation; but courage will be resuscitated when the energy of intellect is displayed, and the improvement of the world, which has been already made, shall be clearly exhibited to view. It is not sufficient that man acknowledge the possession of his intellectual powers, it is also necessary that these powers should be developed, and their force directed to the discovery of direct principle, and the useful application of it to social life; errors, evils, and vices, every where exist, and by these the world has been rendered continually wretched, and the history of mankind furnishes the dreadful lessons, and shocks the sensibility of every human being. The savage ferocity of despotism has destroyed the harmony of society; the unrelenting cruelty of superstition has cut asunder the finest fibres that ever concreted the hearts of intelligent beings. It has buried beneath its gloomy vale all the moral properties of our existence, and entombed in the grave of ignorance and terror, the most sublime energies, and the purest affections of the human mind. An important duty is therefore imposed upon intellect, and a departure from its faithful performance should be ranked among the crimes which have most disgraced and injured the felicity of the world. If the few philanthropists who have embarked in the cause of humanity, have not been adequately rewarded, it is, nevertheless, true, that the principle and force of duty remain the same, unbroken and incapable of being abrogated. It is the discovery and propagation of truth which ought to engage the attention of man, and call forth the powerful activity of his mind.

“The nature of ancient institutions, instead of forming a reason against the activity of mind, should be considered as constituting a double stimulus; these institutions are such a complete abandonment of every just and correct principle; they have been so destructive in their operation and effects, that nothing but the strong and energetic movement of the human understanding will be capable of subverting them. The whole earth has been made the wretched abode of ignorance and misery; and to priests and tyrants these dreadful effects are to be attributed. These are the privileged monsters who have subjugated the earth, destroyed the peace and industry of society, and committed the most atrocious of all robberies; that which has robbed human nature of its intellectual property, leaving all in a state of waste and barrenness. Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Mahomet, are names celebrated in history; but what are they celebrated for? Have their institutions softened the savage ferocity of man? Have they developed a clear system of principle, either moral, scientific, or philosophical? Have they encouraged the free and unqualified operation of intellect, or, rather by their institutions, has not a gloom been thrown over the clearest subjects, and their examination prohibited under the severest penalties? The successors and followers of these men have adhered to the destructive lessons of their masters with undeviating tenacity. This has formed one of the most powerful obstacles to the progress of improvement, and still threatens, with eternal *damna-*

tion, that man who shall call in question the truth of their *dogmas*, or the divinity of their systems.

“The political tyranny of the earth coalesced with this phalanx of religious despots, and the love of science and of virtue was nearly banished from the world. Twelve centuries of moral and political darkness, in which Europe was involved, had nearly completed the destruction of human dignity, and every thing valuable or ornamental in the character of man. During this long and doleful night of ignorance, slavery, and superstition, Christianity reigned triumphant; its doctrines and divinity were not called in question. The power of the Pope, the clergy, and the church, were omnipotent; nothing could restrain their phrenzy, nothing could control the cruelty of their fanaticism; with mad enthusiasm they set on foot the most bloody and terrific crusades, the object of which was to recover from infidels the *Holy Land*. Seven hundred thousand men are said to have perished in the two first expeditions, which had been thus commenced and carried on by the pious zeal of the Christian church, and in the total amount, several millions were found numbered with the dead: the awful effects of religious fanaticism presuming upon the aid of heaven. It was then that man lost all his dignity, and sunk to the condition of a brute; it was then that intellect received a deadly blow, from which it did not recover till the fifteenth century. From that time to the present, the progress of knowledge has been constantly accelerated; independence of mind has been asserted, and opposing obstacles have been gradually diminished. The church has resigned a part of her power, the better to retain the remainder; civil tyranny has been shaken to its centre in both hemispheres; the malignity of superstition is abating, and every species of *quackery*, imposture, and imposition, are yielding to the light and power of science. An awful contest has commenced, which must terminate in the destruction of thrones and civil despotism; in the annihilation of ecclesiastical pride and domination; or, on the other hand, intellect, science, and manly virtue, will be crushed in one general ruin, and the world will retrograde towards a state of ignorance, barbarism, and misery. The latter however is an event rendered almost impossible by the discovery of the art of printing, by the expansion of mind, and the general augmentation of knowledge. Church and State may unite to form an insurmountable barrier against the extension of thought, the moral progress of nations and the felicity of nature; but let it be recollected, that the guarantee for moral and political emancipation is already deposited in the archives of every school and college, and in the mind of every cultivated and enlightened man of all countries. It will henceforth be a vain and fruitless attempt to reduce the earth to that state of slavery of which the history of former ages has furnished such an awful picture. The crimes of ecclesiastical despots are still corroding upon the very vitals of human society; the severities of civil power will never be forgotten. The destructive influence of ancient institutions will teach us to seek in nature and the knowledge of her laws, for the discovery of those principles whose operation alone can emancipate the world from dreadful bondage. If in the succeeding chapters we shall be able to destroy any considerable portion of human errors, and establish some solid truths, our labours will bear a relation to the progressive improvement of the human race, which, to intelligent minds, is of all considerations the most beneficial and important.

CHAPTER II.

Theology and its Effects.

“THE impressions that are made on the human mind by the awful and tremendous powers of nature, have filled it with terror and astonishment. If by a laborious investigation of the universe, and the laws by which it is regulated: if by an examination of our own constitution and the refined properties of our existence; if from a view of the moral and physical world, in the aggregate, we are led to the idea of simple Theism including all possible perfection; it will nevertheless be found substantially true, that with all savage nations, and even with the mass of the people in civilized countries, that no such sublime conception has ever formed any part of their systems of theology. Rude, immoral, and incoherent opinions have been heaped

together upon this subject, and gods innumerable have been fabricated by a distempered and disordered imagination. It is only with those who have made some progress in science, that any clear and correct ideas of theology have been found; the God of Ignorance has always been an immortal monster, whose attributes spread terror through the whole animal world. The power of thought, directed to the examination of the laws of nature, or to the science of ontology, is pressed by an ultimate necessity to the admission of an immortal principle, to the faint conception of an eternal Being, whose perfections guarantee the existence and harmony of the universe. The essence of such a Being is inconceivable, and that mind which has no doubt on the reality of the case, is, nevertheless, incompetent to the discovery of mode, manner, or place of residence. If the material world be excluded from constituting any share in the essence of such a Being, the refinements and speculations will afterwards become extremely subtle, and conception will, perhaps, be nearly lost in the spirituality of the subject. The principle of causation is, of all others, the most difficult of examination, because it includes the idea of an infinite series in which the last point at which the mind arrives presents a new difficulty not less than the former, and involving the idea of eternal progression. Metaphysical reasoning on the subject is, however, reserved to occupy a place near the close of this Work, where Theism and its combatants will receive a suitable share of reflection. At present it is sufficient that we refer the universe, its laws, and order, to the divinity of thought emanating from the most perfect of all beings. It has been a great question, how far the principle of theology affects the principle and practice of virtue. It can be matter of no doubt, in the first place, that a corrupt and vitiated theology has ever been the bane of morality, and produced effects of the most destructive and detestable nature. An infinite Being, clothed with immoral attributes, and yet made an object of worship and affection, will indubitably pervert the finest sensations of the human heart, and render savage and ferocious the character of man. This is not conjecture, it is verified by facts; the history of all churches proves it beyond contradiction. It is natural to expect such an effect; the Being that is worshipped is presented as a pattern, and to imitate his properties is declared to be an essential duty. If such a Being commit murder, or at any time gives orders to the human race to perform such cruel act, the order once given is the signal for military assassination, national vengeance, or the exercise of domestic resentment. The world becomes a field of blood, and man is slaughtered in the name of Heaven. From the introduction of Christianity into the world, to the present moment, there is scarcely a single war that has taken place in Europe but what has verified this opinion. The church has always been danger, it is in danger still, and always will be, so long as there shall be found on earth a single privileged impostor, to sound in the name of Heaven, the trumpet of alarm among the nations of the world. The purest ideas of the Divinity are necessary for the correct operation of the moral powers of man; there cannot remain a shadow of doubt, when recourse is made to the history of the Jews and Christians, that the god or gods whom they have adored have produced an unfavourable effect upon their moral temperament and habits. The Jewish god is denominated a god of vengeance, wrath, and fury. He gives commands for the indiscriminate massacre of men, women, and children, declaring that not a soul should be left alive. The God of the Jews is inherited by the Christians with additional specimens of injustice and immorality. An infinite and eternal Son, equal to himself, becomes the object of his wrath, and on him with unrelenting severity he wreaks his terrible vengeance. This awful and immoral action is considered in the view of the Christian believer, as an excellent preparatory step to the exercise of gratitude, and the overflowings of filial affections. When man makes to himself gods of such a character, it were far better that he had been destitute of all theological opinions, or that his adoration should have been offered to that resplendent luminary that enlightens the world, and vivifies the productions of the earth. The principle of morality is founded in the nature of man, and modified by his reciprocal relations; this principle cannot be augmented in its force or application by a reference to those barbarous phantoms and incongruous beings which the theology of the Jews and Christians, as well as all savage nations, has presented to view. Individuals and nations will always be wicked so long as they adore a divi-

divinity of loose and immoral character. Theology must first be rendered pure, and then it will become a question of magnitude, what influential relation it bears to the science of morality and happiness of the world.

CHAPTER III.

Christian Theology.

“ BELIEVERS in the Christian system of religion are seldom aware of the difficulties into which their theological theories have plunged them. They are in habits of bestowing on this religion the most unqualified applause, and in most cases, no doubt, the most sincere approbation; but the errors and absurdities, the immorality, and the incorrectness of principle, have never made any serious impression upon their minds. The dreadful idea of opposing that which has been called divine, strikes with terror the uninstructed mind, and ignorance feeds the ecclesiastical deception. Ignorance is an excellent friend to an ancient system of error, to the church and the different projects by which mankind have been enslaved. If you can once persuade a man that he is totally ignorant of the subject on which you are about to discourse, you can make him believe any thing. Impositions of this kind are furnished by every day's experience; and the victim of such imposition is commonly the first to applaud the instrument of his ruin.

“ Nothing can be more true, nothing more certain, or important, than that man owes to himself due respect, that his intellect is an object of veneration, and its result interwoven with the best interests of human society. The distorted exhibitions of imaginary beings contained in all ancient theology, ought to excite within us a strong desire to discover truth, and reclaim the dignity which nature gave to man. Fanaticism, when armed with the artillery of Heaven, ought not to be permitted to shake the throne or empire of reason; the base is immortal, and the superstructure will be augmented in beauty and excellence, in proportion to the progress of knowledge and the destruction of religious bigotry. It is remarkable, that with many honest minds the consciousness of intellectual independence has never been realized, and fear has prevented the activity of thought and the developement of truth. Names have assumed a weight and authority, which in reality does not belong to them. The church and its maxims have been revered; subordinate agents of the Creator have produced universal trepidation; the Devil has broke into the felicity of the moral world, and God himself, even with the Christian church, is an object of terror and dismay. These subjects carry along with them the most dreadful alarm, and man, amidst the reveries of supernatural theology, becomes either feeble or foolish, his power relaxed, his energy is gone, and he sinks beneath the system of fear, which it is the office of cultivated reason alone to destroy. Such are the fatal effects of all theology, but more particularly of that which is denominated Christian. The Christian world worships three infinite Gods, and one omniscient and omnipresent Devil*. This last being is an object rather of terror and frightful

* These assertions have been objected to as incorrect by some believers, who read the first edition of this work. The explanatory and qualifying remarks which follow this phrase in the text, ought to have silenced objections of this kind: but there are other Scriptural considerations which will abundantly destroy the force of the objection. God is represented as a being of wrath, vengeance, and fury—so also is the Devil! The worship of God consists in a very high degree in the sentiment of fear. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, fear God and keep his commandments, &c. Christian believers are also most terribly afraid of the Devil; if the sentiment of fear be worship in the one case, why should it not be so considered in the other case? But this is not all; the description given of these two beings in Holy Writ, is so perfectly similar, that believers, in order to be consistent, ought to include them both as objects of worship. Speaking of God, the Scriptures say, *He was unto me as a Bear lying in wait, and as a Lion in secret places.* Lam. iii. 10. And of the Devil, *He goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.* 1 Peter v. 8. The only distinction here is, that the one was a roaring lion, and the

apprehension, than of worship and adoration; but as he is clothed with nearly all the attributes which this system of religion has ascribed to its divinity, or divinities, and as the latter is also clothed with the awful qualities of wrath and vengeance, it would be difficult to offer any good reason why the one should be entitled, in the view of the Christian believer, to more homage than the other, since between them there is so striking a resemblance of character. But whether Christian theology represents the Devil as an object of worship or only of fear, it is nevertheless certain, that he is a very important and essential character in the drama therein acted. He holds a prominent and conspicuous place in this wonderful system of mythology, and his destruction would go far to the ruin of the scheme itself. There are many other subordinate agents, who are actors in the Christian scenes, such as angels, ghosts, and witches; these, however, are not considered as objects of adoration, but are only to be treated with that degree of civility and respect, to which their station in this celestial and mythological aristocracy may justly entitle them. This variegated groupe of gods, devils, angels, ghosts, and witches, is what constitutes essentially the supernatural theology, or rather mythology of the Christian world. One sect, the most ancient, and like all others, in their own estimation, the most orthodox, have added one female divinity to complete the beauty and wonder of the scheme. The *Virgin Mary*, among the Papists, is called the mother of God; and having produced so respectable an offspring, is frequently addressed with prayers and supplications, and to her, also, divine honours are paid.

“ Next to the absurdity of the leading idea contained in the nature of this theological system, is that branch of it which violates all the rules of arithmetical calculation, and mathematical proportion; that which violates all ideas of common sense and common understanding, the awful doctrine of the Trinity. The *Father is God*, the *Son is God*, and the *Holy Ghost is God*; and yet there are not *Three Gods*, but *One God*. The *Father is Almighty*, the *Son is Almighty*, and the *Holy Ghost is Almighty*; yet there are not *three* Almighties, but one Almighty*. The essence of this doctrine is, that there is but one infinite and perfect being, yet there are three infinite and perfect beings. When the Christian is asked how many Gods there are, he will answer, there is but one. If the inquiry be made, how many persons this God is divided into, the answer is, three; but to each of these three persons all possible perfection is attributed, and yet in a compound state, the whole mass of perfection continues the same. Let this doctrine be subjected to rational investigation, and its absurdity and contradiction must strike with astonishment every correct mind. There cannot possibly exist in nature more than one infinite, eternal, and perfect being; one infinity swallows up all others, and it is impossible to add to that which is already as great as it can be. If God the Father possesses all possible excellence, if he be infinite in extent, infinite in duration, there can be no space or time in which any other infinite being could possibly exist. Two infinities must either coincide and coalesce, and then they would become one, or they would destroy each other. If the Father is possessed of infinite wisdom, such attribute cannot belong either to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost; if the Son, the second person, possessed such infinite wisdom, it would operate as a disfranchisement of the other two; the same will apply to the *Holy Ghost*, in exclusion of his

other did not roar; but this deficiency is made up by coupling with the still lion a still bear also; for these two put together would probably be about equal, in point of terror, to the roaring lion. When Christian believers are so inconsistent as to worship these immoral monsters, or either of them, they ought to cease to charge others with lies and blasphemies. As to the first part of the phrase, That the Christian world worships three infinite Gods—this is *certainly* true, and demonstrated by the single consideration, that they attribute infinite perfection to each person in the Trinity. The unintelligible union of these three persons cannot destroy in any degree whatever, the infinite perfection ascribed to each; it therefore remains true, that the Christian world really worship three infinite Gods, or infinite persons, which is exactly the same thing.

* See St. Athanasius's Creed.

competitors; there can be but one infinite; a double infinite is a double absurdity, and the Trinitarian idea is incongruous and impossible. If the assertion be made, that one is equal to three, and that three are no more than one, all numerical distinction is totally destroyed, and man consents to become a fool upon the plainest points. Trinitarian declarations are direct contradictions to each other; the part is as great as the whole, and the whole is no greater than the part; three infinities put together make only one, and the destruction of two of them does not diminish the mass of existence or perfection. If facts did not stare us in the face, we should never have believed that it was in the power of superstition to have perverted in so gross a manner the human understanding. In all the common concerns and calculations of human life, Christians themselves, practically declare, that they do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. In these concerns, they would be very unwilling that a part should be considered as equal to the whole, or that the whole should be estimated no higher than the part; they would not consent to destroy all numerical distinction, nor would they be willing to annihilate the just ideas of discrimination, by which their interest is supported; but although in common life they would reject all this, yet in theology the nature of things is stripped of its true character, and every species of just distinction is perverted or destroyed. This doctrine of the Trinity, Christianity has borrowed from the ancient heathen ideas, and the church has incorporated it for the purposes of mystery and ecclesiastical imposition. It was found among the reveries of Plato, and being transferred to the followers of Jesus, it has appeared under the modification, and with the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Thus modified, it became the foundation of a cruel and ferocious dogma, that eternal damnation should be the portion of him who called in question this holy mystery. The spirit of this Trinitarian opinion has diffused itself through several other parts of the Christian system, and the idea of an atonement is not the least shocking amongst the consequences that are to be ascribed to this theological absurdity. The followers of the Son of Mary boast of the purity of their Theistical doctrine; but a candid examination of it proves, that it is nothing more than a modification of the mythological opinions of all ancient and barbarous nations.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bible, or the sacred Writings of the Jews and Christians.

AMONG all nations that have pretended to any kind of literary improvement, there have always been found ambitious, designing, and fanatic men, who are impelled by one or the other of these considerations to become leaders or influential characters among the beings who surrounded them. Superiority of talents or improvements, constituted a ground of hope and strong belief, that they should succeed in an attempt of this kind. Advantage was taken of human ignorance, and the most destructive and erroneous plans were introduced and established by length of time and the force of authority. In nations not at all, or very little improved, tradition has supplied the place of sacred writings, and they have been equally the dupes of those unprincipled chieftains who have assumed authority over them. Moses and Mahomet governed their followers with a rod of iron, and a military despotism. They were savage and ferocious men, crafty and intriguing, and they knew how to subject to their will the stupid but unfortunate followers who were devoted to their views. If Jesus was more mild, benevolent, and temperate, it was because he had less power, and because his disposition was less cruel and resentful. His followers, when clothed with power, have not paid a very high compliment to their master, for the history of their conduct evinces the most malignant design, and the earth has been drenched in blood, to defend that system of religion, of which the meek and lowly Jesus is reputed to be the author.

The Christian religion is a compound and combination of all the theological writings of the followers of Moses and Jesus. We have no evidence that either of these men wrote any part, either of the Old or New Testament. From Genesis to the Apocalypse of St. John, a vast variety of fact, fable, principle, wickedness, and error is exhibited to view. The book, though bound together, appears to be in

many respects discordant; the historical part has no accurate connection; the moral part is distorted, deficient, or wicked: the doctrinal parts are either unintelligible, or contrary to moral and philosophical truth. These positions shall be proved in the course of the examination of these sacred writings; it is sufficient for the present that the consideration which relates to the origin and nature of such productions, should form the basis of our enquiry. It is because man has forgotten the dignity of his nature; it is because he does not realize the force of his faculties, that he consents to yield to the impositions of superstition. What is a book, whether it be denominated sacred or not, unless the human mind is capable of discovering the evidence by which the truth of such a book can be substantiated? The Bible, which means nothing more than a book, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which means nothing more than the heterogeneous writings contained in the former, and the incoherent and unintelligible will of various beings contained in the latter; what are all these to the correct decisions of human intellect, unless the matter therein contained can be collated with the immortal principles of truth in the system of nature?

The title page of the Bible subjects it to a strong suspicion of fraud and deception, of error, alteration, and absurdity. It is as follows, and ought to be examined. *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations, diligently compared and revised, by his Majesty's special command. Appointed to be read in churches.* The title page of this book, which for many centuries has been the rule of faith and action in the Christian world, is of itself sufficient to destroy its supernatural origin and divine authority. It is to be observed that the book in the first place was denominated holy; but its holiness and divinity are both destroyed before we get through the title page. It is a well known fact, that this book was not written at first in the English language, but in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that it has been translated out of these languages into English; and the believer who understands no language but English, rests his faith upon the knowledge and integrity of the translators alone. He cannot tell whether these men were either scientific or honest, and consequently he does not know whether he believes what was really contained in the original writings or not. He cannot determine whether the sentiments which have drawn forth the affections of his heart, have really emanated from God, or proceeded from the mind of man; he cannot tell whether the supposed truths of the gospel are the result of human or divine power. If the sentiments and the doctrines be consistent with the nature of things, he may, on this account, pronounce them true; but they are true because they are consistent, and not because they have been revealed. This single consideration, that the English believer knows nothing of the original state of the Bible, is of itself sufficient to annihilate all his confidence. But this is not all; this book is said to be given by divine inspiration; But is it possible that inspiration can be either transferred, translated, altered, or revised? Certainly the very nature of the thing forbids it. If the Scriptures be given by divine inspiration, their contents must be communicated to certain individuals by supernatural power. These individuals had no such power to transfer to other individuals with the same force of authority, the celestial information which they had received. If it were binding on the first persons who received it, it could not be equally so upon the second, for the nature and force of the communications were essentially destroyed. The first power that communicated was divine, and the second was human; the first was incapable of error, the second deceptive and fallacious. If it were therefore to be admitted that any human beings were ever inspired, it would not follow that the result of that inspiration could be communicated with certitude or divine authority to any other minds. The idea of transferring celestial information received by supernatural means, is absurd and impossible; it is as impossible as that man could become a God, and exercise the attributes of the Divinity. The idea of translating a supernatural system of religion, is equally incorrect. The readers of such a system, even in the original languages, could not know that the things therein contained were inspired by God himself, if those few be accepted who were supposed to be the recipients of such sacred instruction; much less could the reader in subsequent ages be assured of the truth or validity of such translated doctrines. To render this system correct, and to keep up the chain of divine connection, it is not only necessary that the first prophets and

apostles should have been inspired, but that all the translators, transcribers, printers, and printers' boys, should have been inspired also. In deficiency of such arrangement, the Christian believer at the present day must be uncertain whether he believes in holy writ, or the imaginary conceptions and wild reveries of the human understanding. If inspiration be a thing founded in truth, there can be no occasion to alter or revise it. It is defect alone that creates the necessity of alteration and revision. If, therefore, the Bible was right at first, every alteration is a deviation from that rectitude; and, consequently, in proportion as the Scriptures have been altered and revised in modern times, the Christian believer has been led astray; he has not believed in the real and true word of God. If the Scripture was wrong at first, the faith of the primitive Christian was nothing more than a delusive error; in either of these cases we are thrown into a dilemma, from which clerical ingenuity alone, will be able to extricate us. The last resort of the believer, must be to the authority and command of his Majesty, who has kindly interfered for the purpose of rendering divine and holy, a book, whose indecency and immorality shocks all common sense and common honesty.

The Lord Chief Justice said—You have now read enough to show the whole tenor and purport of this work, and I will not suffer any more of it to be read. If you proposed to show, by reading the whole, that the passages selected for prosecution are so qualified by the context as not to bear the meaning which, taken separately, they seem to imply, I would allow the whole to be read; but I will not allow a book to be read in this Court, of which the professed object is to attack the Christian religion.

The Defendant—This is my defence, Gentlemen: Will you judge me without hearing it? I insist on my right to read it. The Jury have a right to hear all I have to say; and the Judge is bound to let the Jury hear it, before he asks them for their verdict. I must go on.

Chief Justice—I can't permit you to read any more of that book; and I don't think the Jury are very anxious to hear any more of it.

Jurors—We have heard too much of it already.

Defendant—I feel it my duty to read it, and I insist upon my right to do so. It is impossible for the Jury to come to a fair decision without hearing what I have to say, or to say what is the meaning of the book without hearing it all read. The Attorney General has selected some objectionable passages, and they have been read in Court—Why not permit me then, to read the passages not so objectionable?

Chief Justice—I would allow you to read for any length of time if your object were to shew, that the passages stated in the indictment did not bear the meaning imputed to them.

Defendant—That is my object.

Chief Justice—I have taken down your own words, and in your address to the Jury you have said, "I tell you this book is an attack upon the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion, but I tell you it is not unlawful to publish it." Now I don't like to take advantage of any expression used by a defendant, and I wanted to see if that which you professed was the object of the book. From what I have heard you read, I have no doubt that it is as you stated

it to be, an attack upon the Christian religion; and I therefore cannot consistently with my duty suffer you to read any more. If you have any thing to offer against the proof of publication, I am ready to hear you; but I shall hear nothing which is (what you in the outset declared it to be) an attack upon the Christian religion.

Defendant—I am not allowed to proceed in my own way; this is not a trial—it is a mockery of justice; I will proceed.

Chief Justice—You shall not proceed in the way you propose. Have you any thing else to offer in your defence?

Defendant—No, you will not let me state that which is the ground of my defence.

Lord Chief Justice—I tell you I will not permit it. I have suffered you to read thus far, although you yourself represented the work as an attack on Christianity, because I would not conclude a defendant by a word of his own, and because I wished to see clearly that it had this character before I stopped it; but now its object is too plain to be mistaken, and I will not suffer you to proceed. If you can offer any thing to show that you did not publish this book, I am most ready to hear you.

The Defendant—This is a mockery of justice. I will proceed in reading the book to the end.

The Lord Chief Justice.—I tell you that you shall not. His Lordship then turned to the Jury, and told them, that as the Defendant persisted in a course which he could not suffer, and refused to apply himself to any legitimate topic of defence, he must close the case. There were two questions for them to consider—first, whether the passages set forth in the information were defamatory of the Christian religion; and secondly, whether the Defendant had published them: if they were of opinion in the affirmative on both points, they would find him guilty.

While the Lord Chief Justice was addressing the Jury, the Defendant made several attempts to stop him by exclaiming—“But I have not made my defence.”—“It is a mockery of justice.”—“I have had no trial.” “I have not made my defence, and you are summing up.”

Chief Justice—If you think the proof offered you upon the latter point be sufficient, you must find the prisoner Guilty.

His Lordship was then proceeding to read the evidence, when some of the Jury said, the Jury were satisfied, and his Lordship desisted.

A verdict of *Guilty* was immediately returned.

The Solicitor General—I move, my Lord, that the Defendant be committed.

The Lord Chief Justice.—Let him be taken into custody, and committed to Newgate.

The Defendant was then taken into custody, and continued repeating his protestations against the interruption of his defence. He also declared that he had been tried by a packed jury.

Defendant—I have not had a fair trial; I wish to say a few words as to packing Juries.

The Chief Justice—I have ordered the Defendant into custody; Why is he not taken away? Take him away before he again insults the Court.

A Juror—My Lord, the Defendant can't say that I am a packed Juror; for this is the first Special Jury I have ever been on.

Two other Jurors, said that they had never been before on a Special Jury.

Defendant—I say you have been packed, for none but a packed Jury would have condemned me without a hearing, at the nod of a corrupt Judge.

Mr. Gurney said—Gentlemen, you are not packed, and that is the best answer to such a charge.

The Chief Justice—What the Defendant has said casts no imputation upon you. You know you are not packed: but we all know the object of the Defendant in making the remark.

The Defendant was then taken out of Court.

PALMER'S PRINCIPLES (*Continued.*)

CHAPTER. V.

Original Sin, Atonement, Faith, &c. A Christmas Discourse, delivered in New York, December, 1796.

THIS, my friends, we are told is Christmas-day; and while the pious and learned divines of all Christendom are extolling the beauties, the excellences, and the divinity of the Christian religion; while its doctrines are represented as the most pure and celestial, its morality exalted above that of any other ethical treatise, and the goodness of the Creator represented as demanding the most unreserved gratitude, and the highest affection of the human heart; while this absurd and cruel system is every where held up to admiration, as containing the height of divine perfection and the most unbounded display of infinite benevolence; while an ignorant and astonished world are called upon to yield an unqualified credence to the mysterious dogmas of this mysterious religion; while, in a word, the thundering voice of the Christian world is proclaiming to the elect few the joys which are reserved as their unflinching portion, and damnation to the many who are unfortunately destitute of what they call saving and supernatural faith; be it our task to enquire into the truth or falsehood of these declarations. This inquiry shall be made without reference to any other principle than that of truth, or any other effect than that of the happiness of mankind. Elevated in our conceptions above every possible consideration resulting from hope or fear, and having truth alone for our object, we shall proceed to an unreserved examination of this so much celebrated system of religion, called Christianity. The world has been so long in the habit of believing it to be true, that the mind seems to have lost all traces of independent investigation; a mental stupidity has taken possession of the human faculties, and liberal enquiry has been lost in the vortex of clerical authority. A general torpor has reigned for ages past, and it is now time to throw in our aid, to awaken the mental energy of intelligent beings. Let us proceed, then, to an unprejudiced discussion of the subject; and in order to do this with perspicuity, the following method shall be observed:—

1st. We shall make some remarks concerning Jesus Christ.

2ndly. We shall consider the doctrines of the Christian religion.

3dly. The morality of this religion.

4thly, The effects of the introduction of Christianity into the world.

With respect to the first proposition, we may observe, that among other strange and marvellous things contained in this scheme of religion, the conception of Jesus Christ is very singular and unnatural; he is ushered into the world in a manner neither credible nor cognizable by the human mind; he has a mother it is true, but he has no father; for although the lineal descent is traced through many generations down to the person who ought to have been his father, yet the chain is here broken, and he is said to have been begotten by a ghost. To what purpose is this genealogy given, when the lineal descent is to be wholly destroyed in the conclusion of the scene? And after having destroyed it, and ascribed the conception to an unknown phantom, called the Holy Ghost, he is then said to be the eternal Son of the Father, that is, of the Creator and preserver of the universe. If he is the only begotten Son of the Father, how can he be the Son of the Holy Ghost? And if he was really begotten by this Ghost, what had the Father to do with this scene of debauchery? At any rate what conception can the human mind form of this absurd and contradictory representation? This child, when born, appears to be a human being, and yet he is supernaturally begotten by two supernatural fathers, and he is as old as either of them. Sophistry and folly united cannot exhibit a greater specimen of nonsense and irrationality. This story of the virgin and the ghost, to say no more of it, does not wear the appearance of much religion; and it would not, it is presumed, be difficult in any age or country, to find a sufficient number of men who would pretend to be ghosts, if by such pretensions they could obtain similar favours, especially with the consoling reflection superadded, of becoming the progenitors of the pretended Saviour of a wicked and apostate world. How absurd and contradictory are the principles and doctrines of this religion! In vain do its advocates attempt to cover this transaction with the machinery of ghosts and supernatural agents. The simple truth is, that their pretended Saviour is nothing more than an illegitimate Jew, and their hopes of salvation through him rest on no better foundation than that of fornication or adultery.

But let us suppose that the mode of bringing him into the world was natural and consistent; what valuable purpose has been effected by it? There has been none, either in his conception, his birth, his life, or his death, unless the horrid cruelties, the murderous wars and devastations, which have disgraced the annals of the Christian world, can be considered as blessings to mankind. In every moral point of view, the world is infinitely worse, and so far as relates to their felicity, we may boldly assert, that wretchedness has been increased; yet this was the man who was to do away sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness; this was the source whence innumerable benefits were to be derived; but, alas! wickedness and misery have been the continued and uniform result.

But to proceed.—What was the conduct of this person, called Jesus Christ? Was it like the conduct of a deity, or like that of an ignorant uninformed man? Was it the conduct of divine wisdom, or that of imbecility and distrustful apprehension? If this man, Jesus Christ, had really entered into a coalition with the Creator of the world, for the accomplishment of important purposes relative to the happiness of the human race; if the stipulation had been well understood by the two contracting parties, in the origin of the business; if the intelligent Creator of the world on his part had asserted that there was no other mode of producing the benefits intended, than by the death of his only begotten Son, and the multiplicity of sufferings and calamities which necessarily resulted from so arduous and important an undertaking; and if, on the other hand, this pretended Son of God was apprised of the unavoidable evils which were connected with his mission; if all the previous arrangements and subsequent events had been well and clearly determined between them; and if the whole had been directed by infinite wisdom, power and goodness, what ought to have been the final effect of this splendid celestial embassy? Ought we not to conclude, that the general felicity of intelligent beings on the surface of the globe, must have been the unavoidable consequence? Are we not bound to suppose that a plan of operation formed in the cabinet of eternal wisdom, must have answered all the purposes which that wisdom was calculated to produce? Instead of this, how wretch-

edly are we disappointed ! Vice is not destroyed, and the fears of future damnation are increased. Three infinite Gods have laboured in vain, and their united efforts have not been able to rescue mankind from endless torments. But further, why was not this pretended Saviour exhibited to the world, the nature of his scheme, and extensive benefits of his mission ? Was he uninformed, or was he incapable of communicating to intelligent beings the knowledge of a plan on which their eternal felicity depended ? If, as is pretended, he had been God himself, or if he had been enlightened by the wisdom of the Creator, no progressive steps of science could be applicable to his condition. It could not be necessary for him to go to a school or academy in order to learn to read or write, and yet we have no evidence that he was capable of either, and the negative evidence on this point is almost conclusive, as to his want of common information. To have convinced the world of his supernatural conception and celestial mission, he ought to have written a moral and theological treatise, in which the principles of his mission should have been elucidated in a manner intelligible to every living creature, interested in the possession of such knowledge. But unfortunately for mankind, this has not been the case ; all is doubt—all is uncertainty : and we are left to depend on the opinions and declarations of others, who seem to have known but little of the matter. They tell us an unconnected and inconsistent story, of the conception, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; but they have no system, and their development of moral principles is partial and inaccurate ; but the concluding scene of his life exhibits some information worthy of our impartial attention. In his last moments he cries out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! ” What conclusion is it natural to draw from this distressing exclamation ? It appears to be this, that on the part of Jesus Christ, there was a virtual renunciation of his confidence in the Creator ; and on the supposition that there was originally a concerted plan of execution well understood by both the parties, the fulfilment of it seems here to have been relinquished, and the beneficial effects annihilated. On the part of Jesus, it is saying, “ I have been deceived in this undertaking. I did not expect that I should have been forsaken in this hour of my greatest distress ; but I rested with confidence on eternal wisdom, for a timely escape from this wretched misfortune.” On the part of the Father, there is a want of attention and support in this trying hour. He forsakes his beloved Son ; he gives him up to the murderous fury of vindictive enemies ; and neither the one nor the other of the parties exhibit that spirit of fortitude and constancy which might justly have been expected on so interesting an occasion. The reflecting mind concludes, therefore, that the whole is but a fiction, and that no such stipulation ever took place between the man Jesus Christ, and the Creator of the world.

We shall now proceed to an examination of the doctrines of the Christian religion, and compare them with the principles of a genuine and natural morality, the nature and character of man, and the perfections of the intelligent Creator of the universe. If the founder of this religion was destitute of authority in his mission, the doctrines which are applicable to him will fall of course ; but so strong are the prejudices of mankind in favour of these doctrines, that it becomes necessary to expose the immorality of them before we can expect that they will be relinquished. The most important doctrines of this supposed celestial scheme, are those of original sin, atonement, faith, and regeneration. The first two of these are essentially immoral in their nature. The third, though considered as a virtue by Christians, has nothing in it either of merit or demerit, and the last being supernatural, is not cognizable by the faculties of the human mind. This strange and unnatural system, called the Christian religion, commences the development of its dogmas, by the destruction of every principle of distributive justice. It makes the intelligent beings who are now in existence accountable for the errors and vices of a man who lived six thousand years ago ; a man who its advocates say, God created upright, free from every kind of impurity, and placed in a state of uniform happiness, with a strong natural propensity to the practice of every virtue, and an equally strong aversion to every vicious and immoral principle ; created in the image of God himself, and possessing an unqualified attachment to celestial purity and goodness. This man, nevertheless, transgressed the divine law, and this solitary violation becomes temporally and eternally fatal to the human race. Moral impurity assumes a new shape, and becomes transferable through successive

generations. Though none of this man's descendants could possibly be partakers of this original criminality, they are, nevertheless, implicated in the consequences and effects of his primary apostacy. *They sinned with him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.* This is the language of pious and learned divines, and of the rectitude of the principle we are not permitted to doubt, under pain of eternal damnation. But truth compels us to assert, that this doctrine, called original sin, is, in the first place, totally impossible, and in the second place, that it is as immoral and unjust, as the Creator is righteous and benevolent. The virtues and the vices of intelligent beings are not of a transferable but of a personal nature. In a moral point of view, the amiable or useful qualities of one man cannot become those of another, neither can the vices of one be justifiably punished in the person of another. Every man is accountable for himself; and when he can take no cognizance of the intentions or actions of any other man, how can he be justly responsible for their injurious effects, or applauded for any benefits resulting from them? If Adam, or any other man, who lived several thousand years ago, was guilty of any immoral conduct, what has that to do with the moral condition of the present generation? Is a man to become criminal before he existed? or, is he to be criminated afterwards, by the immoral conduct of those who lived long before him? Has not every man errors enough of his own to answer for, without being implicated in the injurious consequences resulting from the bad conduct of his neighbour? Shall there be no line of moral precision, by which human beings can be tried, condemned, or acquitted? It seems by the general tenor of this doctrine, that every rule of moral precision is here totally disregarded, and setting aside the want of justice, the whole business wears a farcical and ludicrous appearance. This original evil so destructive to the human race, commences by the eating of what is called the forbidden fruit. Whether this fruit was an apple, a peach, or an orange, is not material for us to know; if it was either the one or the other of these, and the fruit was good, there could be no harm in eating it, and if bad, let him take the consequence whose ignorance or temerity induced the action. But whether good or bad, whether eaten or not eaten, is nothing to us, and we are neither worse nor better for reading this foolish story. The moral impurity of the heart can bear no possible relation to the criminality of Adam, or any other man of that day or generation. Let Adam, therefore, and his partner Eve, together with the Devil and his snakes, attend to their own concerns, and if they have fallen into difficulties by their own follies and vices, let them extricate themselves as well as they are able. For myself, I have so much regard for all of them, that I hope they will not be damned for ever. For notwithstanding much noise and clamour has been raised, I think that neither party was so bad as the pious ambassadors of Heaven have represented them. The story is almost too foolish to deserve a serious examination. Let intelligent man study his own nature, and the passions of his heart, let him observe his relative condition and the springs of his action, and he will soon discern the causes of his calamity. He will find that disorganization or physical death is an unavoidable appendage of animal life. That the very construction of his nature insures the certainty of a subsequent derangement, and that the primary qualities of all sensitive beings gradually lead to dissolution. No organic perfectibility of animal existence has been discovered yet, which is capable of excluding the anticipation of decay through the progressive operations of physical causes upon the constitution; and perfect moral rectitude, though it were capable of extending the period, could not give ultimate durability to beings organized like ourselves; nevertheless, we are told that death* spiritual, temporal, and eternal, are the consequence of his primitive apostacy. By spiritual death is meant moral turpitude of heart and character; but this in many beings obtains but partially, and is always the effect of personal infraction of moral principle, bearing no possible relation to Adam. By temporal death, is meant that death which experience teaches us to be the fate of every creature in the present world, and this death, though an essential ingredient in the constitution of nature, is foolishly and unphilosophically attributed to the sin of Adam. If Adam, previous to his supposed apostacy, had been thrown into a

* See chapter on Death.

fire, or immersed in water, would not one of these elements have disorganized him, or the other have drowned him? Or would he have returned from these trials with all the beauties of youth and vivacity in his appearance? If it be contended that he would, a constitution must then be attributed to him of which the human mind can form no conception. If it be admitted that he must have perished, temporal death can then no longer be attributed to the commission of moral evil, and it must be acknowledged as an essential property of our primary and physical organization; and that death is as natural as life in the order of the world. By eternal death is meant a state of endless punishment; and so powerful is the influence of this sin of Adam upon the human race, that they all become liable to eternal torments on this account. One would have supposed that after having brought temporal death into the world by this transgression, and after having corrupted every moral principle of the human heart, the contrivers of the scheme might have been contented, without annexing to this crime any other fatal consequences; but fanaticism and superstition delight in murder, misery, and eternal fire; and to this flaming lake I wish them a speedy passage, never more to rise to insult the dignity, or destroy the happiness of the human race. To punish the temporary and finite crimes of a finite life with eternal fire, would be to relinquish every principle of distributive justice, and to act like an arbitrary and malevolent tyrant. All the sins that ever have been committed do not deserve this unlimited severity of punishment; and to attribute to one solitary infraction of a moral law these terrible consequences, is to lose sight of infinite benevolence and eternal justice. It is to represent the God of Nature as cruel and vindictive, and even less merciful than the majority of his creatures; it destroys all degrees in moral turpitude, and inflicts on a petty offender a punishment not merited by the greatest criminal. It is therefore evident that this original sin has not produced, and that it could not produce, any of the consequences which have been attributed to it, for death is one of the physical properties of our nature. Vice is the result of individual and personal infractions of moral law, and an eternal Hell is a bugbear of superstition, which has never answered, and never can answer, any valuable purpose even in preventing crimes.

Another important doctrine of the Christian religion, is the atonement supposed to have been made by the death and sufferings of the pretended Saviour of the world; and this is grounded upon principles as regardless of justice as the doctrine of original sin. It exhibits a spectacle truly distressing to the feelings of a benevolent mind, it calls innocence and virtue into a scene of suffering and reputed guilt, in order to destroy the injurious effects of real vice. It pretends to free the world from the fatal effects of a primary apostacy, by the sacrifice of an innocent being. Evil has already been introduced into the world, and in order to remove it, a fresh accumulation of crimes becomes necessary. In plain terms to destroy one evil, another must be committed. To teach mankind virtue, they are to be presented with the example of murder; to render them happy, it is necessary to exhibit innocence in distress; to provide for them the joys of Heaven, wretchedness is to be made their portion on earth. To make them love one another, they must be taught that the Deity, regardless of this principle, voluntarily sacrificed his only begotten Son. In fine, to procure for intelligent beings the happiness suited to their nature, cruelty and vindictive malice must be exhibited for their contemplation. This doctrine presented in its true colours contains neither justice nor utility. Its principle is vicious, and its consequences are not beneficial. The reflecting mind which views the operation of causes and their natural effects, possesses a nice and accurate power of discrimination. Moral precision is an important object of attention, and although it traces the nature of the infinitely combined relations subsisting among beings of the same species, it cannot discern either the justice or the utility of the relation which suffering virtue can bear to the destruction of moral evil. No connection can be discovered between the exclamations of expiring innocence, and the triumphant march of vice over an apostate world. Does the suffering of the virtuous man destroy the evil habits or propensities of him who is vicious and abandoned, especially when he is told that these sufferings are to annihilate his own crimes? Can this induce the mind to exhibit any efforts wearing the appearance of reformation? Does it not rather contribute to the practice of vice, from the belief

that the burden and effect must be sustained by another person? Yet this is the true ground on which this scheme of atonement is promulgated. It is exhibited as a substitute for moral perfection. It teaches man that his own virtues are insufficient for his felicity; that the cultivation of his faculties, and the discovery and practice of moral truth, can never lead to substantial happiness. This must be obtained from the sufferings and expiring groans of the Deity himself. But even on Christian principles, what useful purpose has this atonement answered? Though the believers of this religion have sacrificed the God of Nature to gratify their pride, have they by this means accomplished their end? Have they established a sure foundation for the destruction of moral evil? Have they insured permanent happiness to every intelligent being? No; this desirable end is not completed. Sin, say they, is an infinite evil. Was the atonement infinite? Alas! No; for although Jesus Christ, who suffered, was equal to God himself, yet all of them acknowledge that it was the human, not the divine nature that partook of this suffering. If, therefore, it was the human nature only that suffered, this suffering could make only a finite atonement, and if the sin was infinite, this atonement could not reach its nature or destroy its effects; for to have done this, the atonement must have been commensurate with the evil to be destroyed; but as the one is finite and the other infinite, no relation could have subsisted between them, and no beneficial effect has been or can be produced from it. This method of destroying evil is an unfortunate one; it is essentially unjust in its principles, and useless in its effects; it professes to sacrifice an infinite being, but it denies the possibility of this sacrifice producing any thing more than a finite atonement. If an atonement was necessary, it ought to have been as extensive and complete in its nature as the offences intended to be destroyed by its influence. But instead of this every thing is reversed. According to believers themselves, this atonement has not reached the condition of more than one-tenth part of the human race. The efforts of Trinitarian wisdom have all failed, and notwithstanding the pretended good news of the Gospel, every living creature is destined to never-ending torment. The elect themselves are incapable of escaping eternal damnation, for without an atonement they cannot be saved, and the atonement that has been made is not equal to the crime committed. If, therefore, our hopes of salvation are to rest on this vicarious suffering, we shall be essentially disappointed, and endless misery must be the lot of man. Priests and fanatics of the world! is this your scheme of infinite benevolence? This your theme of divine eloquence? Is this the only way in which you can exhibit the perfections of your God, and adore his eternal wisdom? Are murder, carnage, and injustice, the objects in which you delight? Have you lost all attachment to moral virtue, all veneration for the dignity and faculties of your nature? Have you dismissed all respect for nature and for truth? Will you never learn wisdom from the book of Nature, will you never derive instruction from the permanency of her laws? Is it only among miracles, ghosts, and crucified Gods that you delight to walk? Oh! prejudiced and superstitious man, look at the splendid beauties of Nature, look at the vast machinery of the universe, and through these thou mayest discover the intelligent organizer of the whole, perfect in all his attributes, and worthy of thy adoration.

The next principle of discussion is, that of Christian faith; and this among the believers of this religion has been considered as a great virtue. But is this substantially true? What is the real meaning of the word *Faith*? It is necessary to inquire concerning its true definition, and from this inquiry we shall be able to draw a conclusion whether or not the principle of faith is meritorious. Faith is an assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition supported by evidence. If the evidence adduced is sufficient to convince the mind, credence is the necessary result: if the evidence be insufficient, belief becomes impossible. In religion, therefore, or in any other of the concerns of life, if the mind discerns that quantum of evidence necessary to establish the truth of any proposition, it will yield to the force and effect of the proofs which are produced; if, on the other hand, the intelligence of man does not discern the necessary influence of such evidence, infidelity will be the natural and unavoidable result. Why then is the principle of faith considered as a virtue? If a man beholds the sun in its meridian splendour, and declares the truth of this exhibition, is he meritorious in making this acknowledgment? If any truth in nature is

well substantiated and supported by the testimony of his mind or his senses, does he deserve credit for his mental acquiescence? No. Why then have the Christian world annexed to this principle of belief any degree of merit? Is necessary acquiescence a virtue? Does men become entitled to praise for the acknowledgment of facts guaranteed by his senses, or essentially supported through the channel of his mental faculties? Does truth really exist in the system of nature? And is this truth discoverable by the operations of the human mind? And shall man, notwithstanding this, arrogate to himself a high degree of importance, for the rejection of the splendid testimonies which are exhibited for his contemplation? No; after a full display of evidence, the mind must yield to its necessary and unavoidable influence. When, therefore, the Christian religion represents faith as being meritorious, it loses sight of the natural operations of the human mind; it betrays an ignorance of nature, and becomes censurable by its deviation from the primary and essential arrangements. Yet in this holy book we are told, that "he that believeth not shall be damned." But what are we to believe? Are we to believe that the Creator of the universe is the parent and friend of the whole human race? Are we to believe that his wisdom acts in coincidence with the general felicity, or operates on the ground of universal happiness? Are we to believe that the establishment of general laws is sufficient for the well-being of intelligent agents? Are we to believe the vast machinery of the universe to be under the guidance and direction of eternal perfection? Are we to believe that the primary principles of our nature are sufficient for our improvement and ultimate perfectibility? Are we to believe that the practice of moral virtue is essentially connected with the dignity and final improvement of the human species? Are we to believe that the establishment of good laws, and the exhibitions of moral energies are essentially interwoven with the permanent happiness of sensitive creatures? No! We are not permitted to believe this. What then is Christian belief? What are the dogmas and principles to which we are required to give an unqualified credence? However painful it may be to declare it, they are of the following nature:—That the great Creator of the world sacrificed his only begotten Son for the happiness of the human race; that he sent numerous prophets and apostles to teach and instruct mankind; that they were charged with the disclosure of every species of celestial knowledge, relative to the future felicity of intelligent beings; that they were unwearied in their attention to enlighten and inform the human race; that they exhibited every possible effort for the accomplishment of this desirable end, and all this to no valuable purpose; that man is to be criminated for the bad conduct of a person who lived 6000 years ago: that he can be made happy only by a crucified God; that he can perform no virtue of himself, and yet, that without being perfectly holy, he cannot be happy; that he must give an unlimited credence to the greatest absurdities, and most palpable contradictions, and view the most immoral specimens of human actions as sanctioned by the Deity; that he must venerate the most senseless opinions, admire the most unexampled ignorance, and love the most detestable crimes; in fact, that he must believe in a book which contains, systematically considered, neither truth nor morality, neither purity of sentiment nor principle, neither propriety of arrangement, nor progression of human improvement; erroneous in all its primary establishments and vindictive in all its consequences; unjust in its origin, and malevolent in all its subsequent movements; incorrect in its relations, and impure in its intentions; destructive to science, an insult to morality, and essentially injurious to human felicity.

This then is Christian faith. Great God of Nature! Must we then renounce the justifiable exercise of all our faculties, in order to be happy? To attain felicity, is it necessary that we believe in contradictions? Must we deem cruelty one of the attributes of divinity? Must the benevolent mind be called to the view of murder, in order to be fitted for the performance of its essential duties? Must injustice and revenge be interwoven with the morality of man? Shall we never be permitted to love truth, admire nature, and practise a pure and genuine morality? Oh, superstition! how much thou hast to answer for! thine influence has corrupted the faculties of man, debased his heart, and rendered wretched the whole human race. Thou hast spread ruin, misery, and devastation over a beautiful and productive earth, and

thou art deserving of the curses of every intelligent being in every part of the universe.

Another divine doctrine of this divine religion is that of regeneration. This doctrine appears to be scarcely deserving of a serious consideration. When the mind of man takes cognizance of the operations of nature, it discerns no effect which can possibly include an event of this sort. We behold the renovations and alterations in the material world; we observe the principles and progression of gradual decay, in all its essential and relative movements, and we recognize the benefits which result from the principle of mutability. The principles of disorganization and reproduction are everywhere discoverable in the works of nature, but no justifiable analogy can possibly be drawn from this view of the subject. The renovation in the material world bears no resemblance to the Christian principle of regeneration. The one is cognizable and rests on natural grounds, the other is inconsistent with the knowledge derived from experience. The human mind, through the channels of its observation, discovers the means of perpetuating the species; but this mental regeneration bears no relation to these progressive means of production. It is necessary, therefore, that we examine what is meant by this unintelligible principle, called regeneration. It seems to be almost impossible to obtain any accurate or definite idea, from the representation which is given concerning this pretended and important change. Those who are the subjects of it profess themselves to be incapable of disclosing its real movements or genuine operations. If it were an event, of which the human mind had any real knowledge or experience, one would suppose that the faculty of communication would render it in some measure intelligible to others; but enthusiasm delights in mystery, and by embracing this doctrine, has given a powerful specimen of its fanaticism and importance. It pretends to the acquisition of something, concerning which, it can exhibit no adequate idea or useful information. It is a mysterious and inexplicable change of the mind, pretendedly for the better, and yet no valuable purposes seem to be answered by this divine renovation. The being, who is the subject of it, becomes neither the wiser nor the better; he is not the wiser, because he can give no proofs of additional knowledge; his disposition is not amended, for his conduct continues the same. For the truth of this observation we may appeal to experience. Are the saints of the world more just, more honest, more benevolent or charitable, than those who make no pretensions to supernatural grace? Is their heart or their temper of mind ameliorated? Is their conduct in stricter conformity with useful or exalted virtue? Do they sympathise more with the unfortunate, or exhibit greater specimens of genuine benevolence? Is the heart tranquillized, the mind improved, and their actions more consistent with the invariable principles of rectitude? Have they diminished human misery, or improved the condition of human nature? No! Where then is the utility of this thing called regeneration? If the heart be not improved, the mind cultivated, or morality extended in the sphere of its influence, no advantage has resulted from this pretended change. If any benefit has been derived, it ought to be shewn; but the history of the Christian world forbids the attempt.

But further, the performance of the duty which is assigned to the being called the Holy Ghost, seems to have been attended to in a manner not discernible by the highest faculties of the human mind. If this being had really undertaken the moral renovation of the human species, he ought to have rendered it universal, and explained its operation on cognizable grounds. But no such thing having been done, the rational conclusion must be, that the whole is a delusion. Indeed the New Testament representation of this affair bears an equivocal and unmeaning appearance. It is there declared, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," And when Nicodemus makes the rational enquiry how such an event could possibly happen, he is put off with an evasive answer, (John chap. 3.) "Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, verily I say unto thee; except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the spirit. Nicodemus answered and, said unto him, how can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" &c. From this passage it is evident that Jesus, who made the answer to Nicodemus, knew nothing of the nature of this marvellous change. Being born of water and of the spirit is a phrase without meaning; what idea can this possibly convey to the mind? But the advocates of this doctrine contend that one part of this sentence relates to baptism, and the other to the influence of the Holy Ghost. This does not mend the matter, neither does it exhibit any new species of information; for what has baptism to do with the moral condition of man? Can water externally applied, destroy internal moral turpitude? If human vices could be cured through this channel, the more rational efforts for the renovation and improvement of our character would become unnecessary. But it is clearly discernible, that as vice is a violation of moral law, the way to remedy the mischiefs resulting from this violation, is not to pour water on the face, which can have no possible influence on the mind, but to return to uniform conduct, consistent with the primary principles of moral virtue. And further to be born of the Spirit, being unintelligible, and without any beneficial effect, is equally ridiculous and absurd. The comparison of this regeneration with the blowing of the wind, exhibits nothing but the ignorance of him who made it. Indeed the principle on which the doctrine rests, is so unnatural and so destitute of any valuable effects, that it is unworthy of further consideration.

The next point of examination is the morality of the Christian religion. On this head, the advocates of this revealed system have made a mistake injurious to themselves, by extolling its morality above that of any other moral treatise; they have provoked enquiry and comparison, and the result serves only to diminish the pretended excellence of their scheme. It is not denied that this religion contains some good moral maxims. But it is denied that it contains any thing like a pure *system* of genuine morality. Its moral maxims are but thinly interspersed, and they are inaccurate and incomplete, trifling, and often without utility, destitute of justifiable application to the moral condition of intellectual life. All morality that is genuine, is drawn from the nature and condition of rational beings. It is calculated to preserve and augment their happiness to raise and extend the dignity and utility of social existence. It assumes for its basis, the genuine principles of reciprocal justice and an extensive benevolence. While it regards the felicity of others, it also regards the preservation of our own life and happiness. But the moral doctrine concerning injuries, contained in the Christian religion, is not established upon a principle of this mutual nature, but solicits an accumulation of insult, by commanding us after being smitten on one cheek to turn the other also. This is sacrificing the dignity of our character, and inviting fresh injuries. It is surrendering up the manly part of our nature, into the hands of him who is sure to trample it under foot. And again it is said, "if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;" that is, after thine enemy hath unjustly taken away a part of thy property, it becomes thy duty to bestow upon him the remainder. If thy coat is already gone, thou must give away the remainder of thy garments, and go naked thyself. If thine enemy do thee all possible injury, thou must in return exercise towards him sincere love and affection. If he persecute thee, thou shouldst bless him for his curses and persecutions. In short, to comply with the spirit of this morality, we must invert the order of nature, and bestow on crimes and continued abuse, the most endearing affections of our heart. Where is the believer who puts this morality in practice? Is it not considered by every one as merely theoretical. Have you who are believers in this system, coats and other garments to bestow, in order to comply with its injunctions? Are you willing to surrender your natural dignity, to sink your nature to a level with the spaniel, in order to become a true Christian? And can you, with any appearance of truth and justice, advocate the purity and celestial nature of this species of moral maxims? It may reasonably be presumed that if one coat had been obtained through the channel of a law-suit, ano-

ther law suit would be necessary in order to obtain the cloak. And thus this celestial morality would become the cause of endless litigation. But if we should accede to the truth of the assertion, that all the maxims held as moral by the professors of Christianity, were really and truly so, this would not prove the celestial origin of their religion. For if we attribute to them all the excellence which is contended for, they still fall below ancient and modern dissertations on this subject. This religion does not draw its morality from the right source. But the correct, the elegant, the useful maxims of Confucius, Antoninus, Seneca, Price, and Volney, beautifully display its principles from the physical and moral organization of intelligent beings. The writings of these men are in the hands of the public, and may be perused by every one whose prejudices do not forbid it, and when examined with a spirit of candour, they will rise far superior to the boasted morality of the Christian system. But when the numerous, cruel, and immoral maxims contained in the Bible, are placed in the balance, they greatly outweigh all its genuine morality, and the influence of this religion upon the human heart and human actions verifies the remark.

But of this we shall speak in the next division of the subject, which is the consideration of the effects produced by the introduction of the Christian religion into the world.

When the human mind takes a retrospective view of past ages, through the mirror of history; when it calls up to its contemplation, the murderous devastations, the horrid wars and cruelties which have desolated the Christian world; when it beholds the faggot everywhere lighted up for the destruction of man; when gibbets, imprisonment, and persecutions are presented on every quarter; when it sees domestic peace and tranquillity tortured and almost annihilated, malevolence and sectarian spirit enkindling the most unbridled resentments to disturb the benevolent sentiments of the human heart; when, in fact, all Christendom exhibits a spectacle shocking to humanity, the weeping voice of nature cries aloud, and demands a disclosure of the causes which have produced this general misery and distress. It asks in the name of Reason and Truth, whence all these calamities, whence these innumerable evils that have overwhelmed and laid waste a beautiful and productive earth? Where is the source of these human misfortunes? Where the fountain whence these miseries proceed? Righteous God of nature! What questions are these to ask in the face of the Christian church? But however painful the task, truth compels us to declare, that to this *holy* religion they are to be attributed. In this wonderful system of divine benevolence, we must seek for the origin. "Does the God of nature then require devastation for homage, or conflagration for sacrifice? Would he have groans for hymns? Murderers to worship him, and a desert and ravaged world for his temple? Yet such, holy and faithful generations, are your works! These the fruits of your piety! You have massacred the people, reduced cities to ashes, destroyed all traces of cultivation, made the earth a solitude, and you demand the reward of your labours. For myself, I solemnly affirm by all laws, human and divine, by the laws of the human heart, that the hypocrite and the deceiver shall be themselves deceived. The unjust man shall perish in his rapacity, and the tyrant in his usurpation; the sun shall change his course, before folly shall prevail over wisdom and science, before stupidity shall surpass prudential economy in the delicate art of procuring to man his true enjoyments, and of building his happiness on a solid foundation.*"

We now proceed to exhibit, more particularly, the fatal effects of the Christian religion, relative to science, to morality, and human happiness. In vain do the advocates of this system contend for its beneficial effects as it regards these three principles. Science has been suppressed, morality insulted, and human happiness partially destroyed.

If the introduction of this religion into the world had been calculated to accelerate the progress of human improvement, or to render mankind wiser and happier, history should have recorded the progressive steps of this accumulating knowledge. But instead of this, the reverse stands confessed on the face of the record. When did the light of science begin to extend its benign influence over the surface of the globe? Was it at the commencement of the Christian era, and did it keep pace with the progressive belief of the Christian doctrines? Did the mind of man receive any impulse beneficial

* Volney's Ruins.

to the cause of knowledge, when this religion was first promulgated! and did the extension of useful information bear any justifiable relation to the diffusion of Christian principles? Did the world become either wiser or better after this religion had unfolded its genuine effects for more than fifteen centuries? Was this the cause of giving energy to the intellectual faculties of man? Were the genuine principles of science, which are contained in the system of nature, displayed and manifested by the establishment of this religion? In a word, has Christianity enlightened the world? No! But it has served as a means to suppress useful knowledge; for neither the commencement nor progressive establishment of this religion has contributed to useful information. If science were connected with the establishment and belief of Christianity, its advancement ought to have kept pace with the accelerated operation of its cause. But the reverse is the fact, for while the Christian religion had its greatest effect on the human mind, the useful branches of science were totally neglected, and the world was buried in the most profound darkness and ignorance; but when the physical energy of man roused itself from its slumbering and depressed condition, it took cognizance of primary principles, and discovered truth from the invariable laws of nature. While the mind was under the influence of clerical authority, independent reflection was effectually suppressed, and fear had destroyed all scientific efforts. Geography, astronomy, and natural philosophy, in short, the whole science of physics was denied the privilege of liberal enquiry and discussion. Religion affirmed the earth to be as flat as a trencher, and he who denied the assertion, was charged with a damnable heresy. Religion denied the existence of the Antipodes, and Genius trembled beneath its threatening rod. Religion inverted the whole order of nature, and truth and science had no safe or beneficial appeal. Religion pronounced damnation to the philosophic enquirer, and he sought tranquility in the dark abodes of ignorance, or the suppression of useful knowledge. In short, religion governed by terror, and the mind of man painfully submitted to its destructive influence, till, at length, wearied and distressed by this degrading authority, it boldly asserted its own natural dignity and independence, and dared to draw its knowledge from the pure fountain of nature. As knowledge began to increase, the influence of the Christian religion and the authority of the church were seen to diminish; and, as in the one case, ignorance kept pace with the promulgated influence of this religion, so in the other, science has kept pace, and extended itself in proportion to the destruction of Christian influence and authority; and where at this period there is the most science, there the least credence is given to revealed religion; where the principles of physics, morality and politics have been most clearly understood, there the least respect is paid to this system of fanaticism and superstition. In short, they are incompatible with each other, and it may be confidently maintained that the world must either retrograde to a state of darkness, or that the belief of the Christian religion must be wholly extinct. If the mind of man should progressively advance towards a state of perfectibility, this system of religion, so injurious to its researches and so incompatible with the dignity and happiness of his nature, must be for ever annihilated and destroyed. If, on the other hand, this unnatural scheme of ethics is permitted to retain its mischievous influence, the highest and best hopes of the philanthropist must be abandoned, and ignorance and misery become the lot of mortals. But God forbid that this should ever be the case. The benevolent mind, while reflecting on the subject, entertains a strong hope that the reverse will obtain, and that the world will ultimately become virtuous and happy.

Again, this religion claiming with so much imperious austerity, celestial origin, has not been less injurious to the cause of morality, than to that of science. Its fundamental principles are of a nature destructive to all moral virtue, its doctrines openly disavow all benefit resulting from the practice of a genuine morality. Faith, atonement, and supernatural grace are the essential requisites of eternal happiness, and these have nothing to do with the mental or moral energies of our nature. The cultivation of our minds, the improvement of our faculties, and the performance of moral duties, by which alone man can expect or deserve to enjoy permanent felicity, are not considered as the proper means of acquiring it; but a blind and unintelligible faith, a mysterious and inexplicable belief in carnage and murder, are to become the objects of our highest admiration! "Not of works," says Paul, (the apostle of fanaticism and superstition) "lest any man should boast." And again, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that

runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." When maxims such as these are fundamental in any system of religion, what beneficial effects can result from it? It goes to the destruction of all moral efforts. It represents man as incapable of performing any virtuous action. "For of ourselves we can do nothing," is another maxim of this *holy religion*. If man then can do nothing, nothing ought to be required of him; and if he is capable of practising moral virtue, he ought to receive his reward. But inspiration teaches, that he ought to depend on the merit of another, and fanaticism cries aloud, that in Jesus alone you have hope; when the truth is, that neither the hopes, the welfare, or the happiness of man, can bear any possible relation to Jesus Christ or his opinions. Man is a being possessed of certain powers and faculties, and it is only through the justifiable exercise of these that he can be happy. But when he is taught to believe that his highest moral efforts can avail nothing; that he is completely under condemnation, in consequence of the imputed sin of him who lived six thousand years ago; that he can be relieved from the effects of this primary apostacy, only by the murder of an innocent person; that he can lay claim to this relief only through the channel of supernatural grace and divine aid; in fact, that of himself, he can do nothing; when he is taught to believe all this, what inducement can remain to the practice of virtue? There is none, and the mind is left to the gloomy anticipations of eternal fire. Was this religion instituted for the benefit and improvement of man? And do its professors deny him the power and beneficial results of moral exertions? Do they call him to virtuous activity for the purpose of insulting the useful energy of his nature? Do they in one breath represent him as an intelligent being, and in the next degrade him to the condition of a beast or a devil? It may be pronounced with certainty, that morality or real virtue can never be promoted by a scheme of religion containing such contradictions and absurdities, and that human enjoyment has been essentially diminished by the promulgation of such unnatural principles. Since it has already been shewn that the Christian religion has been destructive to science and to morals, it seems almost unnecessary to make any observations on its relation to general happiness; for since the happiness of man depends essentially on the possession of knowledge and the practice of virtue, whatever injures these must be detrimental to his true felicity. The descriptions given in this religion of the character and conduct of the Almighty, are shocking to the reflections of the benevolent mind; they represent the Creator of the world, not as the friend, but as the enemy of man; as a being agitated by passions, and acting capriciously for the gratification of his own resentment; sometimes he is said to be merciful, at other times cruel and vindictive; sometimes just, at other times malevolent and revengeful; sometimes permanent and immutable in his actions and designs, at other times changeable, and to have repented of what he had previously determined to perform; at one time unbounded in his love, at another time unlimited in his fury and his vengeance; sometimes the God of peace, at other times the God of wars and battles; now mild and peaceable, the next moment angry and resentful. *In short, this Christian God is ever at variance with himself*, and in him no genuine confidence can be reposed. Can any one then be happy who trusts to a being of this description? To one who is imperfect, unstable, passionate, and revengeful? To a being who has, in fact, no uniformity of conduct, no system of action, and no immutability of procedure? No! Those who place their confidence here must be wretchedly disappointed, and an agitated mind will be their unavoidable portion. Yet to all this is added, the fear of an eternal Hell, as the certain and inevitable lot of nine-tenths of the human race. To say, therefore, that this religion has made mankind happy, is to disregard all the operations of the human heart, and the most justifiable hopes of the human mind.

Man! if thou wouldst be happy, thou must come home to Nature, admire her splendid beauties, develope truth from the permanence of her laws, cultivate real virtue, improve and exalt thy character, extend the sphere of thy utility, and invariably adhere to the practice of a pure and genuine morality.

CHAPTER VI.

Origin of the Earth.

SUPERNATURAL religion has been fertile in inventing systems concerning the origin of the world. The period which has been assigned to its duration has been extremely

different among different nations of the earth, and has been limited or extended by theological authority. The Chinese records ascribe to the earth a duration of more than 20,000 years, and according to the opinions of some, of more than 40,000 years. These opinions are controverted by Christian believers, because, according to their sacred writings, the age of the earth is only about 6,000 years. Every opinion upon this subject, which is supported by a popular and supernatural theology, is maintained with a tenacity which fanatic dogmatism never fails to inspire. It is, no doubt, a matter of curious inquiry, when and by what means the earth was produced, what important changes it has undergone, and by what means these changes have been effected, and what will be their final result upon the modification and existence of the earth. While we inquire into the origin of the earth, we are also naturally led to the idea of the other extreme, and are solicitous to ascertain the ultimate extent of its duration. It is, however, a subject of vast difficulty, and involved in so much darkness and uncertainty, that it will probably always be impossible to reduce to absolute certitude any philosophical ideas upon this abstruse and difficult case. One thing, however, is certain, that if philosophy be ignorant upon the origin of the earth, theology, from the nature of its character, must be still more ignorant; philosophy investigates with patient and temperate perseverance, while theology is impelled by the gales of ranting enthusiasm. The latter is certain, without evidence, and the former is in doubt because it is deficient in evidence. When it is asserted by Christian believers, that without the Bible we should know nothing of the beginning or the end of this world, what do they say more than this, that we must take the authority and declaration of a theological book for absolute and positive truth, that assertion must supply the place of evidence; the ignorance of antiquity is to be preferred to the science of modern times; the decisions of the church ought to have more weight than the demonstration of intellect; that the mythology of every nation should be put into the balance against the strength of human judgment, and a comprehensible development of moral and physical laws. The earth which we inhabit occupies a station in that vast system which is presented to our view in the regions of space; it is the residence of beings whose powers are inadequate to a comprehension of all those vast objects which surround them; it is this ignorance that has induced the necessity of so many false and whimsical conjectures concerning the origin of the world.

There is, however, in this case, one substantial consideration, to which we ought to direct our reflections. It is among the philosophical truths which cannot be controverted, that nothing can never become something, and that something can never become nothing. If this truth be applied to the present case, we shall have in part a solution of the difficulty, so far as it relates to the existence of the materials of which the earth is composed; but modification and local situation in the planetary system will constitute another part of the inquiry. Christian philosophers themselves have acceded to the axiom, that from nothing, nothing can be made; if this be true, as it clearly is, the eternal duration of the earth, in some form or other, will follow as a necessary consequence. It is declared in the first chapter of Genesis, that in the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. But we are not told from what materials, or in what manner this work was performed. One thing, however, is remarkable in the account, that there were three days and three nights before the creation of the sun, which is the sole cause of day and night. This proves that Moses, or whoever wrote the first chapter of Genesis, was neither a good world-maker, nor a good astronomer. If the whimsical and incongruous opinions of theologians were to be credited, every part of the physical universe would be distorted, and all the useful discoveries of philosophy would be destroyed by a single dash of authority. Moses makes day and night without the existence of a sun; Joshua stops the course of the sun; and the author of the gospel of St. Matthew precipitates the stars from their celestial condition, and causes them to descend upon the earth with as little difficulty as if they had been so many pebble stones. It is not in the fanciful reveries of religionists that we are to expect to discover physical truth; the smallest frantic impulse is sufficient to overturn the beauty and harmony of Nature, and there is scarcely a religious zealot on earth who would not sacrifice natural truth to the phrensy of his enthusiasm. When the temperate philosopher asserts that it is probable, in his view of the subject, that the earth has existed from all eternity, the Christian fanatic rises in all the power of holy and vindictive resentment, as if the question, in its ultimate tendency, involved

the best interests of moral existence, and all the practical considerations of human life. Progressive investigation upon this subject will constantly be attended with a diminution of respect for theological opinions; but a doctrine once established in *supernatural religion* is henceforth to be denominated absolutely true and infallible; the most abstract speculations of a philosophical kind are damnable heresies, and the authors and supporters of them destined hereafter to experience the vindictive fury and unrelenting vengeance of the Jewish and Christian God.

The eternal duration of the earth, in some form or other, is rendered certain, by the essential properties of matter; whatever does exist must have existed from all eternity, and must, from its very nature, continue to exist forever. Creation and annihilation, so far as these words are applied to the essence of things, are words without meaning, but so far as they are applied to specific modification, they are intelligible and universal. Experience bears testimony to this solemn truth; but if the earth existed from all eternity, did it always hold the same relative position in regard to the sun and other planets? This is a question that can receive only a partial and probable solution, nor is it of importance to the true interest of philosophy that it should engage in any high degree the attachment and energy of human intellect. The productions on the surface of the globe constitute, in some small degree, the foundation of ingenious conjecture. The vivifying influence of the sun seems to be an operating cause, without which vegetation and life would be unknown; in the present condition of the earth, the effect of the sun is clearly discovered, and the productions which we behold are the result of its celestial power. Men exist, large animals of various species also exist, together with all subordinate exhibitions of physical energy. Procreation and reproduction of specific kind and class are the invariable laws of Nature. But the question of the greatest difficulty is that which relates to the origin of the first and most powerful kind of animals that exist upon the earth, the position which the globe at present holds in relation to the sun does not warrant us in the conclusion, that either man or the larger kinds of animals in brute creation could have resulted from this position. The same power that formerly produced them would be able to produce them still, and in addition to the ordinary process of reproduction, we should have a right to expect new beauties and wonders, equal, at least, to the most excellent which we now behold. This, however, is not the case, and the fair deduction on the ground of philosophy, is, that the relative position of the earth and sun must formerly have been different from what it is at present, and that it is upon a hypothesis of this kind that we are to seek for a solution of the highest difficulties with which we are presented in the animal world.

There is one other idea of analogical weight in the discussion of this part of the subject. Nature is everywhere periodical in her exertions and energies; she is susceptible of fatigue and lassitude, and her most powerful operations are followed by proportionate debility and inactivity. It is therefore possible in the order of Nature, that the most powerful animals might have been the result of an inconceivable exertion, to which Nature for millions of years after might have been totally incompetent. Among the human species there is evidently a great diversity of external appearance; the white and the black man are as different in some other respects, as they are in the colour of their skin; the long straight hair of the one, and the curled wool of the other, is a verification of this remark. Both races are intelligent, and it is presumed that the intellectual powers are not in any essential degree dissimilar. Improvement has made more difference than Nature, and the immoral opinion, that the whites have a right to enslave the blacks, is a complete abandonment of the principle of reciprocal justice, and a violation of the fundamental laws of Nature. The only consideration which induced the mention of this subject, was to shew, that it is probable that Nature has, at different times, made great exertion in the work of creation or production, and that from man down to the lowest insect, a graduated modification of physical energy has been exhibited throughout a past eternity. It will be then enquired, whether this conjecture can be analogized with the idea of new productions in the planetary system? The answer to this enquiry must be given unequivocally in the negative. The axiom, that from nothing, nothing can be made, here applies with correct and indubitable force, and unless comets or planets interfere and derange each other's existence there can be no new production; and even in such a case, it would be form alone that was new, and not essence and matter. The changes that are ex-

hibited in Nature are infinitely diversified, and the causes of these changes not clearly to be discovered. The mass of existence must remain for ever the same; but its modifications will vary throughout infinite space, and through all the successive periods of the eternal duration of time, or, to speak more correctly, through the progression of an interminable futurity. The whole mass of material existence is to us infinite, or at least incomprehensible. To its extent in the regions of space no limits can be assigned, and to its duration, anterior, or subsequent, we can fix no period. The most probable conclusion resulting from the nature of matter, and the stability of physical laws, is, that the universe has existed from all eternity, and that its duration hereafter will be endless. Upon the earth all the different kinds of animals and all the individuals of each kind are seen in succession to die and dissolve into Nature; it is from this inferred, that death is an universal law so far as it relates to all the productions of the earth. But we cannot analogize these facts with the planetary system. We have never seen a planet die or dissolve into the vast ocean of space, we have therefore no good reason to believe that any such event will ever take place. If such a fact had been discovered in one single instance, it would be strong analogical evidence, that the same fate would ultimately overtake all the vast orbs which fill the unlimited regions of space, or that universal death is an universal law of Nature. The constancy of existence, and the immutability of physical laws, will, however, be a sufficient consolation to timid minds, apprehensive of a final dissolution of the beautiful system of the material world. Human nature may repose in these laws the utmost confidence, they will probably operate with *divine* energy throughout an endless futurity.

CHAPTER VII.

Universal Deluge.

THE highest delight of theology is the destruction of the beauty, order, and harmony of the universe. A world regularly existing from all eternity, and continuing so to exist through an endless futurity, would be, in the estimation of supernatural theology, an object of disgust. To nourish the superstitious pride and folly of man, it is necessary to derange, overturn, and destroy the splendid beauties and majestic grandeur of the vast empire of Nature. Not content with the scheme of prediction, whose fulfilment including the ultimate dissolution of the earth, superstition conceived it was necessary to retrace and discover in the history of past ages, an event equally distressing and terrific. For this purpose the story of the universal deluge was contrived, in which all the animals on the surface of the earth, a select number only excepted, fell a sacrifice to the vindictive vengeance of the Jewish God. The nature and details of this story are exposed to strong objections, and by an examination of the Bible account, the inconsistency and even impossibility of the case will be discovered. It will also appear by recurrence to the law of nature, that such an event is in no shape whatever deserving of human credence. The law of fluids and the deficiency of water render it physically impossible that the whole globe should be overflowed at one and the same time. It is well known, that water always seeks its level; where the equilibrium is destroyed, there will be instantly a powerful effort to restore it. If, therefore, the water was elevated sufficiently high to cover the highest mountains, the seas would become dry, a vast cavity would be formed below, and the waters would be precipitated with inconceivable fury and force to supply the cavities below, and re-establish the consistent harmony of nature. The mountains of Andes, in South America, by far the most exalted land upon the surface of the earth, is, at the point of Chimberazo, 20,000 feet above the common surface of the ocean. There is, therefore, a great deficiency of water to answer the purposes of an universal deluge. For as by the law of fluids, water uniformly seeks its level, it is necessary that all around the globe the water should be raised 20,000 feet, otherwise the American Andes would not have been covered, and the deluge would not have been universal. Let any one calculate what a vast quantity of water would have been necessary to have covered the whole earth to such a height, and he will soon discover the absurdity of this marvellous account, and still more marvellous event, related in the book of Genesis. To say that God created such a vast body of water for the sole purpose of drowning the world and all the creatures which he made in it, and afterwards annihilated it, is to assert, in the first place, that which is impossible, and throw upon the moral character of God a

sarcasm, at which man ought to be ashamed, at which he ought to blush and be confounded. The account which is given of the deluge, subjects itself to strong suspicion of incorrectness and want of truth. It is impossible that the ark or any other vessel that ever was built, could have contained all the animals which are said to have taken refuge in it. This ark according to the Bible description of it, was in length about 525 feet, in breadth $87\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and in height $52\frac{1}{2}$ feet. It is easy to perceive, that a vessel of such dimensions had not the capacity of containing the numbers, and all the various kinds of animals which are said to have been rescued from the fatal effects of this general deluge. It is in vain that the advocates of this wonderful event fly to miracles, or the operations of supernatural powers. Miracle on miracle must have been performed, the nature of things perverted, her laws wholly changed, and the immutability of the divine character completely annihilated, before it could be possible for the human mind to accede to the truth of this marvellous event. Some curious and philosophical observations concerning the deluge, taken from Emmerson, a British writer, are here subjoined:—

“Concerning the cause of this flood, some supposed it brought about by natural causes; and others, by nothing less than a divine power. Those that are for natural causes, imagine a comet to have passed near the earth at that time, and by its approach to have raised a very strong tide, which would increase as the comet approached the earth. The effect of this would be, that this great tide would lay all places under water, and would consequently drown all the inhabitants so far as it reached. That such a cause as this is capable of producing this dismal effect, is very evident. For if so small a body as the moon, at the distance of sixty of the earth’s semi-diameters, be able to raise a strong tide in the ocean of twelve or fifteen feet high, a comet as big as the earth, and coming very near it, would raise a prodigious tide, capable of overflowing all that side of the earth which is next to the comet, and also the opposite side. But then this could not drown all places at once; for at the quadratures, or in those places which have the comet in their horizon, they would have as great an ebb, but then it would have this effect to overflow and drown all places successively. For this huge spheroid of water, always pointing towards the comet, would by the earth’s rotation pass over all the countries of the world; and therefore, in the space of twenty-four hours, the whole earth would be involved in water, and all animals as effectually destroyed as if the water staid 150 days upon the earth, especially as the earth must needs make several rotations after this manner before it could get clear of this disturbing force of the comet. The natural and necessary effect of all this would be, that by such a prodigious and rapid motion of this vast body of water round the earth in 24 hours, all plants and trees must be torn up by the roots, and carried along with the current; all buildings demolished; the rocks, hills, and mountains, dashed to pieces and torn away; all the product of the sea, as fishes, shells, teeth, bones, &c., carried along with the flood, and thrown upon the earth, or even to the tops of the mountains, promiscuously with other bodies; hardly any thing could be found strong enough to withstand its force. In such a case as this, it would be impossible for any ark to live, or the strongest man-of-war to exist upon the surface of the ocean.”

The arguments, physical and moral, against an event of this kind are strong and conclusive. Nature is incompetent to any such exhibition, and the moral perfections of Deity forbid it. The flood is therefore a chimera, and one of the theological errors contained in the Bible system of religion, if no other errors, of greater magnitude or more pernicious consequences were to be found in this *holy* book, it would be an object rather of pleasant amusement than of severe remark and condemnation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Christian Wonders.

THE truth of a book is always to be suspected in proportion as it deviates from consistency or the general laws of nature. The story of the deluge, which was considered in the preceding chapter, is followed in the *Holy Bible* by a relation of other marvellous circumstances, which necessarily create, in all candid minds, extreme doubts of the validity or rectitude of such writing. The wonders that are unfolded in the Old Testament, may, with propriety, be denominated Christian, since it is by an union of the two books that Christian doctors have constituted the essence and doctrines of re-

vealed religion. If this book, which is considered as divine, had displayed with clearness, dignity and solemnity, the character of the Creator; if the principles of reciprocal justice, and genuine morality, had been developed and marked with precision; if fact had been substituted in the room of fable, it would not have been an object of censure and condemnation, and the ridiculous and marvellous accounts, which in the Old Testament make up a considerable part of the book, would never have been presented to the human understanding as objects of veneration, belief, and attachment.

The destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone precipitated from Heaven in the form of rain; the blowing down the walls of Jericho with rams' horns, by the triumphant march of the priesthood round the city; the marvellous and frightful story of the witch of Endor; the woeful condition of Daniel in the den of lions; the hot sultry situation of Shadrach and his two companions in the fiery furnace; together with the unnatural and hopeless abode of Jonah in the belly of the whale; all these are specimens of that miserable and disgusting extravagance with which this *Holy Bible* is every where replete.

These are a few out of the number of that long catalogue of foolish detail for which the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are so remarkable. If any man of the present day, who writes for the instruction and benefit of mankind, were to interlard his works with such idle, extravagant, and useless stories, he would be considered in a state of insanity, and his writings would be contemned even by Christian believers themselves. A rain of fire and brimstone is impossible in the order of nature, and inconsistent with the moral perfection of that Being who governs the world. In throwing down the walls of Jericho, there is something in the detail of the story which, in the first place, is calculated to excite in human nature sentiments of humour and ridicule. The pompous and solemn parade of the priesthood, marching with great dignity around this walled city, with crooked rams' horns in their hands, and exhausting the whole force of their lungs with an expectation, that by this puffing effort they should be able to throw down the stony walls of a city, has something in it of a laughable nature; but the conclusion of the story, if it had any truth in it, would be to a correct mind productive of distress, since indiscriminate and unrelenting murder forms the painful picture. The story of the witch of Endor is too contemptible for serious remark; but when coupled with Lot's Wife and with Sampson, the pillar of salt, and the wonderful strength in Sampson's hair, it might serve to frighten children and amuse fools; but to sedate minds attached to nature and truth, such incoherent stuff must become an object of the highest contempt; the bare mention of such extravagant vagaries ought to be their open refutation. The laws of nature are permanent. God is immutable and truth is immortal. To these great objects the energy of intellect ought to be directed. It is time therefore to proceed to the examination of arguments which the most respectable and enlightened believers in Christianity have deemed sufficient to establish its divine origin. These arguments shall be taken up and stated in their full force, that in this respect Christians shall have no right to complain; the success attending an effort to confute them, must be judged of by the result and mode of execution. It is sufficient that a sincere desire to discover truth will be a constant concomitant of those enquiries.

CHAPTER IX.

Is the Evidence drawn from Miracles sufficient to prove the divine Origin of the Christian Religion.

THE sun rises in the eastern horizon with all its resplendent beauties and divine energies, and yet carries along with it no terror or disorder, no trouble or uneasiness in the mind of man. Its motion is known to be regulated by a constancy of impulse; by a cause, whose nature and power are invariable and uniform; by a cause, in which man reposes the utmost confidence. The stars glisten in the firmament, unshaken in their position; the moon performs her wonted duty in the planetary world; in other words, the solar system is guided by laws, of which mathematical sciences has taken the most indubitable cognizance. The productions of the earth are subject to no supernatural derangement; they are exhibited with a constancy and specific similarity which discard every idea of perversion in physical law, and present the material world as a theatre of certitude which the efforts of superstition

cannot destroy. The tides ebb and flow, and all the relative operations of nature are preserved entire, in despite of the malignity of superstition. This vast whole, this extensive universe, thus subjected to the operation of immutable laws, is, nevertheless, distorted and deranged by Christian theology: its Author is insulted, and the scientific deductions of human intellect perverted or destroyed. Religion, not content with the consistency and harmony of Nature, has sought for redress in the violation of her laws, and nothing short of miracles could satisfy the extravagant desires of *pious and holy fanaticism*. Pride and vanity have tempted man to establish religion upon a supernatural basis. The idea of associating with heaven, and holding an intercourse with celestial powers, was a circumstance of extravagant and delicious enjoyment, with a privileged order, and laid the foundation of that terrifying severity of judgment contained in the gospel declaration, *He that believeth not shall be damned*.

If supernatural religion were a thing founded in truth, it would not seek for so many divers means of support, but would rest itself upon the decisions of human judgments and the general science of the world. A true system of ethics disclaims all foreign aid, all violation of Nature's laws, and stands upon its own intrinsic merit. Miracles make it neither better nor worse; if it be false, miracles cannot make it true, and if it be true in its own nature, the working of miracles cannot make it more true. There cannot, therefore, be any use in miracles, since they do not alter the nature of things, or destroy the force and extent of evidence.

The evidence deduced from the supposed existence of miracles is considered by Christian believers incontrovertible, in regard to the sacred truths in their religion. It is astonishing, say they, that any man can have the audacity to call in question the truth of this system, whose divinity has been proved by the working of so many miracles. Both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, God manifested his power, and displayed his eternal perfections in support of the holy nature and celestial origin of revealed religion; he stopped the course of the sun, parted the seas, and dried up the rivers, that his chosen people might pass through with safety upon dry land. He raised the dead in presence of vast multitudes, whose testimony has descended down to us, with undiminished weight and convincing energy. *He has arrested in turn all the powerful laws of nature, in consequence of which, he has established, in the face of the world, the divine origin of the Christian religion. It is, therefore, something worse than folly, it is blindness and madness, mingled with the grossest effrontery to the majesty of Heaven, even to suspect the holy truths of this holy and supernatural system.* All this may be true; but of its truth we shall be better able to judge when we have thoroughly investigated the subject. Assertions cannot be substituted for arguments, and we have yet to learn, whether the weight of evidence drawn from miracles, be as great as Christian believers represent. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, by *supernatural power*. In the act of such violation there must have been some great object in view, which could not otherwise be accomplished; the violation therefore must have been considered as the least of two evils, and the result as productive, upon the whole, of the greatest possible good. But this represents an omnipotent GOD, surrounded with difficulties, and like imperfect creatures, disposed to make the best of a bad condition.

It will be necessary for those who advocate the doctrine of miracles, to recur to the cause and primary establishment of the laws of nature. God is infinite in all his perfections; the laws of nature are an effect of the divine attributes, and must have been modified in the best possible manner, and to answer the best and wisest purposes. To alter, therefore, that which already had been done in the best possible manner, would be to make it worse, for no alteration or amendment could make that better which was already as good as it could be. If the world and the laws by which the world was governed, are the offspring of infinite wisdom, they must have been right in the first place, for it is a necessary character of infinite wisdom to perform whatever it does perform in the best possible manner. All alterations or violations in any system or set of laws, argues imperfection and want of discernment, but such imperfection and want of discernment, cannot be the property of a perfect being. If God, therefore, is perfect, such perfection would enable him to conceive and execute with a masterly hand. The mechanic who builds a machine, frequently alters his plan, and is under the necessity of attending to amendments and repairs; but

his ignorance was the ground work of this, and a competent knowledge of the principles by which the machine was constructed, would have precluded the necessity of subsequent correction and amendment. The Creator of the world knew perfectly well the force and effect of principle before it was applied to the accomplishment of the variegated motions and operations of existence; ignorance, therefore, could have no share in modifying the vast powers of the universe, or the immutable principles by which it is directed. Wisdom, power, and goodness, combined in the management of the whole, and consequently the whole is formed exactly in such a manner as these three leading perfections of the divine character at first intended. To work a miracle, therefore, would answer no very valuable purpose, and is derogatory to the attributes of God, by which it is supposed to be wrought. To establish a system of religion by evidence drawn from miracles, is to establish it upon the ruin of the consistent harmony of the divine perfections; upon the ruin of all principle and all confidence. When the consistent character of the author of such religion is destroyed, the religion itself is not worth much. Either God did things in the first place as they ought to be done, or he did not; if he did them as they ought to be done, there could have been no need of alteration, and consequently there could have been no such thing as a miracle; if he did not, then he must have been either imperfect, or have acted inconsistent with good principle; in either of which cases, his character as God would be destroyed, and the perfection of his existence sacrificed upon the altar of human folly. Fanaticism, which attempts to exalt its God by making him work wonders, is as great an enemy to true Theism as the open and professed Atheist. A wonder-working God, who violates his own laws, and acts inconsistently with the principles which he himself has established, is no God at all. It is an immoral phantom conjured up in the wild vagaries of superstitious imagination. It is easy to perceive that if there be in nature a perfect God, he cannot be the author of those marvellous and even ridiculous violations of the laws of nature detailed in the Old and New Testament. His character must be uniform, consistent and perfect, just and equitable, and in perfect coincidence with the immortal laws of the moral and physical world.

All things, it is said, are possible with God. This is one of the maxims of that religion which has perverted all the principles of truth and justice; but this maxim is not true, it is not possible, for instance, that God should destroy his own existence; it is not possible that he should act inconsistently with the properties and principles of his nature. This extravagant assertion, instead of exalting the character of the Creator, would absolutely destroy it by causing him to act without rule and without justice. But superstition can never do enough for her God, until she has done a great deal too much. A consistent and immutable Deity, acting in strict conformity to the essential properties of his existence, would be, in the estimation of inconsistent superstition, an object far inferior to those wild and unruly divinities, who overturn states and empires, pervert the general order of nature, and occasionally, by way of amusement, drown the whole world, with all the inhabitants and animals therein existing. A man walking regularly upon the earth, and performing with fidelity all his moral duties, is *by no means an object of attachment*, but one walking upon the water, without doing any good, will draw forth the admiration of a gazing, foolish, and superstitious world. The passion for the marvellous has carried man from earth to heaven, and, in the ranting fury of his zeal, he has supposed that his God would be pleased with all those moral distortions which at such unhappy moments agitated his own delirious mind. The idea of the existence of a miracle will be wholly destroyed by a just recurrence to the counterbalancing evidence, drawn from the experience of mankind. This experience bears testimony to the uniform operation of Nature's laws; it teaches man to repose in them unqualified confidence, and, in all the common concerns of life, this confidence serves as the foundation of his courage, his activity, and his consolation. Here are, then, two kinds of evidence opposed to each other; the one human experience, and the other human testimony.

Those who contend that miracles prove the divinity of the Christian religion, appeal to the testimony of witnesses to support the truth and existence of such miracles. Let this case be examined, and the superior weight of evidence will appear with convincing force. Believers declare that the miracles which were wrought to prove the truth of the holy Scriptures, were numerous, and performed before great numbers of

people. That the credit and veracity of these witnesses cannot be doubted; that they were honest and disinterested men; that they did not wish to be deceived themselves, nor could they possibly reap any advantage from deceiving others; that some of the eye-witnesses were inspired men, in whom there was no guile, and that others were men of the world, whose feelings and interest would have rejected, if possible, the splendour of such supernatural evidence; that all these, however yielded to the mighty energy of the mighty God; that they pronounced him a wonder-working God, and that such marvellous facts had never before been presented to a wicked and apostate world. It is also declared and maintained, that the result of these pure and incorruptible witnesses has been transmitted down for more than two thousand years through the holy and incorruptible channel of the Church of Christ; that the present generation might as well doubt of the existence of Scipio or of Cæsar, as to doubt of the existence of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and the miracles which by them were performed; that the unbeliever at this time is working against all his own positions, destroying the nature of evidence, and unhinging the moral world.

Formidable as this statement may appear, it will perhaps vanish when compared with the weight of evidence drawn from the almost universal experience of the human race. The laws of nature are uniform and immutable. This is declared to be a fact by the testimony of all ages and all countries. Observation and experience are the sources which must be resorted to in such cases, and these do not warrant a conclusion that the laws of nature have ever been violated. Through a long succession of ages, the same general facts and events have been presented; the same causes appear to have been in a constant state of action, productive of the same or similar effects, and to the general order of the physical world, every living creature now bears testimony. When, therefore, it is asserted, that in former ages all this beauty and harmony of the world was destroyed, this ought not to overbalance the convincing force of evidence drawn from our own observations. If we say that we believe the former extravagant accounts, we contradict the testimony of our own senses; we abandon the instructive guide of our own experience, and affirm that the testimony of a few men has more weight than our own positive knowledge.

The human mind is bound to decide according to the greatest portion of evidence; in any given case, therefore, the nature and portion of evidence ought to be fairly called up before the mind, and perspicuity of statement, will probably induce the necessity of a favourable and upright decision. Will any Christian believer say, that he has as much evidence that nature's laws have been violated, or that miracles have been wrought, as he has that the laws of nature have not been violated, and that no miracles have been wrought? Certainly the testimony of a few men bears no proportion to the universal experience and general observation of the human species. All mankind, with a few exceptions, declare that the world is governed by laws which do not change. A few men who lived many ages ago, declared that these laws did change, and that they had been witnesses to several astonishing facts of this kind. If we give credit to those men, we give the lie to all the world beside; if we repose confidence in the testimony of our own senses, and the general experience of mankind, we shall have reason to believe, that those few men, who relate prodigies and miracles, were either deceived themselves, or that they had a design to deceive others. It is not extraordinary for ignorant men, or even the most scientific, to be frequently deceived; nor is it at all extraordinary, that either the ignorant or the learned should form a settled plan for deceiving their fellow creatures. Either of these cases is much more probable than that God should violate his own laws, or act contrary to the essential properties of his existence. Either of these cases is much more probable, than that the experience and observation of all mankind, in almost all ages, should have been incorrect or incapable of judging upon so plain a case as the operation of the laws of nature. Men are frequently interested in the practice of deception, or at least they conceive that a temporary advantage would be the result; they therefore yield to an impulse productive of misery in the end, but calculated to gratify for the moment the extravagant and vicious inclinations of the individual. Men are sometimes disposed to tell lies, but nature speaks the language of solemn truth. To controvert, therefore, this truth, and adhere to the stories of a few fanatic and ignorant individuals, is the height of folly. In no other case is man so unwise; in no other case does he so

essentially depart from the rules of evidence and the respect which he owes to the dignity of his intellectual existence.

Further considerations of corroborative weight and influence will be found essentially connected with the nature of this subject, by a recurrence to the history of intellectual existence, and the state of improvement in society. It is extraordinary, that all miracles have been wrought during the dark ages; and that a cultivated state of human existence has always excluded and rejected all such marvellous events. The smallest attention that has been paid to the historical progress of science, will convince us that there are most wonders where there is most ignorance. That knowledge has been always unfriendly to the existence of miracle; that ghosts, witches, and devils, with all their concomitant train of mischievous and malignant phantoms, have generally existed amidst the darkness, the ignorance, and the superstition of former ages; and that in proportion as science advanced, miracle receded; in proportion as knowledge was generally diffused, the marvellous stories of antiquity became less respectable, and their supposed truth more universally doubted. There was a time and that not very far distant, in which the foolish story of the witch of Endor was received with the greatest respect; at this moment, enlightened Christians themselves are ashamed of it. In proportion as man makes progress in physical knowledge, he ceases to be the dupe of superstition, and what before appeared marvellous, now becomes plain and intelligible. In natural philosophy we may discover an hundred proofs of the truth of this assertion; the rapid lightning of Heaven, which darts with inconceivable velocity through the regions of space, was once considered as a powerful weapon of destruction in the hands of God, and that no human power could controul it. This modification of physical energy, among enlightened minds, has lost all its terror, and in many places is completely subjected to the will of man. The cause of earthquakes is known, and scientific presumption has gone so far as to make even those that are artificial. The charms and deception of legerdemain tricks have lost, in a high degree, their influence, and strength of intellect is determined to oppose with constancy and firmness such impositions upon the human race.

If there were no other circumstances which operated against miracles, the ignorance with which believers applaud them, would, of itself, be a sufficient condemnation and refutation of such idle and foolish stories. The witches of antiquity have fled to the mountains; the prophets are no longer credited, and the possibility of miracles is not admitted by the mathematical and physical reasoner. If miracles ever had any existence, why should they not have an existence still? There is as much reason for them now as there ever was, and the necessity is increased by the infidelity of the present day. If miracles were necessary to establish Christianity in the first instance, they are equally proper and necessary now; for proofs ought to be equal to all, where equal credence is demanded. To make the Christian religion consistent, it is necessary there should be a constant string of miracles in every age and in all countries: but this would destroy the very nature of miracles, by making them so frequent, that it would be impossible to distinguish between these events, and those which were produced by the common operations of the laws of Nature. It is, therefore, impossible to give equal proof to all those who are equally interested in the ultimate decision upon revealed religion.

Every supernatural system has pretended to miracles, to something mysterious and marvellous, to something out of the order of nature, and which would be calculated to excite alarm amongst weak and ignorant people. The truth is, there can be no such thing as a miracle, and the religion that is built upon this foundation is false, and cannot be permanent. The laws of nature are immutable, and God, their author, is free from every species of imperfection. Truth, immortality, and eternal uniformity of action are essential to his character and existence. The evidence drawn from universal experience is against the possibility of a miracle, and the history of mankind corroborates the impressive opinion, that the moral and physical world is governed by laws *inherent in the nature of things, identified with their existence*, and incapable of being altered by the properties or exertion of any being whatever. Christian believers assert that their system is the only one supported by miracles; but they ought to know that Mahomet lays equal claim to the working of miracles, having declared that he travelled through ninety heavens in one night, and returned to Mecca, in Arabia, before the next morning. That he saw God Almighty, and held with him a personal conversation, together with many other strange things of a miraculous and terrifying nature. There is as much

reason to believe Mahomet as to believe Moses and Jesus, and their apostles and followers.

The fact is, there is no reason to believe any of them, unless the stories which they relate are consistent with the nature of things, and the character of God. All deviations from this divine standard are to be suspected of error, and miracles most of all. It is extraordinary that Jesus, who is said to have wrought so many miracles, was afterwards put to death in the very place where they were wrought, and by the very persons who had been eye-witnesses of such divine and supernatural power. "If the Jews demanded the death of Jesus, his miracles are at once annihilated in the mind of every rational man." It cannot be presumed, that a man clothed with supernatural power, would be a proper object of execution, in the estimation of those who really believed that he was in the possession and exercise of such power, and that all his efforts were aided and sanctioned by the Creator himself. If the proofs of this celestial mission of Jesus had been clearly exhibited through the channel of miraculous operations, the Jews and all the surrounding multitude would have adored him as a God, and they would have been terrified at the very idea of laying violent hands upon one whose omnipotence could have instantly crushed them to atoms. The following remarks upon this subject, taken from a powerful reasoner, deserve to be inserted here:—

"To suppose that God can alter the settled laws of Nature, which he himself formed, is to suppose his will and wisdom mutable, and that they are not the best laws of the most perfect being; for if he is the author of them, they must be immutable as he is; so that he cannot alter them to make them better, and will not alter them to make them worse. Neither of these can be agreeable to his attributes. If the course of nature is not the best, the only best and fittest that could be, it is not the offspring of perfect wisdom, nor was it settled by divine will; and then God is not the author of nature, if the laws thereof can be altered; for if the laws of nature are God's laws, he cannot alter them in any degree, without being in some degree changeable. If all nature is under the direction of an immutable mind, what can make a change in that direction? God must be allowed to be eternal, therefore he necessarily exists, and is necessarily whatever he is; therefore it is not in his own power to change himself; it is in his perfection to be immutable; for if his nature could possibly change, it might err; for whosoever is changeable is not perfect. Beside, an eternal and a perfect nature must necessarily be unchangeable; and as long as the first moving cause is the same, all subsequent and second causes can never vary."

This reasoning is energetic and conclusive against the doctrine of miracles. If, then, there can be no such thing as a miracle, Christianity, which is built upon this foundation, must be false. Man must therefore resort to a system of morality and religion which coincides with the laws of nature, and which discards all supernatural violation of its divine order and harmony.

CHAPTER X.

Prophetic Evidence in relation to the Divinity of the Christian Religion.

THE fulfilment of the prophecies is considered by Christian believers, as strong proof of the sacred and celestial nature of their religion. They speak in language positive, and in confidence bold and firm, that the divinity of that holy system, which they believe, is substantiated by many wonders, and that they have a surplus of evidence in favour of its *holy truths*. Miracles, although sufficient of themselves to prove that revealed religion is true, are corroborated by the convincing evidence drawn from predictive declaration contained in the Scriptures. Many centuries ago, and even thousands of years, the favourites of heaven were inspired with a clear and a certain knowledge of important events, which subsequent times should disclose to the human race. The predictions of these men have been literally fulfilled, and this circumstance of itself ought to be sufficient to destroy the infidelity of the present age. This idea is considered by Christians as founded in truth, and they challenge a confutation of its force and effect. It is therefore necessary that we inquire whether this species of evidence can have weight in the present case. Prophecy is in some respects like miracles, they both partake of the marvellous, they are both supernatural, they are both inconsistent with the order of nature. There is, however, in man, a pride and

vanity which induces him to pretend to a knowledge of futurity, and that his knowledge is the result of a secret and mysterious intercourse with celestial powers. In all ages there have been prophets who imposed upon the mass of mankind, and made others believe that the events of future ages were opened to their view. It is not extraordinary that such men should have existed, nor is it extraordinary that many of the human race should have reposed a confidence in them. Ignorance is the cause of credulity, and it is with ignorance that imposture always works, but it is extraordinary that learned men have cited the Scripture prophecies in proof of their religion, as will appear more fully when the objections to which these prophecies are exposed, are fully disclosed and examined. The argument which goes to destroy the nature of a miracle, equally destroys the possibility of man's possessing from God a prophetic spirit; it is a violation of the laws of nature, a derangement of its natural and regular course, an infringement of the correct operation of the moral and mental faculties of our existence. But there are two grand objections which lie against Scripture prophecies, and which must destroy all their credit and authority. The first is, that they are so vague and indefinite, that they cannot be applied to any specific object, person, or event. The second is, that those which are the most clear and explicit, have absolutely failed in their accomplishment, and this of itself is sufficient to overturn the divinity of any book in which such prophecies are to be found. A third consideration of weight, is the deception and lying character of the Bible prophets, and even God himself is blasphemously charged of having a hand in this wicked business, by putting a lying spirit into the mouth of one of his prophets. (See 2 Chron. chap. 18.)

If the business of prophesying were admissible in any shape, it is that only which includes perspicuity and certainty of time, place, person, object, and circumstance. There can be no use in prophesying, if nobody can tell to what object it is directed, and what is its real and true meaning. A prophecy that may be applied to twenty different objects, is no prophecy at all; or at least there would be no occasion for a divine spirit in such predictions. It ought to be called conjecture or mere *guess work*, for any man might prophesy after this manner; if it did not suit one thing, it would perhaps another, and in the multitude of events that are constantly disclosed, it would be strange indeed if there was not some event to which the prophecy would in some measure apply. Fanaticism would then step in to aid the application, and a few councils, synods, and presbyteries, by the force of zeal and authority, could easily place the matter beyond the confutation of all the infidels of the world; at any rate, they could declare that if any man did not believe that the prophecy meant exactly what they said it meant, *he should be damned*. This, if it did not make the prediction clear, would at least make the church strong, and in its authority henceforth infallible.

It is pretended that the coming and second coming of Jesus Christ is clearly predicted in the *sacred books* of the Jews and Christians; but those predictions in the Old Testament, which divines so dexterously apply to the Advent of the Son of Mary, are as applicable to any other person as they are to Jesus. It is sufficient in this place, to notice two or three passages which have always been prominent in the estimation of believers upon this subject. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.* This, it is said, has an immediate reference to the first appearance of the Saviour of the world; but admitting that the prophecy was correct in point of time, it is deficient in designation of person. It is impossible to tell who *Shiloh* is, and it would apply as well to Mahomet as to Jesus. The Christians assert that this prophecy was fulfilled; but the Jews, who ought to understand their own sacred writings better than the followers of Jesus, declare that it has not been fulfilled. If, however, the passage really had reference to the coming of Christ, why did it not express, in plain terms that could not have been mistaken, its real meaning, together with the name of the person, the place where he was born, and the time and place when and where he was executed, and by whom. This would have put the matter beyond controversy; the designation of Jesus by name, the name of his mother, and the peculiar circumstance of his death, would have been much better calculated to silence the objections of individuals, and prophecy would have become much more respectable in the view of reason. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, is another prophecy which Christians declare relates immediately to their divine Saviour. But it is impossible to discover any

specific application of such a vague and indefinite assertion as this. The plainest explanation that can be given to the phrase is, that men, being the offspring of women, should find in themselves a disposition to bruise the heads of serpents, wherever they could find them; but what has this to do with religion, or the coming of Jesus Christ? If the passage has any meaning of this latter kind, the words are not calculated to disclose such meaning, and we are just as ignorant as if it had never been spoken.

In the 7th chapter of Isaiah, there is another famous prophecy in the following words: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.* This prophecy declares that at some future time, some girl or other should be with child, and that the child's name should be called Emanuel; this is the whole amount of it, and it is easy to perceive that it is remarkably deficient in all definite properties of perspicuous prediction. The name of Mary is not mentioned, nor the name of Jesus; nobody knows who this virgin was, or by whom she became pregnant; all that is pointed and specific in this prophecy, is the name of the child, and this is Emanuel, and not Jesus. The son of Mary, therefore, whom the Christians have exalted to be the Saviour of a wicked world, is not included within the meaning of this prophecy; or at least, if they meant that the prophecy should apply to Christ, it is a pity that they had not called him by name, and pointed out the time and place of his birth. This would have prevented much doubt and difficulty, and been more consistent with the perfections of that God who is bound to instruct and not deceive his creatures. There is one further observation upon the nature of this prophetic passage, which is, that after declaring that Emanuel should eat butter and honey, and the reason that is offered for this, is, that he might know how to refuse the evil and choose the good; as if the way to discriminate with correctness between moral and immoral principles, was to live upon butter and honey. It is probably true that such a mode of living rendered habitual would be favourable to the moral temperament of man, and that the use of animal food makes him savage and ferocious. It ought not, however, to have been mentioned as a principal cause of distinguishing between good and evil. This is the work of the moral and mental faculties of our existence, and some men might eat honey during their whole lives, and die at last totally ignorant of moral principle. This passage of holy writ, in its real nature and character, does not deserve the least comment or observation; but when Christian theology has made mole-hills into mountains, it is a duty which we owe to the cause of truth, to strip the film from off the eye, that nature may appear correct and without distortion. When prophecies are expressed in such a loose and unmeaning manner, they lose all their character and credit, and can never be cited as proof of the divinity of that religion in which they are found.

Whoever wishes to be more fully convinced, that Scripture prophecies are destitute of all certitude, is referred to the perusal of a work, entitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, in which numerous passages of this kind are called up to view, and the reader is furnished with chapter and verse in various places of the Old and New Testament. In the second place, that prophecies do not prove the truth of the Christian religion, is evident from the consideration, that some of those which are most clear and explicit, have absolutely failed in their accomplishment. The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is adduced to prove the present assertion; in that chapter Christ foretelleth the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world; the inquiry being made, when shall these things be accomplished, the answer is, that this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. But it is necessary to quote the whole passage, to shew that this prophecy, which is as clear and definite as any one contained either in the Old or New Testament has not been fulfilled; that the time of its fulfilment expired long ago, even in that generation in which it was spoken, and that this of itself ought to destroy the validity of all Christian prophecies; because, when detected in one positive and absolute falsehood, the veracity of Testament writers is for ever afterwards to be suspected. (Ver. 29th) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in

the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: when his branches are yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

The things predicted in this passage have not come to pass. The sun has not been darkened, nor has the moon ceased to give her light; the stars still shine in brilliant splendor, they glisten in the expansive firmament, they still hold their stationary predicament in the regions of space, and are expressive of the majestic grandeur and resplendent glory of the Creator. There is no Christian that can contend that this prophecy has been fulfilled; every thing contained in it was to have taken place before that generation should pass away; but not only that generation, but many others have passed away; eighteen hundred years have elapsed, and the things spoken of are not yet accomplished; there is a complete failure, the prophecy is false, and this falsifies the book in which it is contained. A single detection of this kind is enough to destroy the credit and authority, the pretended divinity and celestial origin of the New Testament. If God the Creator had inspired the men who wrote it, they would have written nothing but truth, for it is impossible that he should have inspired them with lies. There are many other places in the New Testament which speak of the day of judgment, and the final termination of the world, as if it were expected that those events would actually have taken place during the life-time of the apostles or immediate followers of Jesus. (See Cor. x. 11. Heb. ix. 21. 1 John ii. 18.) If those men who pretended to be inspired, were nevertheless so grossly deceived, what confidence can the human race now repose in their writings? It is evident that the end of the world was expected as an event that must shortly happen, and that the apostles waited for it with trembling anxiety, frequently impressing on each other the importance of being prepared for the opening of such a terrific scene.

Nature, which is constant, stable, and uniform, has given the lie to all these predictions, and taught man a lesson of impressive science, that God is just, immutable, and eternal; that he regards with parental benevolence the creation which he has made, and that he will not wantonly destroy it to gratify the imaginary whims of a blind and bigoted fanaticism. But there is still a more weighty charge, a more important accusation lying against the Bible prophecies. They charge the Creator of the world with a want of veracity; that one part of his business has been to deceive his own prophets, and to infuse into their minds falsehoods and lies. The Bible represents him as copartner in human guilt, and exhibiting on many occasions a departure from the rules of moral excellence, which departure in itself would be derogatory to the character of any individual of the human race. In the 2d Chronicles, chapter xviii. we shall find matter to verify what has been said. The passage is as follows: "And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? and one spake saying after this manner. Then there came out a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him, and the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said; thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out and do even so. Now, therefore, behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee." Here God is positively charged with having put a lying spirit into the mouth of his prophet, and this, if true, would completely destroy his moral character; if it be not true, the assertion in the Bible is false, and of course destroys the divine authenticity of the book. In either alternative, the believer is involved in equal difficulty; the truth of the book or the character of God must be sacrificed. Another example of this kind of prophesying, is found in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him." The prophet Jeremiah says, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. Wilt thou be alto-

gether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" And in another prophet, the Lord says, "the days are prolonged and every vision fails;" and though the Lord adds, "thus shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done;" yet he afterwards says, if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, "I the Lord have deceived that prophet." And if the prophet is deceived, must not the people who rely on that prophet be deceived? And does not the prophet Jeremiah say, "Ah! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people!" (See Tindal, page 220.)

It is not the intention, nor is it necessary in a work of this kind, to examine all the pages of the sacred writings of the Christians, in proof of their falsehood or immorality; a few specimens are sufficient to substantiate the principle which is placed in opposition to the character and doctrine of revealed religion. God cannot lie; he is incapable of deception, and a book which charges him with these crimes is false upon the very face of the record. This charge which has been exhibited in the quotations which are made above, furnishes a strong ground of belief, that those who wrote the Scriptures were unacquainted with the nature of moral principles, and that they had no correct idea of the nature of Theism. Lying prophets, a lying book, and a God that coincides with such detestable principles, are circumstances irreconcilable, inconsistent, unjust, and destitute of all truth. A prophet who tells lies himself, and then attributes these lies to the Creator of the world, is a character which reason ought to abhor. This impious connection between earth and heaven; this pretended combination for the purposes of fraud and deception, is calculated only to disgust an innocent mind, and produce an implacable hatred against all religion. It would be more consistent with the true interest of man, that he should be destitute of all theological ideas, than that he should yield to the reception of such incoherent and unjust opinions of the divine character. Atheism is far preferable to that theology which includes folly, cruelty, and ferocious fanaticism. A God that inspires people with lies is worse than no God at all, and such is the character of the Bible God, if the passages of Scripture cited above are to be credited. Prophecy has nothing to do with the order of nature, it is not in conformity to it, it is a wild and injurious effect of the most extravagant superstition. It appears from the preceding enquiry, that many of the Scripture prophecies are vague and indefinite, that they prove nothing in regard to the supernatural origin of revealed religion; in other cases, the prophetic spirit has not hit the mark, and the prophecy has completely failed of accomplishment; in others, the lies and deceptions incorporated with these celestial predictions, annihilate at once all the vestiges of truth, and leave the moral world in a state of mental decrepitude, ignorance, and superstition. To assert, therefore, that the evidence drawn from prophecies is sufficient to substantiate the divinity of the Christian religion is a complete abandonment of all the laws and principles by which nature is governed. It is a surrender of intellect to the capricious and extravagant operations of a cruel and superstitious opinion. It is substituting conjecture for truth, and making the imagination more correct and powerful than reason. It is not possible that the intellectual powers of human nature can never reach an exalted state of improvement, till they rise above all the degrading impressions of theological superstition, and rest with confidence upon the basis of their own energy.

CHAPTER XI.

That the Immorality of the Christian Religion proves that it is not of Divine Origin.

It is extraordinary, that among other sources of evidence to which Christians have resorted for the purpose of proving their religion divine and supernatural, they have yielded to a belief, that in point of moral excellence, the Bible is superior to all other books. If all external evidence were swept away, it would, nevertheless, appear by the internal purity of this system, that it is divine. Its morality is declared to be pure, excellent, and celestial; that it rises above the earth, and partakes of the nature of heaven, that its maxims are sublime, its doctrines holy, its moral precepts universally unexceptionable, and that the mind that does not perceive in the Christian religion indubitable marks of its divinity, must be blind to that blaze of internal evidence which shines with refulgent splendour through this revealed system. Such in substance is the opinions such the sentiments and feelings of the Christian believer. It is certainly of the highest importance, that every system of religion should be im-

maculate in its moral principles; and in deficiency of this, its pretended claim to divinity sinks into nothing, and merits absolute contempt. All the miracles in the world can never prove that religion to be true, whose internal maxims are immoral and destructive. Purity of rules and principles, must be fundamental in every ethical treatise; the nature of our existence demands it, our powers bear a constant relation to the production of moral effects, and our happiness cannot be secured by any other means. A single departure from the pre eminent principles of an exalted virtue, is sufficient to condemn to everlasting infamy, any pretended supernatural system, in which such departure is discovered. It is expected, in mere human productions, that errors will frequently appear; but in a work that is divine, there can be no excuse for faults of any kind, not even in a single instance. If the Christian religion be the work of a divine and Almighty mind, it should have been presented free from blemish and moral impurity; it should have been clear, intelligible, upright, and immaculate in all its principles; it should have been clothed with innocence, and untarnished by that debauchery and blood, which now constitute so considerable a portion of this *holy* and *divine* system. It is called a system, but in what respect it deserves this appellation, it is impossible to say. It is in conformity to common phraseology that we so frequently include it under this name. It is not systematic either in its history, its doctrines, or its morality; it consists of detached historical anecdotes, false or mutilated moral rules, and unintelligible dogmas. They are bound up together in one book; but they have as little connection with each other, as the history of Greece and the accounts of the Salem witchcraft. In a genuine system of ethics, it is expected, at least, that glaring immorality will be excluded, and that the fundamental principles will coincide with the nature and powers of man. But when we behold in a book the grossest violation of theoretic moral excellence and practical purity, the greatest indecency and the most disgusting delicacy of sentiment, there is good ground to suspect that such a book has been the production of weak and vicious men, and not the work of infinite wisdom. It is, however, denied by Christians, that their religion contains maxims and principles of an immoral nature; it is therefore necessary to furnish incontrovertible proofs of this position, and shew in what respects the Bible is at war with moral virtue, the peace of society, and the best interests of man. It is necessary to show that this book contains maxims and commands which are said to have come from God, which would disgrace the character of any honest man, and make him a candidate for a state prison or the gallows.

When the chosen people of God were about to leave Egypt, he commanded them to borrow from the Egyptians, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, without any intention of ever returning them to their proper owners, but to march off and appropriate them exclusively to their own use. Here was deception, and a breach of trust of so black a complexion, that it was very little better than downright theft or open plunder. Of a similar nature is the conduct of Jesus, when he sent his disciples to bring him a colt that was none of his own. In case of a detection or attack, he ordered his disciples to answer, that the Lord had need of him. Such a trifling evasion at the present day would not be considered as a valid excuse for feloniously taking and carrying away another man's property. If it was right at that time to steal in the name of the Lord, or get clear of the crime, by saying that the Lord had need of stolen goods, it is right yet, and such a maxim once admitted would overturn the empire of justice, and subvert the order and peace of society. There are many heavy crimes and high-handed misdemeanors, which lie very strong against the chosen people of God; and if the accounts of immorality detailed in the Old Testament, concerning the Jews, are true, we should be led to conclude that God had not made a very wise choice. The history of that barbarous people, is the history of carnage and murder, of theft, robbery, and almost every species of villainy, that ever disgraced an ignorant and savage nation. It is to be presumed, that if God would condescend to become partial to any of the human race, and make them his chosen people, he would choose those that were already strongly attached to the practice of an exalted virtue, or that he would instantly instruct them in the knowledge of useful, moral, and sublime principles. This, however, is not the fact in the present case; the Jews knew nothing of morality or science, before God made them his chosen people, and they knew nothing of it afterward; so that their intimacy with their God was of no advantage to *them*, and still less to their *neighbours*. To their neighbours it was the sword of vengeance and slaughter;

for when they were impelled to the abominable crimes of unrelenting murder and universal pillage, they charge it upon God, and said, for so doing, they had his immediate command. In proof of this, various passages might be cited; but a few are sufficient to destroy the credit of the Bible, and free the divine character from such odious imputations. In the 20th chapter of Deuteronomy, the following bloody and exterminating commands are given, and these commands are attributed to God himself. (Verse 13th) "And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof shalt thou take unto thyself." (Verse 16th) "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them." In the sixth chapter of Joshua, there is another specimen of the immoral and murdering spirit of God's chosen people, (Verse 21) "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." To charge the Creator of the world with such a violation of all justice, with such a dereliction of every humane sentiment, is to deprive him of all his moral perfections, and to make him equal in villainy to Moses and Joshua, or any of the eminent murderers whose names have been recorded in the bloody history of the human race. It is strange to observe, that in reasoning upon theological subjects, men are disposed to abandon the correct ground of moral decision, and contend that those actions which would be unjust in man, would nevertheless be just, when performed by the Creator. This is a mode of reasoning which perverts all the faculties of our existence, destroys the moral excellence of Deity, and overturns the foundation of principle. In all beings that are intelligent, moral principle is the same; and God has no more right to violate it, than any other being. He is essentially bound by the properties of his existence, and his character cannot be sustained without an undeviating attention to the immutable principle of justice.

In the history of David and Solomon, there is such a flagrant violation of justice and decency, that the character of these men is most certainly incompatible with the idea of celestial association. David, who is said to be a man after God's own heart, was, nevertheless, a murderer and adulterer. Solomon, though declared by Christians to be the wisest man, was, probably, one of the most debauched characters that ever disgraced the annals of human history. The chapters in which his love intrigues are celebrated, are an extravagant specimen of the most sensual and lascivious enjoyment. It is impossible to read at the head of some of the chapters, *Christ's love to the Church*, without smiling at theological stupidity, or being disgusted with religious deception. There is not a word in all the Songs of Solomon, which has the least relation to religion; they are descriptive of sensual love. In some places grossly, and in others delicately touched off by the hand of a descriptive artist. If the church of Christ at the present day possessed moral sentiment enough to produce a blush, its cheek would be crimsoned over at the idea of incorporating with a system of divinity, this ludicrous and lascivious poem. But fanaticism is blind to the errors and imperfections of any book to which it is determined to be attached. Zeal propels the faculties to discover in nature, debauched or distorted, a real love between Christ and the Church, or a system of morality far superior to every other ethical treatise. This wicked system, which inculcates theft, murder, fornication, and lies, is denominated *holy writ*. If such be the character of holy writ, it is far better to seek for moral consolation in productions of another kind. It is a blasphemous application of the terms, and subverts all human confidence in the purity and truth of natural religion. In this religion there is certitude, consistency, and moral virtue. Of all the books that ever were published, Volney's *Ruins* is pre-eminently entitled to the appellation of *Holy Writ*, and ought to be appointed to be read in Churches; not by his Majesty's special command, but by the universal consent and approbation of all those who love nature, truth, and human happiness.

In the New Testament, many principles are advanced inconsistent with moral truth, destructive of the peace of society, and subversive of the best interests of the human race. Some of these ruinous and immoral sentiments must be noticed, and made the subject of useful comment. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ* is announced to a wicked world, as a great and important blessing; but an examination of this system will shew that it

is calculated to annihilate every thing valuable in human existence; to create endless wars among the nations of the earth; to destroy domestic peace and tranquility; discourage industry, and arrest the energetic progress of the human faculties in their career of beneficial improvement. In proof of these assertions, the following passages are quoted. (Luke, chap. xiv. verse 26) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple." In the gospel of St. Matthew we are commanded to love our enemies. By what strange perversion of moral sentiment is it, that we are commanded in one place to hate our nearest relations, and in another to exercise a tender and affectionate regard to our implacable enemies? Such a violation of consistency in a moral code, annihilates at once all human confidence, destroys the finest feelings of the heart, and renders it indubitably certain that such a book cannot be divine or true.

The above passage is also inconsistent with that part of the decalogue which says, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, for surely we cannot hate and honour them at the same time. It is also expressly contradictory to the mild and benevolent temper so frequently exhibited in the Epistles of John. *If any man say that he is in the light and hateth his brother, he is in darkness, even until now.* If the above passage in Luke be true, the condition on which we are to become the disciples of Christ, is that of hating our brother, and all our relations: while in the writings of John, love is absolutely necessary to the idea of true religion. How these opposite declarations can stand together, it is difficult to conceive. Christian fanaticism is able, perhaps, to reconcile them; but reason sees in them nothing but inconsistency, and the heated zeal of an incorrect and disordered imagination. Another passage of most destructive immorality, is in Mathtlaw's Gospel, (chap. x. verse 35) *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law, and a man's foes shall be of his own household.* If this was really the object of Christ's mission, no man was ever sent upon a more bloody and baneful expedition. This is carrying the sword of war into the hearts of nations, and sowing the seeds of private animosity, in the bosom of domestic life. It is inconsistent with the goodness of God, that he should have been the author of a religion which has annihilated rational peace, and subverted the foundation of social and domestic tranquillity. This same dreadful idea is expressed in other parts of the New Testament, and furnishes an immutable ground of decision against the moral principle and divinity of this religion. But not content with spreading far and wide the baleful effects of public and private calamity, this revealed system has positively enjoined, what, if reduced to practice, would bring upon the world universal starvation, and cause the human race to become extinct. (See Matthew, chap. vi.) *Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meet, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore take no thought saying, what shall we eat; or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? If these directions were followed, the corporeal and mental industry of man would be destroyed, and famine, ignorance, and misery, would be the necessary consequence. It is in vain that we are told that these passages do not mean what they express; if, when we are told that we ought to love our enemies, it is meant that we should not love them; and when we are told that we ought to hate our nearest relations, it is meant that we should not hate them; if when we are told that we ought to take no thought for the morrow, it is meant that we should take thought. If such be the explanatory methods by which the injurious force of these passages is to be done away there is an end to all confidence in language, and the religion of Jesus is better calculated for deception than instruction. The writings of Paul, that heated and fanatic zealot in the Christian faith, are equally noxious to the cause of moral virtue, and are calculated to annihilate the most virtuous efforts of every individual. *It is not of him that willith nor of him that runneth; not of works lest any man should boast; of**

ourselves we can do nothing; together with a hundred other passages of a similar nature, which go directly to suppress all the elevated exertions of the human faculties, and if literally followed, would turn man from intelligent activity, to a state of brutal indolence. It is extremely destructive to the moral happiness of mankind to teach them the want of powers, or the inadequacy of those they possess; because the fact is otherwise, because it is a solemn truth that the powers of man are competent to provide for his happiness; they are equal to the exigencies of his existence. It is superstition that has made him a fool, it is religious tyranny that has enslaved his mind, perverted his faculties, and tarnished the glory of his intellectual energies. Christianity has taught him two awful and destructive lessons; first, that he is incapacitated for the performance of moral actions; and secondly in case he *should* perform them, they would add no merit or superior excellence to his character; that his best righteousness is like filthy rags which God would treat with marked abhorrence.

The repetition of such discouraging impressions must necessarily work an effect remarkably injurious to the virtuous activity of the human race. It is in conformity to this immoral instruction, that we see fanatic Christians every where boasting of their own inability, and doing violence to that internal sentiment which would otherwise constantly impel them to the performance of acts of justice, benevolence, and universal charity. In addition to the pointed declarations of the *holy scriptures* against the power and practice of morality, the inventors and promoters of the Christian religion have set up various kinds of doctrines, which diminish the motives to good actions, and lead the uninstructed mind to repose confidence in something foreign from its own exertions and merit, such as atonement, baptism, faith, sacramental suppers, oblations, and ablutions, together with many other idle ceremonies and wild vagaries of a dis-tempered and fanatic brain.

The idea that Jesus the son of Mary died for the sins of the world, and that henceforth moral virtue can have no saving efficacy, is among the most destructive conceptions by which the moral world has been insulted and perverted. The supernatural grace of God, which Christians for so many ages have been in search of, has hitherto eluded the grasp of all rational and philosophic men; and to those who pretend to be acquainted with this celestial gift, it has been at times more trouble than profit; since innumerable doubts have been created concerning its reality and modes of operation in the human heart.

The cursory survey that has been taken of the immoral precepts and principles contained in the *Old and New Testament*, clearly proves that these books are not of divine origin. The God of the Jews and Christians, according to their own description, is a changeable, passionate, angry, unjust, and revengeful being; infuriate in his wrath, capricious in his conduct, and destitute, in many respects, of those sublime and immutable properties which really belong to the Preserver of the universe. The characters spoken of in the Scriptures, as the favourites of heaven, such as Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Paul, are none of them good moral characters; it is not probable, therefore, that they were selected by the Creator as the organs of celestial communication. In the *Old Testament*, national and individual justice is disregarded, and God is made the accomplice of crimes which human nature abhors. The maxims of the *New Testament* are a perversion of all correct principles in a code of moral virtue. The whole system is calculated to take man out of himself, to destroy his confidence in his own energies, to debase his faculties, vitiate his social affections, and brutalize the most useful qualities of human existence. The highest dignity of the human race consists in the practice of an exalted virtue, in the exercise of a fine sympathetic benevolence, in reciprocating our feelings and affections, in promoting the justice and order of society, in relieving the unfortunate and supporting the cause of truth, in diminishing evil and augmenting good; in short, in promoting universally the science, the virtue, and happiness of the world. There is, however, no possibility of faithfully performing these duties while under the shackles of Jewish and Christian superstition. The remedy consists in a return to nature, and in elevating our views and conceptions above those theological absurdities which have degraded man to a level with the beast, and taught him to respect his civil and ecclesiastical tyrants as beings of an higher order, or celestial messengers from a vindictive and revengeful God.

CHAPTER XII.

Christian Martyrs, the Church, Opinions of Learned Divines.

WHEN all other arguments fail, we are called to contemplate the wonderful fortitude of those martyrs who have suffered and died in the cause of Christianity. Such religious heroism, it is said, could proceed only from a conscious certainty of the existence of those sublime and holy truths contained in the system which inspired such preternatural courage. The slightest knowledge of the history of the human passions would furnish a complete refutation of this argument in favour of revelation. Extravagant zeal and unbounded enthusiasm are frequently exhibited in many of the important concerns of human life; there are martyrs in the worst of causes, and if martyrdom could prove Christianity to be true, it would prove an hundred other things to be true which are in pointed opposition to that system. The Mahometan condemns the Christian, and the Christian condemns the Mahometan; their creeds are different, and in many respects contradictory; but they both had martyrs without number; both systems have sacrificed millions upon the altar of theological fanaticism. Zeal amongst the Mahometans is not less infuriate nor less sincere, than among the Christians; and Mahometanism might as well be proved to be divine, from this kind of evidence, as the religion of Jesus. The historical fact is the same of all religions, especially of those which claim supernatural origin. Madmen and enthusiasts are to be found every where, and celestial enthusiasm is generally the most ranting and extravagant.

But when recurrence is made to the universal conduct of mankind in every age, and upon every important occasion, it is strange that an argument drawn from the conduct of Christian martyrs, should have been advanced in favour of the divine origin of this religion. The spirit of fanaticism, which made Europe, during several centuries, the slaughter-house of the world, will not, surely, be adduced in favour of the mild and celestial nature of the religion of Jesus; yet the crusades prove as much as individual martyrdom, and neither of these proves more than that human nature is susceptible of strong and rancorous passions, and that to the variety in the modification of these passions there is no end. A heated and delirious imagination always overturns the empire of reason, and subverts the throne of justice. The extent of real attachment which individuals may shew towards any cause, is not conclusive evidence that such cause is right. It is evidence only, that such persons are deeply interested in it; but the interest which they take may be nourished by a thousand other causes, than a clear and comprehensive view of truth. The savage of America, has excelled in the patient fortitude of suffering beyond all that can be boasted by all the Christian martyrs of the world; yet this uncultivated man of the western world, holds in contempt the doctrines and promises of the Christian religion. It is directly in the face of all historical facts, to contend that the conduct of Christian martyrs substantiates, in any degree, the divinity of the Old or New Testament. From the banks of the Mississippi, to the Island of Japan, there is not a spot of earth, but what has furnished martyrs in some cause or other; and if the idea contended for by believers, were true, it is certain that more than five hundred religious sectaries, all different in the tenets which they hold, could instantly prove the sacredness of their theological opinions, by reference to a spirit of fanatical martyrdom; which spirit, instead of bearing the least relation to truth, has served only to make man a miserable idiot, and deluge the world in blood.

The Church of Christ in all ages, has come in for a share of influence and authority, to prove that the Scriptures are true. *The Church has always believed in the Bible, and therefore the Bible is true. The Bible declares the Church to be right, and therefore the Church cannot be wrong: the Church proves the Bible, and the Bible proves the Church; thus the divinity of the one, and the infallibility of the other is rendered incontrovertible.* If it were admitted that the authority or opinion of the Church could prove any thing, it would, nevertheless, be difficult to discover who are the Church. The sectarian divisions are so numerous, that it is impossible to determine which is the true Church. This would be a much more difficult task than to determine which is the erroneous Church. They continually dispute with each other concerning the truth of their doctrine, they anathematize one another, and are liberal in the charges of heresy; they are all heretics in the estimation of each other, and they have no

standard to determine with certitude their theological differences. To bring the Church, therefore, to prove the Christian religion, is to bring nothing at all, for nobody can tell who, or what the Church is. It ought to be first settled which Church is to be relied on, or rather which is to be considered as the true Church, and then it would be time enough to decide whether even that one had any just claim to settle for all mankind the problematical points of truth and error. If, however, all the Churches in the world, were agreed in their doctrines, this would not prove them to be true; but amidst such ecclesiastical differences of opinion, an honest enquirer of truth will find but little consolation. These heterogeneous and contradictory ideas of supernatural theology necessarily destroy the validity and pretended divinity of all these systems. The Church has carried every thing with a high hand, and attempted to settle questions of truth by the force of authority; but force has no relation to truth, and all the authority of all the Churches can never annihilate, in a single instance, the necessary and essential connection between the truth of a proposition, and the evidence by which it is supported. In former ages they held many councils to decide upon ecclesiastical truths, and at every successive council some alteration was made; truth was never the same with them, and the final decisions were regulated by the temperament, views, and interest of those learned and pious clergymen, who composed those ecclesiastical associations. When the power of the councils was not sufficient, the sword was resorted to, and this constituted the *last reason* of the Church, as well as of kings. To historize the conduct of the Church, from the third century to the commencement of the sixteenth, would fill many volumes, and after all it would be nothing more than a dark history of cruelty, force, persecution, burning of heretics, and shedding, in the name of heaven, the blood of the human race.

If a corrupted Church and priesthood have believed in an error for a thousand years, this does not change the nature of that error and cannot convert it into truth. *It is contended, that whoever calls in question the divinity of revealed religion, is flying in the face of the Church, and controverting its ancient and respectable opinions; that these opinions have stood the test of ages; that they have been believed by many pious and learned men, and cannot now be overturned by a new and infidel philosophy.* To all this it may be answered, that a Church that has always been quarrelling with itself concerning doctrines, is always to be suspected; it is absolutely necessary for the Church, first to settle its own disputes, before it calls others to account for unbelief. The bloody and ferocious conduct; the cruelties, differences, and persecutions of the Christian Church, in all ages, ought to destroy all its weight and authority. Truth has not been its object, for sincere enquiries after truth are disposed to mutual friendship and assistance; but this has never been the case with those religious despots, whose opinions have kept the world in an uproar for more than fifteen hundred years. It was at one time a famous dispute among the clergy in Europe *whether Jesus Christ was sitting, kneeling, or standing at the right hand of the Father in Heaven.* This foolish and despicable altercation generated the most envenomed malice, and the most rancorous passions were let loose upon this occasion, to the destruction of order, peace, and human happiness. *But the Church is the repository of power; the Church knows every thing; the Church is always right, and woe be to that daring infidel who does not believe as the Church believes.* It is high time for the reason of man to rise in all its energy, and sweep away such childish nonsense. *The opinions of the Church have stood the test of ages.* But how, in what manner have they stood the test? As soon as the principles of science began to be investigated; as soon as philosophy had thrown off the shackles of authority, the opinions of the Church were called in question; revealed religion began to be doubted, and every supernatural system was subjected to a bold examination, which terminated against its truth and utility. In proportion as science advanced, infidelity has increased; in proportion as man has become acquainted with the nature of physical and moral principle, his respect for unnatural theology has constantly diminished. During fourteen hundred years of moral darkness, in which Europe was involved, it was impossible that the Christian religion should be brought to the test of a fair examination and upright decision; the learning of those ages was almost exclusively confined to the clergy, and as they were universally attached, either from pure or interested motives, to the Christian religion, it was not possible that there should be any free enquiry upon the subject. It is very easy for a thing to stand the test where every body is in favour of it; this is exactly the case in regard to revealed

religion; it stood the test very well when nobody had the sense or courage to oppose it. But when philosophy had opened her treasures, and developed some of the most sublime and important truths of nature; when reason had acquired strength, and taken the resolution to act for itself, *the test of ages* was shaken to its centre. It is only within the last two centuries, that the great question concerning the truth of the Christian religion has been at all agitated; during this period the contest has been always vastly unequal; the strength of civil and ecclesiastical despotism has been malignantly opposed to a peaceful and contemplative philosophy.

Notwithstanding all this, the progress has been great, error has been attacked on every side, new truths unfolded, and a door of consoling hope opened to the future generations of mankind; the opinions of pious and learned men ought never to be adduced to prove the celestial origin of the Christian religion. These same men, celebrated for piety and learning, have believed in the grossest absurdities, and the most childish errors. They have believed that the earth was the centre of the planetary system, and that the sun constantly performed its revolution round it; whereas the reverse is the truth, the sun is the centre of the planetary system, and round that resplendent luminary all the planets constantly revolve. They have believed in witchcraft, dreams, apparitions, and all that numerous train of ancient gentry, which have so much troubled the repose of credulous fools. Since then, it is certain, that they have submitted to the most childish and degrading credulity, their opinions cannot be cited in proof of any system whatever; they have been, however, honest, and in many instances, respectable men. Error is a misfortune and not a crime; but truth can never be substantiated by adducing, in support of it, the opinions of superstitious and deluded men.

CHAPTER XIII.

Origin of Moral Evil, and the Means of its ultimate extirpation from the Earth.

THE facts in the physical world are, many of them, difficult of solution; those of the moral world have perplexed still more the operations of the human understanding. The subtilty, the abstruceness, the incognizable character of moral existence, place it beyond the power of clear intellectual perception, and the mind loses itself in those metaphysical combinations, whose successive variations are incalculable. But the difficulties which nature has thrown in the way of this enquiry are much less numerous than those presented by superstition. A design has been formed, and carried into effect, whose object it was to cover the moral world with a mantle of mystery, and exclude it wholly from the view of vulgar eyes, and common comprehension. It is only necessary to conceal the real nature and character of a thing, and then deformities and distortions may be made to pass for positive properties or essential qualities, inherent in any specific mode of existence. If the subtilty of thought, and the difficulty of moral discrimination, have in many cases presented to human investigation a barrier to farther progress; the intentional malignant descriptions of superstition have, in almost every age and country, terrified the mind of man, and prevented the development of substantial moral principle. Nature furnishes some difficulties, but supernatural theology exhibits many more.

In no one instance is this remark more substantially verified, than in the enquiries which man has made concerning the source or origin of moral evil. Reason and theology, philosophy and superstition, are at war upon this subject. The believers in the Christian religion, following the examples of their theological and fanatic predecessors, have searched the universe in quest of a satisfactory solution to that long altercated question—Whence came moral evil? One religious sectary, willing to screen the divinity from any just accusation relative to so nefarious a concern, have descended into hell, and discovered there all the characters and distorted machinery necessary to the production of such an effect; but here metaphysical and fanatic invention indulged itself in all the extravagance of delusion. It was necessary first to create this *infernal* country, and then to create inhabitants suited to the nature of the climate, and the unfortunate condition in which they were to reside. The idea of a devil was accordingly formed, and the reality of his existence rendered an indubitable truth by the reiterated assertions of superstition. Ignorance and fanaticism greedily swallowed the foolish *infernal* dose which had been administered.

There is a remarkable disposition in the human mind to remove the point of intellectual difficulty as far from the reality of the case as possible, and then it triumphantly imagines that a solution has been given. This is in fact particularly in theological enquiry, in which a few retrogressive efforts of the mind have been considered as an ample illustration of all the difficulties relative to the subject of Theism, and the existence of the physical universe. Similar to this idea is the doctrine concerning moral evil, and the disposition which theologians have exhibited to remove the burthen from their own shoulders, and place it upon the devil's back. The whole *infernal* machinery with which we are presented by superstition, serves only to detach the mind from the true and real source of moral evil. While reflection is directed to another world, it is incompetent to a clear view of the facts existing in this, and the habit of such reveries produces a fanatic delirium subversive of all correctness of judgement. The existence of hell, and the beings that dwell therein, being only supported by what is called divine revelation, it follows, of course, that if this revelation is not true, a belief in any thing that is a mere result of that system cannot be substantially founded. Since then it is presumed, that in these chapters a competent refutation is given to the doctrine contained in the sacred books of the Jews and Christians, the idea of descending into hell, or having recourse to a devil, in search of moral evil, is futile and inconsistent.

Another part of the Christian world, willing to avoid difficulties which their antagonists had thrown in their way, abandoned the *infernal* abodes, and ascended into a celestial world, in quest of the origin of evil. They exhibited ingenious metaphysical reasoning upon the subject, declaring that God was the Creator of all things; that sin was something and not nothing, and therefore he must be the Creator of sin or moral evil. This puzzled the advocates of the *hell scheme*, and a clerical warfare was engendered concerning two theological opinions, neither of which had any kind of existence in the nature of things. After heaven and hell had been searched through and through to find something which did not belong to either of them, the terror-struck enquirer, as if fatigued with his atmospheric journey, seated himself once more upon the earth, and saw, or might have seen, in the very bosom of society, and the perverted character of man, a clear and satisfactory solution of that difficult question, which for so long a time, had occupied his attention in distant regions. It is in this manner, that the plainest subject is rendered mysterious, when a superstitious religion is industriously employed in subverting the independent power of thought. It is neither in the upper nor lower regions; it is not in heaven nor in hell, that the origin of moral evil will be discovered; it is to be found only among those intelligent beings who exist upon earth. *Man has created it, and man must destroy it.*

But it is necessary to exhibit the proofs of this last assertion, and convince Christian theology of the innumerable errors, which for ages past have been imposed upon a credulous and deluded world. What is it, then, that constitutes a moral evil? It is the violation of a law and justice or utility, by any one of the human species, competent to distinguish between right and wrong. We have no other cognizable idea upon this subject. Facts and practice are presented continually to the view of the human mind; the decision of a correct mind is always according to the nature and character of the case. The character of a human being is made either good or bad by the actions he commits. If these actions are conformable to the principles of justice and universal benevolence, they are with great propriety denominated good; if they are unjust, cruel, and destructive to sensitive and intellectual life, they are denominated bad. There are certain fundamental laws, suitable for the government of rational beings, and it is a departure from these laws that vitiates the human character. It is proved in another part of this work, that virtue and vice are personal qualities, and that they result from personal adherence to, or personal refraction of, moral law.

It is only necessary in this place to call the attention once more to the nature of human actions, and to the characteristic difference between them, in order to establish the position principally assumed in this enquiry; for it ought to be recollected, that even if it *could* be proved, which by the way it cannot, that even a deity or a devil had violated moral law, this would not effect the decision upon the subject in regard to man; because that evil could not be transferred from a different kind of beings in the other world, to those who exist upon earth. As the moral properties of all intelligent agents are personal; are essentially their own and not another's; as there can

be no justifiable transfer between man and man, so it follows that there can be none between man and devil. Every intellectual being must depend upon himself: must rest upon his own energies and be responsible for himself. Man must, therefore, relinquish that position, which has been assumed by Christian theology, relative to the transferable nature of moral qualities. Christianity presents us with two grand leading characters, to whom we are always referred in our enquiries upon the subject of moral evil. Adam and Jesus are these persons, and in them is said to have been concentrated the sin and righteousness of the human race. The New Testament declares that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. This is a sweeping clause, in regard to the moral existence of man, and flies in the face of universal experience. Facts are at war with this scripture declaration, and it is impossible to reduce the sentiment to practice, without producing in common life the grossest violations of justice. Admitting for a moment the existence of such a man as Adam, which, by the way, is extremely problematical, it will not follow, that there was in him either a moral or physical death of the human race. Physically it is impossible, and morally it is unjust.* If Christian theology has made a recurrence to Adam, to aid the solution of difficulties, relative to the origin of moral evil; if it has by this idea perverted the eternal principles of discriminate justice, it has also been equally unfortunate in calling in the righteous Jesus to its assistance, in expectation of ultimately destroying the immorality of the world. The scriptures invite us to behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. This Lamb is Jesus, the only begot-of the Father; he is reputed to be divine and uncontaminated with any kind of moral turpitude. He is made the victim of Jehovah's wrath, and falls a sacrifice to the vindictive fury of his benevolent father, and all this for the purpose of removing crimes for which apostate man should have been scourged and afflicted. Means more unsuitable or incompetent to the production of such an effect, could never have been invented by the delirious brain of fanaticism itself; but the absurd and incompetent methods which Christian theology has invented for the destruction of moral evil, are not so much the objects of the present investigation, as the means which reason has in view to effectuate the moral renovation of the species. It is a common complaint among theological doctors, that the *world is growing worse and worse!*

Passing by any strictures upon the ill compliment which theologians pay to themselves by indulging such a sentiment, the truth of the opinion itself will become a more important matter of discussion. The organic construction, the powers and the properties of human existence, the aggregate amount of virtue and vice in the present generation, these are objects subjected to the inspection of the human mind; but the conduct and character of man, in former ages, is to be drawn from history. Histories, however, are not always faithful to the realities of the case, and description is sometimes excessive and sometimes deficient. But judging from what we know, and including in the ground of decision, similarity of organic structure, cogent proofs will be exhibited against the admission of an opinion hostile to the ultimate perfectibility of intelligent life. The expansion of mind, the developement of principles, and the cultivation of the arts, in a degree far superior to all the specimens of high antiquity, evince an incontrovertible amelioration in the present race. The accommodations favourable to the comfort and happiness of life, with which man has surrounded himself, demonstrate, that there exists in the constitution of his nature a strong and indestructible impulse to progressive improvement; to the diminution of evil, and the augmentation of good. The fine moral qualities of the heart, which adorn cultivated life, give to it a splendid brilliancy, and triumphant exaltation above the coarse, instinctive brutality of former ages. If personal malignity and national warfare continue, the first is diminished in the acrimony of its character, and the second has regulated its movements, in some measure, upon the principles of reciprocal humanity, and a greater respect for the dignity of human existence. These are facts with which we are every moment presented in the history of modern times; those who controvert these assertions must have forgotten, or never knew, the names of Alexander, of Nero, and Caligula; of the numerous ecclesiastical despots and persecutors with which the history of the Christian Church presents us, anterior to the commencement of the sixteenth century; nay farther, they must have neglected the reading of the *Holy Scripture*, and have lost sight of the cha-

* See Chapter on Death, or the disorganization of intelligent beings. / 83

rafter of Moses, that eminent murderer of antiquity. The Mahometan arguments in favour of belief must also have escaped their notice; in short, the advocates of pre-eminent virtue in former ages have shut their eyes against the history of kings and priests; against the knowledge of those dreadful effects, which the compound despotism of the church and state has produced upon the human race.

If the modern *Suwarrow* be brought as an example of refutation to these remarks, it is admitted in its full force, and this eminent murderer of modern times is consigned, by the sentiment of humanity, to the grave of eternal infamy. But the cases of such savage barbarity are growing less numerous in proportion as the knowledge of principle advances, and the correspondent moral practice flowing from such knowledge. Reason, on the intellectual powers of man, must eventually become the deposit and the guardian of the rights and happiness of human existence. Reason has already acquired such strength, and so far unfolded its powers, that it has already sealed the future destiny of the human race. It is the peculiar office of reason to look to the utter demolition of the ancient regimen of the church and state. These twin-sisters of iniquity are the moral giants, which have stalked with huge devastation over the face of the whole globe. Political despotism and supernatural religion have done more to render the human race vicious and depraved, than all other causes conjointly combined. If the passions of man and the impulses of his nature have frequently produced a moral eccentricity in his conduct, it is certain that a corrupt government and a corrupt religion have rendered him habitually wicked; have perverted all the conceptions of the mind upon moral and political subjects, and brutalized his intellectual existence.

The most important step which can be taken for the extirmination of vice and misery, is to destroy the artificial causes by which such evils are perpetuated. If other causes should be found to exist in the constitution of nature, they would be progressively removed by the light and power of science, and a more comprehensive view of the true interest of the human species. But efforts tending to make the individuals of a nation virtuous and happy, will never succeed extensively till the civil and religious tyranny under which they groan shall be completely annihilated. This will lead to the application of force in the political revolutions of the world; an expedient however, the rectitude of which some benevolent philosophers have called in question. An ample discussion of this point, however, is reserved to occupy a place in a political work, which the author is preparing for the press, and which will be presented to the view of the public as soon as it is completed.

It is sufficient at this time to remark, that despotism gives no encouragement to any kind of improvement, and the hope of human amelioration from this quarter will ever prove to be fallacious. Reason, righteous and immortal reason, with the argument of the printing types in one hand, and the keen argument of the sword in the other, must attack the thrones and the hierarchies of the world, and level them with the dust of the earth; then the emancipated slave must be raised by the power of science into the character of an enlightened citizen; thus possessing a knowledge of his rights, a knowledge of his duties will consequently follow, and he will discover the intimate and essential union between the highest interests of existence, and the practice of an exalted virtue. If civil and ecclesiastical despotism were destroyed, knowledge would become universal, and his progress inconceivably accelerated. It would be impossible, in such a case, that moral virtue should fail of a correspondent acceleration, and the ultimate extirpation of vice would become an inevitable consequence. Ages must elapse before the accomplishment of an object so important to the elevated concerns of intelligent life; but the causes are already in operation, and nothing can arrest or destroy the benignant effects which they are calculated to produce. The power of reason, the knowledge of printing, the overthrow of political and ecclesiastical despotism, the universal diffusion of the light of science, and the universal enjoyment of republican liberty; these will become the harbingers and procuring causes of real virtue in every individual, and universal happiness will become the lot of man.

CHAPTER XIV.

Infidel Philosophy.

THE discovery of the art of printing was a deadly blow to religious fanaticism, and to every species of error. The clergy rejoiced in this discovery, but their rejoicing was

an untimely delusion of the heart; they were blind to the consequences of this fortunate and consoling discovery. The consideration of exhibiting, in a new form, the sublime and holy truths of the Christian religion, was to them a matter of the most elevated satisfaction, and they anticipated a result directly the reverse of what has taken place. It was believed, that a religion sent from heaven to benefit only a small part of the human race, would have been always confined within the power and discretion of a privileged and ecclesiastical order. To this sacred band learning had hitherto been confined, and it was perceived that the art of printing was calculated to break the charm, and diffuse among the nations of the earth a moral light, consoling to the heart of ignorant and unfortunate man. Such, however, was the result, and the human mind received and experienced a new and powerful motive to energize its powers and provide for its happiness. Many important causes combined at one and the same time to excite fresh vigour, and increase the activity of intellectual strength. The ecclesiastical dissensions of Europe; the discovery of the new world; the discovery of the art of printing; the philosophical investigations of French, English, and German philanthropists; all these, and many other powerful circumstances, were concentrated, and produced a new era in the intellectual history of man.

Newton, profiting by the errors of those great philosophers, Descartes and Bacon; Newton, whose original genius and comprehensive mind have immortalized his name and character, developed with clearness the physical principles and order of the planetary system, and struck with everlasting death and eternal silence the theological pretension of all former ages. The ignorance and stupidity of Moses, Joshua, and Jesus, were exposed, and their opinions were sacrificed upon the altar of philosophical truth and mathematical demonstration. Newton's mind was honest and discerning, but partially obscured by the moral darkness of the age in which he lived, and the theological impressions of early life. He was reputed to be a Christian upon a graduated scale; but the habit of mathematical precision had led him to a rejection of the doctrine of the trinity, and some other prominent absurdities in the theology of Christians. His discoveries, however, in the physical world, were vastly important to the cause of human science, and have been productive of a more accurate mode of reasoning, than any that had been adopted in former ages. The demonstrations of Newton were compared with the theological reveries of Moses and Joshua. The consequence of which was, that the scientific philosopher rejected the imaginary conceptions of fanaticism, and bestowed on solid argument a due portion of respect and attachment.

It was not the discovery of physical truths alone that bore relation to the renovation of the human species; it was reserved for Locke, and other powerful minds, to unfold the internal structure of the intellectual world; explain the operations of the human understanding; explore the sources of thought, and unite sensation and intellect in the same subject, and in a manner cognizable by the human faculties. Locke has, perhaps, done more than Newton, to subvert the credit of *divine Revelation*; but neither of them discovered the extent of the doctrines upon the moral interests of man. Sensation being established as the source and cause of all human ideas, a system of true and material philosophy necessarily followed. Organization was, of course, considered essential to the production of intellect, and disorganization bearing very hard against a conscious reminiscence of identified existence, speculations upon the doctrines concerning futurity became frequent, and the ultimate decision rested upon the discoveries which had been made in human sensation. In addition to these leading features of a sound philosophy destined to emancipate the world from a religious bondage, other collateral and subsequent aids were experienced, and had a powerful effect in ameliorating the moral condition of society. Mirabaud, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, and Bolingbroke, together with twenty other philosophers of France and England, combined their strength in the philanthropic cause of human improvement; they destroyed error by wholesale, and swept away the rubbish of ancient superstition, by the irresistible force of a keen and active intelligence. Those moral luminaries were followed by those of more modern times, and the present age is pre-eminently distinguished by a numerous and respectable band of philanthropic philosophers, whose labours are calculated to destroy error, and elevate truth upon the ruins of every thing injurious to the peace and dignity of human society.

The writings of Paine bear the most striking relation to the immediate improvement

and moral felicity of the intelligent world. He writes upon principle, and he always understands the principle on which he writes; he reasons without logic, and convinces without argumentation; he strangles error by his first grasp, and develops truth with much simplicity, but with irresistible force. He is one of the first and best of writers, and probably the most useful man that ever existed upon the face of the earth. His moral and political writings are equally excellent, and the beneficial influence of the principles for which he has contended, will be felt through all succeeding ages.

Volney and Condorcet, Godwin and Barlow, are justly entitled to the universal gratitude and applause of the human race. They have attacked error in its strongest holds; they have pursued it with a powerful and discriminating intellect. It has already lost half of its force; and the philosophy that is denominated infidel, will, ere long, chase it out of existence. It is this philosophy that has developed the laws of the physical world, and exhibited the principles on which its systematic order depends; it is this philosophy that has unfolded the moral energies of human nature, which has become an object of calumny, in the estimation of a cruel and persecuting superstition.

All the opprobrious epithets in the English language have been bestowed upon that mild and peaceful philosophy, whose object is the discovery of truth, and whose first wish is to emancipate the world from the double despotism of church and state. This philosophy has already destroyed innumerable errors; it has disclosed all the fundamental principles which have been employed in the construction of machines, mathematical instruments, and the arrangement of those moral and political systems which have softened the savage and ferocious heart of man, and raised the ignorant slave from the dust, into the elevated character of an enlightened citizen. Its only weapons are thought, contemplation, argument, demonstration, experiment, and probable conjecture; whilst, on the other hand, the only weapons of despotism are *cold steel*, or *leaden balls*. This despotism, however, whether it be political or ecclesiastical, is malignantly employed in opposing and calumniating that philosophy, which has sought with an ardent benevolence for the scientific improvement of man, and the tranquillity of nations. The philosophy of Europe armed itself with a spirit of truth and the sword of justice; it humanely marched forth to conquer the errors and vices of nations, and restore to man his lost dignity, which had long ago been sacrificed upon the altar of theological fanaticism. This effort, propelled by wisdom and humanity, was denounced by the thundering voice of the church, and the resentful malice of monarchical tyranny.

The *Illuminati* in Europe have been represented as a vicious combination of persons, whose object was the destruction of all the governments and religions of the world. If the enemies of philosophy, in that part of the globe, mean by governments the corrupt monarchies of the earth, and by religion, popular superstition, founded upon the idea of a supposed mysterious intercourse between beings of the earth and celestial powers, then they are right in this respect; for these are the governments and religions against which reason and philosophy ought to direct their energies; but if by government they mean a system of genuine republicanism, founded upon the equal rights of man, and by religion the idea of simple Theism, and the immortality of moral virtue, then their assertions are false, and their productions a calumny against reason and the rights of human nature. The plain truth of the case is, that those who oppose philosophy, and bestow upon it harsh and malignant epithets, are interested in keeping up a privileged system of plunder and robbery, which makes nine-tenths of the human race absolute slaves, to support the other tenth in indolence, extravagance, pride, and luxury. The purest systems of morals that could possibly be exhibited, and the demonstrable axioms of the soundest philosophy, would become objects of unbounded reproach, and their abettors marked as objects of the bitterest censure, if the ancient regimen of church and state were to be in any shape whatever injured by such developement. The physical force of nations would be drawn forth to suppress the independent power of thought, destroy damnable heresy, and arrest, in the name of heaven, those infidel philosophers, whose efforts had been directed to the emancipation and moral felicity of these malicious and tyrannical persecutors. The cry of vengeance and merciless punishment against the benevolent philosophers of all countries of the present day has not deterred them from the faithful discharge of their duty, and the most unremitting attention to the best interest of individual and national happiness.

The strong arm of despotism can never reach the subtle activity of thought, or subvert the dignified empire of reason. It is now the object of despotism to stop the progress of intellect, or prevent the universal diffusion of useful knowledge. The substantial happiness of the human species depends upon the activity of reason, and the liberty of the press; they have gained too much strength to be crushed by all the civil and religious tyranny of the world,

CHAPTER. XV.

Inquiry, are the Evils incident to Human Life the result of the Operation of the Laws of Nature; or, are they Special Judgments from God?

MAN will never cease to be erroneous in his reasonings, while he departs from the simple and uniform ground of nature; the only solid basis of all conclusive argumentation, the only true source of all important science. It is in the physical constitution of existence in its real relations, in its energies, in its effects, that he must seek for the principles by which to construct an useful and well cemented fabric; by which to arrange and methodize thought, and apply it to the diversified purposes of human life. The imperfection of his faculties does not enable him to seize upon all these objects in such a manner as to preclude the possibility, and even probability of many errors; but these errors are to be destroyed only by a constant recurrence to the fundamental data, from which correct conclusions must ever be deduced.

Man has lost himself in the wanderings of a fantastic imagination, in the fleeting dreams of fanaticism, and the malignant fury of a blind superstition; he has sought for truth where it is not to be found, his mind has diverged from the line of reality, and he has become the victim of innumerable prejudices. The most common phenomena have been ascribed to causes which had no existence, and effects have been attributed to those chimerical combinations which were to be found only in the distorted brain of an enthusiastic religious zealot. The simplicity, the uniformity, the grandeur of the physical universe, have been abandoned, while the fictions and non-entities of delirious mortals have been substituted as the ground of evidence, and the principle of correct conclusion. It was not in the organization of the material world, that man sought for truth, but in the deceptive schemes of religion, which interested zeal imposed upon him.

The sensation, the intellect, the capacities of man, taught him that he was subject to a variety of evils; but instead of searching for the cause of these evils, where only they were to be found, he suffered the operations of intellect to be subjugated by the pride and arrogance of superstition, and he no longer discerned the true connection between the miseries which he felt, and the active and natural causes which produced them; he no longer beheld his true condition in nature, but weakly imagined that he had become the object of malevolent intention in some superior being, who took delight in his torture, and wilfully subjected him to the diversified misfortunes with which he was assailed. In this unfortunate predicament, with too much weakness to abandon his errors, and too much prejudice to discover truth, he wandered over the face of Nature, the devoted victim of that ignorance and superstition which for so long a time had destroyed the tranquillity of his heart, and suppressed the operation of his mind; he inquired with anxious solicitude into the causes of his sufferings; he sought in a vindictive theology for a solution of the difficulty, but his enquiry ended in an accumulation of sorrow, and a repetition of the misfortunes from which in vain he had endeavoured to escape. By dint of investigation, by constancy of intellectual enquiry, he at length was led to discover, that the evil which he suffered were to be accounted for by a single comparison and application of the law of power in surrounding objects, and the law of sensation, by which his life was every moment modified; the development and explanation of this solid truth will constitute the true ground of the present enquiry.

While physical existence continues what it now is, while its powers, its modes of operation, its essential energies remain the same, it will be impossible to modify a sensible being so as to prevent his being necessarily subjected to a diversity of unpleasant and painful sensations. Power and activity are essential to the existence of matter, and capacity of sensation to every specific modification of life; an undue pro-

portion of this power, applied to any sensitive agent, will necessarily derange, in some partial degree, the natural organization of which he is possessed; it is the nature of life to feel, to be sensible, to be capable of perception; it is the nature of physical objects to make impressions, and if the impressions from surrounding objects are not properly apportioned to the capacity of sensation, the natural result will be pain, distress, or complete misery, according to the nature and quantity of that power which in any case may be applied; such consequences must inevitably follow, while the law of power in physical objects, and the law of sensation in modified life, maintain the same relation which they now bear to each other. It will, therefore, be for ever impossible wholly to prevent pain, unless you destroy the law of power in material nature, or the law of sensation in animal life. The relation and connection now subsisting between them, necessarily includes the possibility, and even the absolute certainty of the existence of pain, or some portion of real misery. It will be perceived in this method of reasoning, that every idea of suspension or violation of the laws of nature is excluded, and that identity of power and quality in specific portions of nature is presumed to be perpetuated with undeviating uniformity.

To shew the correctness of this opinion, it is only necessary to have recourse to a few familiar examples in the ordinary concerns of human life; for instance, if a man were to thrust his hand into the fire, or if by any other means fire should come in contact with any part of a sensitive being, the feeling experienced must necessarily be painful, because the law of power or activity in fire, and the law of sensation in modified life, necessarily includes the impossibility of preventing such consequence. Again, if any one were situated so that a heavy body falling from above should come directly upon him, it would be impossible to prevent disorganization or death, unless the law of gravitation were suspended, or his own peculiar structure of body instantaneously changed. In short, the whole application of the power of physical existence to the condition of sensitive creatures will ever prove, that such necessary consequences must be experienced.

Look through the whole order of nature, and this solemn truth is clearly perceived, that every being possessed of feeling must eternally be exposed to a vast variety of complicated evils, painful sensation, and diversified misfortune, resulting from the constitution of the universe, and the laws by which it is governed. The same reasoning will apply to all the higher operations of nature, and those astonishing phenomena that surprise and terrify the mind of man! Earthquakes, volcanoes, lightning, inundations, are all the result of the operation of physical laws, and it is impossible to prevent the misery which they occasion, without a suspension or violation of the laws by which they were produced.

A similar mode of reasoning will partially apply in regard to those evils that attack associated bodies of men, where superabundance of population, with a variety of other causes, has laid the foundation of inevitable disease, such as plagues, malignant fevers, and many others to which large and populous cities are subjected. But this part of the subject requires particular examination, since it is here that superstition has raised a rampart impregnable to the attacks of reason. The pride, the fanaticism, and the intemperate zeal of man will never cease to mislead his judgment, cause the energies of intellect to diverge from the line of truth, and to subject him to the baneful influence of opinions, erroneous and destructive in their consequences. Man is ignorant, and this ignorance produces in him an attachment to the marvellous; he is both delighted and terrified with strange and unnatural appearances, with events out of the common order of things, with those phenomena which approach or seem to approach the idea of a miraculous occurrence; he seems to take a pride also in attributing these events to the special intervention of Divine Providence, to the supernatural operations of a vindictive God; to the cruel and arbitrary arrangements of an omnipotent tyrant, to the malice and premeditated revenge of that ferocious being, who exists only in his own imagination, and the admission of whose existence would be the sure presage of the annihilation of the vast fabric of nature. The fanaticism and intemperate zeal of all supernatural religion has ever desired to represent the God of nature as partial in his operations, revengeful in his intentions, and inconsiderably destructive in all those arrangements of which he is supposed to be the author and contriver. All the various religious parties and sectaries that have ever existed on

earth, have pretended that God was enlisted in their service, and, consequently, that he had proclaimed war, and the most implacable resentment against every other man, or set of men, who had not embraced the true and orthodox faith.

This terrible representation of the divinity, as destitute of truth as it was pernicious in its consequences, was, at length, diversified and decomposed, and afterwards recombined for purposes of systematic terror; the partial distribution of favours, and the dreadful torture of the human race under the name of divine vengeance. The professors of different religious opinions having armed their God in their own cause, became the merciless distributors of those dreadful punishments and calamities which they expected would result from the character of that barbarous divinity, which their imaginations had described. The malice of the individual, the savage cruelty of man, was transferred to this imaginary God, and he appeared in turn the object of terror to every living mortal. Man thus wishing to gratify his resentment against his neighbour, of an opposite religious opinion, has never failed to engage his God in his own quarrels; and if in the course of events, if any misfortune befel his enemy, the doctrine of special providence was then verified in his mind, and he triumphantly asserted that the Almighty had made bare the arm of his justice, and brought ruin and destruction upon the objects of his wrath. This doctrine, so humiliating to the character of man, and so disgraceful to the intelligent preserver of nature, has been fundamental in every religious system of supernatural origin. It took its rise in the weakness and malevolence of human nature, and its destructive consequences will have no end, till reason shall enlighten and renovate the world.

To expose the absurdity of this doctrine, it is only necessary to have recourse to the plainest facts, and the incontestible evidence resulting from a view of those events which are every where presented to the contemplation of man. If in any of those cases which include the admission of a special providence, recurrence were made to the most obvious and striking proofs, the error must inevitably be corrected. If plagues, malignant fevers, or national calamities of any kind be considered as the scourges of divine vengeance for the punishment of sin, why do they fall indiscriminately upon the virtuous and the vicious, upon the young and the old, upon the weak and the strong, in fact, upon every class of intelligent beings, whatever may be their character, their circumstances, and condition in life? Why does not divine justice apportion these punishments to the actual degree of criminality in each individual that is made the object of his displeasure? Why does he not pour out his beneficence upon the chosen children of his love, and mark with tokens of displeasure those only who are his real enemies, those only who are disobedient and incorrigibly wicked? But no! this is not the manner of his operation; this arrangement of distributive justice is no where to be discovered. The child of God, and the child of the devil, are often involved in the same calamity; frequently subjected to the same disease, and eventually fall a sacrifice to the same complaint. This proves that the event has been produced by the uniform operations of the laws of nature, and not by any special judgment from God; this proves incontestibly, a want of moral discrimination, and overturns every argument which Superstition has arranged for the accomplishment of her wicked intentions.

Whoever will deign to look at facts will be necessitated to yield to the truth of these operations; they stand verified by observation, by the universal experience of all mankind. There is not, perhaps, a single case in which man reasons so much in the face of facts, as in the admission of a special providence in the government of the world. These reflections, though they may at first appear to operate against the cause of virtue, will, when attentively examined, be found to produce an opposite effect, and present to the human mind the strongest inducements to the practice of genuine morality; for no one can with justice pretend that the discovery and the disclosure of truth can injure the moral improvement of the species; and although the world is governed by general laws, and consequently every description of character is necessarily involved in the result of their operation, yet it is also certain, that the design and the practice of virtue are the surest grounds on which to rest the expectation of moral felicity. It is true, indeed, that no degree of virtue can effectually secure man against the effects of physical evil; because whatever may be the excellence of his character, this excellence will not prevent the uniformity of operation in the material world, nor change the immutable laws by which it is governed, nor can

it destroy that universal relation which every where exists between sensation and the law of power in external objects. In vain shall we search for a solution of difficulties in the mutable decrees of a capricious divinity: it will ever be necessary to have a recourse to the fundamental laws by which the material universe is regulated; it will ever be necessary to abide faithfully by the universal principles of nature in all our decisions on this important subject.

No system can more effectually disgrace the moral character of God, than that which includes the idea of partial arrangement in the government of the world; and no system is more incontestibly proved by facts, than that which admits universality of operation in the whole of physical existence. The evils of which man complains, and which he unphilosophically denominates the judgments of God, are consequences resulting from the establishment of immutable laws; and the want of moral discrimination relative to the suffering objects, verifies this principle incontrovertibly.

It is further to be considered what terrible consequences would flow from the doctrine of special judgments. This doctrine practically forbids benevolent intention, and would frequently criminate the efforts of humanity in relieving distress, and mitigating the circumstances of the unfortunate. If it be the will of the Divinity to pour out his wrath upon a whole city, and to destroy its inhabitants by malignant fevers, who shall dare to oppose his determination? Who shall presume to exercise the healing art, when Heaven decrees sickness and death? Who shall be found hardy enough to enter the lists with the Creator, and attempt to avert his judgment? In short, if this doctrine were admitted and reduced to practice, it would destroy in some of the most essential cases, all the friendly and social virtues of man, and brutalize the human race. But, fortunate for man, if in theory he hold this doctrine sacred, his practical conduct humanely varies from the theory. The smallest recurrence to facts in the single instance of malignant fevers, would clearly substantiate this assertion. Superstition may darken the mind and derange its theoretic speculation, but the benevolence of the heart rises superior to these doleful illusions, and delights in the performance of duty.

In vain then do you speak of special judgments to that man whose family is attacked with malignant disease: he practically denies the truth of the doctrine, and humanely proceeds, as he ought, to administer the proper and necessary relief; even those who pretend to believe in this manifestation of divine vengeance, are often the first to oppose the will of Heaven, and restore health to a distracted family. Whence this difference between doctrine and action, between theory and practice? Will man never learn to be consistent, will he never forsake his errors and return to nature? It is on this grand system alone that he can find consolation; it is here only that the ardent desires of his heart can be satisfied, and confidence restored to his soul. Every deviation from nature is the establishment of a cause which must, sooner or later, work ruin to his sensations, or essentially disturb the tranquillity of his mind; he will find no happiness in error, and the most dreadful of all his errors is to be found in the terrible descriptions of the Divinity that he worships; he falsely attributes to this Divinity the diversified evils which he himself has produced, and while he remains under the impression of such an opinion, he will be for ever ignorant of the true sources of those miseries to which he is continually exposed.

“ How long will man importune the heavens with unjust complaints? How long with vain clamours will he accuse fate as the author of his calamities? Will he then never open his eyes to the light, and his heart to the insinuations of truth and reason? This truth every where presents itself in radiant brightness, and he does not see it! The voice of reason strikes his ear; and he does not hear it! Unjust man! If you can for a moment suspend the delusions which fascinates your senses; if your heart be capable of comprehending the language of argumentation, interrogate nature.

“ In what consist the maledictions of heaven against these countries? Where is the divine curse that perpetuates this scene of desolation? Monuments of past ages! say, have the heavens changed their laws, and the earth its course? Has the sun extinguished his fires in the regions of space? Do the seas no longer send forth clouds? Are the rain and the dew fixed in the air? Do the mountains retain their springs? Are the streams dried up? And do the plants no more bear fruit and seed? Answer, race of falsehood and iniquity! Has God troubled the primitive and invariable order, which he himself assigned to nature? Has heaven denied to the earth, and the earth

to its inhabitants, the blessings that were formerly dispensed! If the creation has remained the same, if its sources and its instruments are exactly what they once were, wherefore should not the present race have every thing within their reach that their ancestors enjoyed? Falsely do you accuse fate and the divinity; injuriously refer to God the cause of your evils.

“Tell me, perverse and hypocritical race, if these places are desolate, if powerful cities are reduced to solitude, is it he that has occasioned the ruin? Is it his hand that has thrown down these walls, sapped these temples, mutilated these pillars? Or is it the hand of man? Is it the arm of God that has introduced the sword into the city, and set fire to the country, murdered the people, burned the harvests, rooted up the trees, and ravaged the pastures? Or is it the arm of man? And when, after this devastation, famine has started up, is it the vengeance of God that has sent it, or the mad fury of mortals? When, during the famine, the people are fed with unwholesome provisions, and pestilence ensues, is it inflicted by the anger of heaven, or brought about by human imprudence? When war, famine, and pestilence united, have swept away the inhabitants, and the land has become a desert, is it God who has depopulated it? Is it his rapacity that plunders the labourer, ravages the productive fields, and lays waste the country; or the rapacity of those who govern? Is it his pride that creates murderous wars, or the pride of kings and their ministers? Is it the venality of his decisions that overthrows the fortune of families, or the venality of the organs of the law? Are they his passions that, under a thousand forms, torment individuals and nations, or the passions of human beings? And if in the anguish of their misfortunes they perceive not the remedies, is it the ignorance of God that is in fault, or their own ignorance? Cease, then, to accuse the decrees of fate, or the judgments of heaven! If God is good, will he be the author of your punishment? No, no; the caprice of which man complains, is not the caprice of destiny; the darkness that misleads his reason, is not the darkness of God; the source of his calamities is not in the distant heavens, but near to him upon the earth; it is not concealed in the bosom of the divinity; it resides in himself, man bears it in his heart.

“You murmur and say, Why have an unbelieving people enjoyed the blessings of Heaven and of Earth? Why is the holy and chosen race less fortunate than impious generations? Deluded man! Where is the contradiction at which you take offence? Where the inconsistency in which you suppose the justice of God to be involved? Take the balance of blessings and calamities, of causes and effects, and tell me, when those infidels observed the laws of the earth and the heavens, when they regulated their intelligent labours by the order of the seasons, and the course of the stars, ought God to have troubled the equilibrium of the world to defeat their prudence? When they cultivated with care and toil the face of the country around you, ought he to have turned aside the rain to have withheld the fertilizing dews, and caused thorns to spring up?

“When to render this parched and barren soil productive, their industry constructed aqueducts, dug canals, and brought the distant waters across the deserts; ought he to have blighted the harvests which art had created; to have desolated a country that had been peopled in peace; to have demolished the towns which labour had caused to flourish; in fine, to have deranged and confounded the order established by the wisdom of man? And what is this *infidelity*, which founded empires by prudence, and defended them by courage, and strengthened them by justice; which raised magnificent cities, formed vast ports, drained pestilential marshes, covered the seas with ships, the earth with inhabitants, and like the creative spirit, diffused life and motion through the world: If such is impiety, what is true belief? *”

The correct and unprejudiced observer of nature, the genuine moralist, will necessarily accede to the truth of the above remarks, and in all his reasonings he will analyze facts, and attribute events to the real causes which have produced them; he will be under the necessity of rejecting those senseless opinions which have never failed to involve all human enquiries in the doleful predicament of endless contradiction and absurdity. There can be no errors more pernicious than those which destroy the uniformity of operation in the physical world, and despoil the Creator of the honour of governing the universe by immutable laws. So long as the belief of special judgments

* See Volney's Ruins, page 20, et seq.

shall obtain, man will for ever tremble before a capricious tyrant, who deserves neither gratitude nor admiration; but if the evils of life be attributed to their true sources, he will learn to provide against them, and to found his happiness upon a comprehensive view and knowledge of those principles by which the conservation of all existence is rendered sure and certain to every intelligent being. Prophecies, miracles, special judgments, and divine vengeance, are phrases without meaning, and phantoms without existence, calculated only to disgrace the character of God, and derange the intellectual faculties of man. Philosophy teaches us to seek in nature, and the knowledge of her laws, for the cause of every event, and when this knowledge shall become universal, man will relinquish with elevated satisfaction his attachment to those supernatural schemes of a vindictive theology, which have served only to destroy the harmony of nature, and demoralize the intelligent world. O, man! return in thy enquiries to the basis of physical existence, develop its principles, cultivate science, love truth, practice justice, and thy life shall be rendered happy.

CHAPTER XVI.

Christian Devil.

IN the examination of the Christian religion, it would be improper to pass over, in silence, a character of so much power and importance as that of the devil. If accounts are true, he has acted a very conspicuous part upon the theatre of theological delusion. He was the leader of a refractory band of insurgents in the celestial world; a vast and tremendous conflict ensued, in which it became necessary for Jehovah to draw forth all his forces to quell the rioters. It was with difficulty that this grand object was accomplished by the united exertions of the angelic hosts, under the guidance of the most distinguished officers of the upper regions.

Milton has described, in a terrific manner, these heated and resentful combats, and given to the most enthusiastic fictions the character and effect of real existence. His poetic fancy, the extent of his imagination, and brilliancy of conception, have been, and will long continue to be, admired; but his *Paradise Lost*, in the estimation of sound philosophy, and considered in its relation to philosophical truth, is an object of censure and contempt. He has done more to immortalize the marvellous character of a fictitious being, than even the Bible itself. He has given to *airy phantoms*, a *local habitation*, and a *name*. The Christian devil is seen performing very marvellous feats in several different places in the Bible. He has vast powers of modifying his form and appearance, and can exhibit himself in an infinite variety of shapes. He assumes the form of a serpent, and very cunningly introduces himself to the original mother of the human race. It is in this fanciful scene so dexterously played off in the garden of Eden, that commenced the innumerable troubles, and destructive evils, that have since overwhelmed the life of man, and rendered miserable the fair creation of God. In almost all the cases where the devil has brought his powers into vigorous action, he has succeeded in despite and defiance even of omnipotence itself. God made the world for his own glory, for the purposes of virtue and felicity, but the devil overturned the scheme, before it had come fairly into operation; and thus, in the very commencement of the business, defeated the wisdom, and disordered the creation of the *Most High*. It is very extraordinary that a being of perfect wisdom and goodness, whose object must have been to extend the empire of happy and intelligent life, should have made such bad calculation, and so soon have been deranged in the correctness and benevolence of his designs.

It is remarkable, that in the sentences of condemnation which were passed upon the several offenders, there is a difficulty and singularity in that which relates to the serpent. "And the Lord God 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." It is a question of magnitude, which ought to engage the attention of theological doctors to inform us in what manner the serpent performed loco-motion, previous to his transgression, for which he received the condemnatory sentence of going upon his belly. Did he walk about erect like a man? If so, he must have cut a curious figure, travelling about upon the point of his tail; and the condemnation which brought him to a horizontal position, was rather in his favour than against him. This story, in its nature, is too childish and

trifling for serious remark. It is, however, a story which has found its way into other theological systems of great antiquity. And the followers of Moses have to contend with many of the eastern nations, such as Egyptians, Persians, and Indians, upon the merit of originality. There is a similarity in almost all supernatural systems of theology; they are all founded in a disgusting distortion of nature; they are all interwoven with the *marvellous*; they have all their serpents, their ghosts, and their devils. It is not of importance who first invented these theological wonders; they are not the less foolish and injurious whether they were first propagated by the followers of Moses or the disciples of Zoroaster; whether they are of Egyptian or Indian origin. They are still the dreams of fanaticism, and have perverted all the pure ideas of God and Nature, which man otherwise would have formed.

Concerning the invention of the devil, of good and bad spirits, with which all ancient theology is replete, there is, in Volney's *Ruius*, a most striking passage, which throws much philosophic light upon the subject. "In Persia, it was the serpent, which, under the name of Ahrimanes, formed the basis of the system of Zoroaster; and it is the same, Christians and Jews, that is become your serpent of Eve; (the celestial origin) and that of the cross in both cases, the emblem of Satan, the great adversary of the "ancient of days" sung by Daniel. In Syria, it was the hog, or wild boar, enemy of Adonis; because in that country the office of the northern bear was made to devolve upon the animal, whose fondness for mire and dirt is emblematical of winter. And it is for this reason that you, children of Moses and Mahomet, hold this animal in abhorrence, in imitation of the priests of Memphis and Balbec, who detested him as the murderer of their god, the sun. This is likewise, O Indians! the type of your Chiben, which was once the Pluto of your brethren, the Greeks and Romans; your Brama also, (God the creator) is only the Persian Ormuzd, and the Osiris of Egypt, whose very name expresses a creative power, producer of forms. And these gods were worshipped in a manner analogous to the real or fictitious attributes; and the worship, on account of the difference of its objects, was divided into two distinct branches; in one, the benign God received a worship of joy and love, whence are derived all religious acts of a gay nature, festivals, dances, banquets, offerings of flowers, milk, honey, perfumes, in a word, of every thing that delights the senses and the soul. In the other, the malign, on the contrary, received a worship of fear and pain, whence originated all religious acts of the sombre kind, tears, grief, mourning, self-denial, blood-offerings, and cruel sacrifices. You now understand," continued the orator, addressing himself to the Indians, Persians, Jews, Christians, and Mussulmen, "you now understand the origin of those ideas of combats and rebellions, which equally pervade your respective mythology."

It is thus that this beautiful writer has developed the origin of these religious ideas; and it is in this manner that the disordered imagination has operated upon subjects that could not be reduced to certitude. There is not, however, perhaps one malignant character amongst all those which theology has created, who has acted a more conspicuous part than the Christian Devil, or Satan. He comes forth under this latter name in the book of Job, and there assumes to himself the right of keeping the best of company, and carrying on vast projects of ruin, mischief, and rascality. He introduces himself among the sons of God, and holds a familiar and social conversation with the Creator himself. God, according to the story, condescends to indulge him in this kind of intimacy, and they unite in forming a scheme to torment and ruin the unfortunate Job. The coalition and the project so effectually disgrace the character of the Deity, that no genuine Theist can read the story without emotions of disgust and resentment against its foolish fabricators. Satan is here put upon a par with God himself, and they mutually coalesce in a scheme to torment and destroy an upright and honest man. Such representations of God annihilate at once the validity of any book in which they are found. Another extraordinary story concerning the Devil is told in the New Testament, which describes him as having fallen into much worse company than he had been accustomed to keep, according to the accounts in the book of Job. There he was found among the sons of God; but in the latter case, amongst a herd of swine. The passage must be quoted, because it is worthy of comment; it shows how miserably inconsistent is the Christian system of religion; it shows the extent of fanatic credulity, and the impositions which priestcraft has laid upon uninstructed man.

"And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the

devils besought him, saying, if thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place, and perished in the waters." (Matthew, chap. viii.)

It appears by this passage, that these devils had a desire to change their residence, which was granted to them, and they forthwith entered the swine, and took up their abode there; but it seems that these brute animals, by some unknown impulse, probably of a devilish kind, since it is clear that the Devil was in them, plunged into the water, and were instantly drowned. Now the morality and utility of the business must be settled by Christian theologians. Whether were the devils in this case drowned with the hogs or did they make their escape the moment that they were immersed in water? If they really made their escape, there could be no use in sending them into the swine; and if they were actually drowned, then one might with truth assert, that the devil is dead. In the fifth chapter of Mark, the same story is related, and it is said that the swine, into which the devils entered, were about two thousand in number, and that they all ran violently down a steep place, and were drowned in the sea. To have given this impulse to the whole herd, it is necessary that each one should have been possessed with a devil: it follows, therefore, that two thousand devils must have been drowned, or, if they made their escape, that two thousand hogs must have perished for no valuable purpose whatever.

In any view of the story it is marked with injustice and inhumanity; injustice towards those who were the rightful owners of these swine, and inhumanity or cruelty toward the swine themselves. It is a tale of a childish nature; but it shows what strange conceptions theology has formed concerning devils, and many other airy phantoms. In another part of Matthew's gospel, the devil is said to have taken Jesus up into a high mountain, for the purpose of tempting him, and offering him all the kingdoms of the earth for his homage and worship. This same Jesus, Christians believe to be God himself, or equal to God, and yet he condescends to be led about by the devil, and holds with him a conversation. A book that exhibits such accounts, such dereliction of all dignity or correctness of conduct in the Creator, could never be written by a spirit of truth. The devil is represented as being everywhere at the same time; ubiquity is one of his leading attributes, and he goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; he is omniscient as well as omnipresent, he knows every thing that is going on in heaven, earth, and hell, and is continually exerting his power to defeat the projects of his celestial competitor. Such is the description which Christian theology gives of that malignant Devil, which it has created to answer the purposes of interest and of terror. This being is so essential to the clerical scheme and its advocates, that a certain writer observes, that they could not do without him. But it will perhaps be said, that the Devil has a powerful effect in restraining men from vice; his existence, combined with the idea of hell, is necessary to deter the multitude from the commission of enormous crimes.

In this point of view, the subject assumes a more serious character, and merits attention. An appeal to the nature of the case, and to facts, will furnish, in some measure, the satisfactory solution of any supposed difficulty upon the present subject. It is a well known truth, that an immediate and certain evil of a much less severe nature, of much less weight and magnitude, has much greater effect upon the human mind, than those that are distant and uncertain, even when their size and terrific appearance become extended in an infinite degree. Show to a man the certain and sudden consequences of an action; let his mind be strongly impressed with an idea that there is no escape from such fatal effect, and he will recoil with horror from the perpetration of a deed, which would bring along with it such speedy ruin and excruciating misery. In the apprehension which relates to distant punishment, there is a great drawback upon its acuteness and severity, arising from the single consideration that it may never happen, or that intervening causes may diminish the malignity of its nature, or the fury of its operation. When, for instance, a man is about to take feloniously his neighbour's goods, he does not look behind him to see whether the Devil is watching his motions; no, but he keeps a vigilant eye upon the owner of the property, or the by-standers in general; if these can be evaded, the Devil is set at defiance. The account can be settled with him at a future day; but with the owner of the goods there can be no postponement of the business.

With the civil law, the settlement must be instant, and the compensation adequate and complete; there is a corporal, moral, and pecuniary punishment, which has a powerful effect in restraining man from vice, and without these, all the hells of fanaticism would never be able to hold him to the point of substantial virtue; he would fly off in a moral tangent, from the great circle of human happiness, and sow the seeds of disorder in the very bosom of society. Take away from man these restraints, justly imposed by the civil law; take away the love of reputation, which is a strong and active sentiment of the human heart; take away that internal idea of discrimination in the character of human actions; the idea that one class is useful and amiable, and that another is injurious and detestable; take from the constitution of man these powerful motives in the cause of virtue, and you will strip him of the most influential considerations by which he is bound to the faithful performance of his duty; let him loose under these circumstances, and neither the Devil, nor the fear of hell, would be sufficient to fasten his attention upon the practice of an exalted morality.

In support of this assertion, we may safely appeal to the evidence of facts. For many hundred years past the Christian religion, and its powerful advocates, the clergy, have combined to restrain a wicked world from acts of degrading and destructive criminality; they have portrayed the subject in all the frightful and impressive points of view, of which it was susceptible; they have represented hell with all its horrors, the Devil in all his malignity, and combined with these an angry God, not less terrific in his character; notwithstanding all this, these pious men are continually crying out that the world is growing worse and worse; that infidelity is increasing, and that we are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the righteous display of the awful vengeance of God. If such be the fact, these boasted restraints have not answered the purpose; if such be the fact, they might as well have been without a Devil, for he appears to have answered them no purpose. Men who do not believe in this immoral monster, are frequently more virtuous, and never more vicious, than many who declare that they would not for all the world renounce the belief of a Devil. Among those nations, where the reign of terror has been the most complete, there has been the least virtue, the least morality, the least attention to the rights and dignity of human nature. Spain, Portugal, and Italy, have been eminent for their attachment to the Christian religion; for their pious zeal and unshaken faith in the gospel, and yet there is scarcely a spot upon the globe where moral principle is less understood, or more universally abandoned in practice, than it is in these wretched and superstitious countries.

If the machinery of the Christian religion could have answered the purpose of moral restraint, a fair opportunity has been given among many Christian nations for proving, in this respect, the efficacy of this religion. It has not, however, been proved, and the fact is, that the most religious countries have been the most immoral. The horrors of the Inquisition, the cruelties of Spain, and other countries of Europe, upon the peaceable and unoffending inhabitants of America, are not yet forgotten; they are still fresh in the mind, and evince with indubitable certainty, that the spirit of Christianity is ferocious cruelty, and not a generous and exalted benevolence toward the human race. Facts are therefore in pointed opposition to the opinion, that the terrific part of revealed religion has aided the cause of moral virtue. The condition of man in nature impels him to virtue; but superstition has perverted his heart, and deranged the operations of his understanding. It is the business and the duty of reason to restore him to intellectual sanity, to exalt the feelings of his heart, and give to his energies a new impulse productive of human happiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

Death, or the Disorganization of Intelligent Beings.

PAINFUL sensations are often the consequences of surveying the history of man. The means of ingenious torture are everywhere discovered, and the imagination gives an accumulating impulse to the development of their operations. The ingenuity and the fury of fanaticism are continually busied in manufacturing misery for unfortunate mortals. The natural and unavoidable evils which are connected with the condition of human life are not sufficient; the disordered fancy of man seeks in the distant heavens, or in futurity, the causes calculated to produce, by anticipation, a new modification of distress; and in this respect, enthusiasm has been extremely successful. It

has awakened all the fears of weak and ignorant mortals, and taken special care to convert this to its own profit and advantage. Death, which is as natural as life, has been converted into a fruitful source of revenue, and clerical avarice has been satiated through the channel of human frailty and destruction. It is not sufficient that man is every where subjected to the natural and unavoidable influence of the elementary world; to pain, sickness, and inevitable calamities of every sort, without being alarmed by the errors which superstition has connected with his ultimate dissolution. Must this final event of our temporary existence become the cause of perpetual torture during our life? Must the mind of man be for ever on the rack, in consequence of an anticipated evil, which no prudence or foresight can possibly prevent? Must the unpleasant sensations which result from the capacity of our natures, be increased by the artificial ingenuities of a blind and fanatic zeal? Is there no source from whence to draw consolation and mental tranquillity; no fundamental principles of repose and happiness; no primary objects of delight, calculated to dissipate the mist of ignorance and general wretchedness? Yes, and they are to be found in the established order of nature. My object therefore, in this chapter, is to reconcile man to his fate; to tranquillize his mind, and raise it above the superstitious fears of death; to call into action his fortitude and his reason, and by a justifiable exhibition of the general and uniform operation of the laws of nature, to increase the quantity of human happiness. To do this with success, it is necessary to destroy the prejudices and the evils which are connected with the belief of ancient systems.

It is universally agreed and verified by the experience of all past ages, that death is the inevitable fate of every sensitive and intelligent agent: but it is denied by philosophy, that this death is the consequence of any primary apostacy of the supposed first parents of the human race. But since a contrary belief has obtained throughout all the Christian world, it becomes our duty to make the necessary enquiry respecting this strange and unnatural doctrine, and develope the true causes of ultimate disorganization in the human species. In doing this, we shall examine the threefold death of the Christians.

First, Spiritual Death.

Secondly, Temporal Death.

Thirdly, Eternal Death.

These three kinds of death have been foolishly attributed to the sin of Adam, when, in fact, the first and the last are not true, and neither of them bears any relation to the supposed violation of moral law. By spiritual death, Christians understand a total corruption and debasement of the moral qualities of our nature, by which man is rendered incapable of the performance of any virtuous action; and this, they say, has been the fatal consequence of the primitive defection of Adam, who violated the command of heaven, by eating of the forbidden fruit. Let us examine this doctrine on the principle of nature, reason, and justice.

The moral qualities of our nature are capable of being drawn into action, in perfect coincidence with the fundamental principles of an exalted virtue; but it is also conceded, that they are capable of being vitiated. In every intelligent agent, actions of the most opposite nature will sometimes obtain; man is not wholly virtuous, nor is he wholly vicious; but he consists of a compound of these two different kinds of action; but whether virtuous or vicious, it is the result of his own choice, and the use of the moral energies of his nature; his virtue is always personal, and his vices are to be attributed to a source which entitles them to a similar denomination. He acts as an independent moral agent; he acts for himself, he is accountable for himself, and he cannot be justifiably criminated by the vices of another, neither can another be criminated by his violation of moral rectitude. In this case, personal and moral agency is the correct ground of decision, and to this tribunal alone the whole must be deferred.

From this statement it ought to be perceived, that the partial corruption of our natures and character is admitted through its proper channel; but it ought also to be evident, that no concession is made relative to a transfer of personal immorality. What, then, can these spiritual doctors mean, when they speak of a spiritual death referable to the primary apostacy of Adam? Do they mean that these personal infractions of moral law are to be attributed to the conduct of him who lived six thousand years ago? Do they mean to exhibit the idea of a double crimination, in consequence of one present and personal infraction? Do they mean to charge *Adam* with the sins

of the whole world, and afterward each individual with *his* portion of the national debt of iniquity? Would they procure two judgments, two payments, and then remain unsatisfied? Yes, *and after all, the whole debt must be eventually cancelled by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ.*

Christians, can you examine seriously the nature of human actions, and still contend for the propriety of such unnatural doctrines? Will you never give to man his due degree of merit, and reward him for his real virtue. Is there nothing tender, nothing sympathetic, nothing moral in the heart of an intelligent being? Is there no justice for the benefit of society, no benevolence to brighten the character of man, no humanity for the relief of distressed objects? Is the heart wholly corrupted, and the mental qualities of our nature totally vitiated? Are there no principles preserved in operation, honourable to the character of the human species? It is in vain to attempt, at this enlightened day, to impose a religion upon the world, which tortures all the social faculties of our nature, and reduces man to the condition of a brute; it is in vain to say there is no moral goodness, no elevated sentiments of virtue, no beneficial operations of the heart, by which to preserve the happiness of the human species. Society could never exist without the influence of moral principles, and the practice of real virtue; but since it both exists and proceeds in a manner mutually beneficial to all its members, it is fair to conclude, that its preservation is to be ascribed to the exercise of a social morality, and this morality fundamentally connected with the nature and condition of man.

But admitting for a moment that the world is as vicious as it has been represented, it does not follow that this aggregate of wickedness is to be attributed to the sin of Adam; but the contrary is evident from the personal nature of moral actions, and the responsibility connected with the character of intelligent beings. Let fanaticism and superstition therefore exhibit their laboured discourses on this supposed spiritual death; they speak of phantoms and not of realities; they lose sight of the moral nature of man and the sources of human action; virtue and vice are confounded, and their transferable nature serves only to perplex the understanding, and destroy the line of personal and discriminative justice. This spiritual death may serve to augment the mysteries and follies of the Christian religion; but I am confident it will never serve the cause of virtue, or lead to the practice of genuine morality.—I proceed to the consideration of temporal death.

This temporal death, which is the death that every man suffers when he leaves the theatre of human action, seems to be less mysterious and more cognizable by the human mind; we are taught the knowledge of it by the experience of all ages and all countries; by our own observation on the facts and events constantly presented to our contemplation. Death is the inevitable portion of every living creature; it is the certain fate of every organized being; it is the counterpart of our original construction; it is a change in the mode of existence; it is a dissolution of the combined modifications of animal life; it is a physical property of every sensitive agent; it is the eternal mutability of infinitely diversified modes of being; it is established in the primary arrangements of Nature; it is a property, and ever will be, of the parts of all existence. Death is as natural and as necessary as life; the preservation of the latter is an unavoidable effect of the former. Change or mutability is essentially connected with the uniform harmony and preservation of the great fabric of the universe; and no one can expect to be excepted from the operation of this general law. Vice is not the cause though it may accelerate the event; the seeds of death are contained in the original organizations of our natures; sensation and reflection by their necessary operation lead to decay. Life is naturally progressive to a certain point, which having passed, it necessarily retrogrades toward a state of dissolution. This is the true condition, the just and eternal order of organized existence, and the knowledge of this ought to be the highest consolation of a reflecting mind. But here, superstition, from her dismal and dark recess, cries out heresy, and proclaims damnation to the man who dares to reason on the ground of nature; we hear her awful voice sounding hollow in her dark and gloomy abodes, and we regard it not. Reason whispers in our ear and says, Pursue with indefatigable zeal the cause of nature, develope truth, and labour for the happiness of the human race.

But after all, how is it possible we can attribute temporal death to the sin of Adam? Did this transgression change the physical organization of man? Did it destroy any of his natural faculties, or make an addition to those he was already possessed of? If

so, what was the construction of Adam previous to his supposed fall from a state of innocence? If he was possessed of sensation, he must have been exposed to pain, if he was exposed to pain he was liable to death, for death is often the consequence of severity of pain; if he was not possessed of sensation, he must have been a being entirely different from ourselves, and consequently could not have been the parent of the human race. It follows, therefore, that there is no point of view in which this subject can be considered, which will warrant the conclusion, that death is to be attributed to the primitive apostacy of Adam. It follows both physically and morally, it is unjust. Some other cause of corporeal dissolution should, therefore, be discovered, and this, as we have seen, is to be found in our natural texture and arrangement.—The next principle of discussion is what is called eternal death, or a state of endless punishment.

This kind of death cannot be the consequence either of Adam's transgression, or the aggregate wickedness of the whole human race. It is an idea which has been generated in the brain of fanaticism, and supported by the enthusiastic zeal of persecuting superstition. It was not sufficient to subject mankind to the terrible effects of total moral turpitude, and temporal disorganization; but the fury of religious malignity has been exerted to invent a new species of torture to endure for endless ages. In the invention and establishment of this doctrine, the nature of human actions and the principles of justice have been entirely disregarded. To verify this assertion, it is only necessary to examine the qualities of human actions, and the crimes which are supposed to merit this terrible infliction of punishment.

Man is a being possessed of certain powers and faculties; of certain passions and propensities to actions, and these, by a primary law of nature, are subjected to the controul of reason, and are to be directed by conscience, or an internal moral sense of right and wrong. But what are these faculties, what these passions which are essentially connected with the character and condition of intelligent agents? Our existence and all the properties of it are of a limited and finite nature? there is not a single quality of man that is not imperfect; the parts of the aggregate of his life do not constitute any thing like infinity. In all his movements, in all his energies, in all the capacities of his being, he is regulated by finite and not by infinite principles. He is incapable of any actions which do not result essentially from the faculties which he is possessed of; all his conduct must have a strict reference to the causes which have produced it, and every effect must bear a proportion to its productive cause. If the cause be limited and imperfect, the effect must also be imperfect, for the effect can never rise superior to the cause which has given it birth.

Before we speak, therefore, of an infinite sin, or an infinite evil, we should consider the capacity of those beings to whom this evil is attributed; if the acting agents are infinite in their nature and character, the effect of their operations may be so too, but if they are finite, their actions can lay no claim to an infinite effect. Sin is the consequence of the infraction of moral law; if this infraction be made by an infinite being the criminality would be like the being who made it, that is of an infinite quality; but if the infraction be made by an imperfect being, the criminality is finite, and limited in its essential nature. It follows, of course, as man is a finite and imperfect agent, he is incapable of the performance of any infinite act; if he cannot do an infinite act, he is incapable of an infinite evil, and does not deserve an infinite punishment; consequently, the idea of eternal death is unjust and unreasonable.

But further, if every sin were an infinite evil, which is the Christian doctrine, it would merit an infinite punishment; but if one sin deserves an infinite punishment, what must be the punishment of him who is guilty of ten thousand sins? According to this doctrine he must be liable to ten thousand infinite punishments, which is a physical and moral absurdity. This doctrine of eternal death or infinite punishment, disregards the nature of human actions, and every principle of distributive justice. It inflicts on the smallest offender as great extent and severity of punishment as on the most abandoned criminal. It goes to the destruction of all moral virtue, by inducing man to believe, that the commission of one vicious action is as odious in the sight of God, and deserves as much punishment as a thousand violations of moral rectitude. It destroys all relation between the actions of men and the beneficial arrangements of corrective improvement. It makes man infinite, and the Deity unjust; both of which are inconsistent with the nature of things and the principles of eternal truth.

It is impossible that there should be more than one infinite being in existence, and

this being is the God of nature, the intelligent organizer of the universe; possessed of all possible perfection and excellence, and directing the vast concerns of nature with the greatest harmony, and the most divine benevolence. This being is incapable of any infraction of moral law, and this excludes from the system of nature, the possibility of an infinite evil, and consequently the justice of an infinite punishment is also excluded, and with it the principle of eternal death. Thus the belief of an eternal Hell is essentially erroneous, and can claim no justifiable foundation in Nature or Nature's God. This doctrine of endless punishment tortures the whole system of distributive justice; is pernicious to the well-being of society; is virtually destructive of the moral energies of man, and degrades the dignity and perfections of the divine Creator of the universe.

The Christian doctrine of death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, has now been considered, and the whole proved to bear no relation to the sin of Adam, or the primitive apostacy of the reputed parents of the human race. It has been shewn that spiritual death is nothing more than a partial corruption of the moral qualities of our nature, and even this partial corruption has resulted from personal violation of moral law. It has been shewn also, that temporal death is the physical property of our existence, and has been unphilosophically attributed to the sin of Adam. It has also been proved, that eternal death or endless punishment, is inconsistent with the nature of human actions, and the qualities and properties of finite agents. In short, the Christian idea of death is inconsistent with reason, bears no affinity to truth or nature, and violates the primitive order of the world established by God himself. Some observations, therefore deduced from the reason and nature of things, shall conclude this chapter.

In examining the vast machinery of the universe, presented for our contemplation by the great Creator, the human mind is lost in a labyrinth of reflection, and swallowed up in the most profound meditations! We behold on every side the most ineffable beauties and the most astonishing wonders; the most splendid exhibitions of eternal wisdom, the most unbounded displays of infinite benevolence, and the most perfect testimonies of an incomprehensible power. In this vast system, there are many things inexplicable to man; many events beyond the power of human solution, and many arrangements incomprehensible by the most scrutinizing efforts of human wisdom. But man should consider himself as an unit in the totality of existence; as a part of a widely extended whole, bearing a relation to every other part, and every other part bearing a relation to his own modification of life. He should reflect that the world is governed by general and immutable laws, and that the immutable operation of these laws produces perpetual mutability in the infinitely diversified parts and portions of the great fabric of nature. He ought to learn that change is the eternal order in the established arrangements of the world, and he ought not to expect to be excluded from the general influence of fundamental laws established by eternal wisdom. He should learn to be reconciled to his fate, and consider death as a necessary and justifiable appendage of the present modification of existence. He should be taught to love and practice virtue, but not through the fear of an eternal hell; but because it is useful to society, and contributes to his individual happiness. He should be taught to revere the power which animates and enlivens the great system of nature; but not to fear God on the one hand, nor flatter him on the other, with an expectation of obtaining his favour. He should disregard all ideas of ghosts, demons, and malignant spirits, and reason on the cognizable properties of real existence. The mind of man should be elevated above the practice of vice, above the frowns of fortune, and the fears of death. He ought to be the strong advocate of nature, *and have confidence in his own energies*; his principles should be just and correct, his actions strictly moral, and his sentiment in coincidence with the system of benevolence and utility. No bugbears of superstition, no ghosts of fanaticism, no demons of hell, should be permitted to disturb his brain; but, rising above all vice and all prejudice, he should consider himself as an associated being, and live for the benefit of himself and his own fellow creatures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Proposition, that the want of Universality in the Christian Religion demonstrates that it is not of Divine Origin.

EVERY production must of necessity bear a strict relation to its cause. If the cause be imperfect, it is to be expected that the production will exhibit some strong features of imperfection. If, on the contrary, the cause be perfect, the effect will carry along with it the unequivocal proofs of that perfection. If these assertions be applied to a system of religion, it would not be difficult to ascertain the source and origin of such religion. A religion, therefore, claiming divine origin, ought, by the nature of its doctrines and principles, to produce conviction in the mind, that it is really supernatural and divine. It ought to exhibit the proof of this celestial birth in so clear and striking a manner, as to be capable of being embraced by every capacity interested in a knowledge of its nature and consequences.

It is unreasonable and unjust in the advocates of any system to announce divinity of origin where the internal evidence derived from the scheme itself is sufficient to demonstrate imperfection. A supernatural code of theological principles should be incapable of being charged with any of those defects which are unavoidably connected with all human productions; contradictions, inconsistencies, and immorality, can never be found in the mandates of a being infinitely perfect; infinite perfection precludes the possibility of such effect, and wherever the defect is discovered, the evidence growing out of such defect is abundant against the admission of divine origin. Keeping these principles constantly in view, as marks by which to direct our enquiries, we shall be able to ascertain what degree of respect we ought to bestow upon a system of theology, which has heretofore demanded the unqualified credence of every living creature to whom it has been presented; we shall be able to ascertain whether ignorance, superstition, and a fanatic zeal, have had any share of influence in producing the marvellous attachment which the votaries of every unnatural religion have inconsiderately bestowed upon the mysterious doctrines therein contained. It is with difficulty, amidst the prejudices that assail us, that the mind has recourse to the fundamental principles of truth, and the immutable laws from which it results; but we should learn to dismiss our unreasonable attachments, and exercise affection towards those principles only which are sanctioned by the voice of reason, and which bear a constant relation to the order of the physical world. Man is essentially interested in the discovery of truth, and the diversified application of its principles to all the concerns of human life; he is equally interested in the practice of a pure natural virtue; truth, however, will make but little progress, where religious bigotry has seized upon the mental faculties, and suppressed the elevated conception of the understanding; nor will practical virtue share a better fate, where its beneficent effects are opposed by similar causes; the hope, therefore of constituting a useful character, compounded of the love of truth, and the practice of genuine morality, will become evanescent, unless man can be persuaded that he is interested in a speedy return to nature, from which in all his enquiries, he has so long deviated. The plan of revealed religion, in which man, for so many ages has reposed the confidence of his mind, should be re-examined under impressions inducing an invincible attachment to the developement of solemn truth, and the diffusion of general felicity; and it is with sentiments of this kind that we proceed to the examination of the subject proposed. If the Christian religion be true, we are essentially interested in a knowledge of this truth; if it be false our happiness must be increased by a disclosure of those proofs which invalidate its authenticity. It is presumed, that forcible evidence can be adduced from the partiality of the scheme itself. This religion, destined to enlighten mankind, and lead them to the possession of sublime happiness, has, by its supposed author, been concealed from a considerable part of those very beings who must all be equally interested in the knowledge and the application of its doctrines. The assertion will not be controverted by any Christian advocates, who have any tolerable portion of geographical information.

It is in strict conformity with truth to say, that two-thirds of mankind, and perhaps three-fourths of them, are destitute of any knowledge of the Christian religion; and to verify this assertion, the learned geographer must indulge us while we take a short view of the situation of the globe in this respect. In America, it is true, that the Christian

religion has been disseminated among all its civilized inhabitants; but there is a large portion of an opposite description, that have not been thus highly favoured by the Divinity. Almost all the aborigines of this country are entirely destitute of any knowledge of supernatural religion; they grovel in their native darkness, abandoned in this respect *by the divine power that produced them*, and left to form a variety of conjectures relative to a subject so essentially interesting to their present and their future welfare. In travelling to the old world, and including the aggregate of population, the feelings of the Christian heart will not be better consoled. Europe, it is true, with some trifling exceptions, may be considered as nominally Christian; but in going eastward, and entering the vast regions of the Asiatic world we there behold 500,000,000 of inhabitants, which is more than half the human race, totally deprived of every information concerning this holy religion, deemed by its advocates essential to the felicity of intelligent beings. The exceptions in this part of the globe are too inconsiderable to engage our attention in this general calculation. Here the number of proselytes might have been somewhat greater, had not the conduct of the Christian missionaries laid the foundation of their expulsion for ever. In Africa, the remaining quarter of the globe, our inquiries will terminate in a discovery of the same ignorance relative to revealed religion. The exceptions here are as inconsiderable as those already noticed in regard to Asia. For the truth of these assertions an appeal is made to the best information of the civilized world.

The application of these facts to the subject under consideration, will operate essentially against the benevolence of that being, who is said to be the author and promulgator of this religion. It will be necessary, on the one hand, for the advocates of revelation to abandon the idea of its universal necessity, and the consideration that it is the sole cause of procuring felicity: or, on the other, to acknowledge that the God they worship is a partial, cruel, and vindictive parent, depriving his creatures of necessary information, and consigning them to future destruction for involuntary ignorance. It is a maxim of this celestial religion, that he that believeth not shall be damned; but how is man to believe a proposition of which he has no knowledge? How can he embrace a religion which he has never heard of? And, above all, how can criminality be attached by a just God to a want of belief, where no opportunity has been afforded of bestowing an assent? Are not all the human race equally the children of one common and benevolent parent? Are they not all fed by his bounty, and supported by his universal beneficence? Do they not all experience the benefits resulting from that luminous body, which in turn enlightens and fructifies the earth? Whence then this unjust discrimination, this partial arrangement in the moral concerns of man? But the advocates of the Christian religion will perhaps retort and say, "Do you believe that God is the author of the system of nature?" Yes. "Do you contend that he has been impartial, and that he has bestowed equal talents and faculties on all?" No. "Why, then, if you admit partiality in one case, do you complain of it in another?" The objection is plausible, and deserves an answer.

In doing this it is to be remarked, that there is an essential difference in the nature of the two cases. In the case of the Christian religion, man is subjected to damnation, either because he is ignorant of the system, or because his mind cannot discern the quantum of evidence necessary to establish its divine origin; but in the system of nature, although there is a real difference in regard to the possession of talents, yet the man weak in intellect cannot, in justice, be subjected to punishment on this account. No Christian will contend that great mental energy will entitle a man to salvation, or, on the other hand, that a feeble understanding will, in the mind of the Deity, be considered as a justifiable cause of damnation. No; if God be just, he will require only the due and proper exercise of those diversified talents which he had variously bestowed upon his creatures. If one be weak and another strong, one foolish and another discerning, the justice of God demands a mode of treatment exactly adjusted to these different powers and faculties. The Christian religion, therefore, in order to accord with the system of nature, should have annexed no penalty to unbelief, whether that unbelief resulted from total ignorance, or an honest dissent of mind, after a due examination of the evidence. The evidence of any system of religion ought to be equal to all, where equal credence is demanded of all. By what rules of moral justice does the Deity demand the unqualified belief of the present generation upon a less degree of evidence than he is said to have formerly exhibited? If mira-

cles be necessary in one age to establish the truth of Christianity, they are equally necessary in every age. If one country be favoured with supernatural proofs, all other countries are equally entitled to the same unequivocal, convincing, and demonstrative testimony. If impartiality be considered as an attribute of God, this impartiality should at all times and in all places be preserved with an undeviating uniformity; but in every case where merit is attributed to the human assent, on the ground of supernatural proof, and in every other case where demerit is attached to unbelief, when the evidence in quantity and quality is of an inferior nature, this principle is notoriously abandoned.

Again, if the Christian religion be true, the proofs ought not only to be universally exhibited, but they ought also to be universally convincing; and this results essentially from the nature of that evidence which is employed to substantiate the system. It is not strange that man should often doubt, where human testimony is the only ground of conviction, but when the proof rises higher and claims a divine origin, one would suppose that the mind must necessarily yield to the force of such divine testimony, otherwise the means made use of by divine power for the accomplishment of the end, are inadequate and deficient; but as no such imbecility can justly be attributed to a being possessing infinite wisdom, it is to be presumed, that the exhibition of evidence in the present case ought to be complete and satisfactory, universal and every where convincing. If human projects miscarry, this failure is to be ascribed to the imperfection of human nature; and the believer ought to perceive that he does virtually ascribe to his God the same kind of imperfection, whenever he acknowledges a defeat in the completion of any object, the producing of which was deemed important in the mind of the Supreme Being. It were less pernicious for man to believe in no God, than to believe in one that is wicked and imperfect, partial and vindictive, establishing his systems upon no principle of distributive justice, and acting upon principles neither correct, beneficial, nor universally understood. Those immoral monsters to whom men in all ages have paid adoration, have served only to corrupt the morality of the human heart, and exhibit examples destructive to the cause of virtue. Such, however, is the character of all those beings who have been made the authors of supernatural schemes of religion. It is time that man should abandon his errors, and return to nature; it is time that he should elevate his conceptions above the prejudices resulting from a partial religion, and attribute to the benevolent parent of universal existence, those attributes only which can possibly adorn his character. The barbarous divinity of the Christian religion has marked all his arrangements with a partiality and vindictive cruelty, which strip him of every amiable property, and subject the mind to the terrific impressions which naturally flow from anger and revenge. When believers shall prove their God to be just and impartial, they may solicit with confidence the gratitude of the human heart; but the rational mind beholds in the arrangements of supernatural religion the most unequivocal injustice, and the abandonment of every principle by which the preserver of nature ought ever to be influenced. Shew us a religion universally promulgated and universally proved, and man will soon discover both its truth and utility, and that its revelation is worthy of the being whom he adores. This religion is the religion of nature, it is the practice of justice, it consists in acts of extensive beneficence, it is not confined to any age or country, it is established over the face of the whole earth, it is complete and universal, it is comprehensible by every mind, it is useful to every creature, it is the indestructible cement of intelligent nature in every part of the universe.

CHAPTER XIX.

That Moral Principles are not founded upon Theological Ideas, nor upon any Sectarian Modification of these Ideas, but upon a Basis as Immortal and as Indestructible as Human Existence itself.

THE different religious sectaries, which have prevailed in the world, have furnished innumerable proofs of that bigoted tenacity so strikingly characteristic of supernatural theology. It is not only in regard to their doctrines that this disposition has appeared, but each sect has laid claim to a pre-eminent preservation of morals, and to the power of rendering good and happy a wicked and apostate race of men. The fulminating anathemas of the Church have been poured forth in every direction, and the most

petty sectary has raised around itself a rampart for the alternate purpose of self-defence, and attack upon heretics and unbelievers. They have universally charged each other with holding doctrines of a demoralizing nature, and subversive of the moral purity of rational existence. In such a state of things reason owes to the happiness of man the faithful discharge of an important duty, consisting of a candid and temperate investigation concerning theological ideas, and the foundation of moral principles. Reason has indulged an opinion that virtue rests upon a more stable basis, than the sectarian theology of past ages, and that the aggregate number of sectaries have been altercating superficially the reciprocal relation which their respective doctrines bear to each other; that they have abandoned the ground of substantial support, which nature has given to the principles of a pure and incorruptible morality, and that their acrimonious strictures and recriminations have served only to perplex the mind and vitiate the heart. The Jewish, the Christian, and the Mahometan theology furnishes the most incontrovertible facts, and presents the most convincing evidence respecting an ultimate decision of the present subject. But the internal and essential character of the inquiry first merits attention, before the collateral and subsequent consideration of sectarianism can lay any just claim to a share of influence in the final determination.

The mind of man, in every age of the world, has given diversified specimens of its ideas concerning supernatural powers. The physical universe is a grand and impressive spectacle, whose phenomena alarmed the terror-struck beholder, generating at one and the same time a thousand hopes and fears in the agitated and uninstructed intellect of man. The physical world was the grand reservoir.

It was the common source of Theological eductions, and every species of fanaticism drew from this fountain beings of such form and character as would best answer the various purposes for which they were intended. The characteristic differences and the moral or immoral shades of each deified object, were regulated by a thousand different causes existing in the passions and properties of intelligent life. The aggregate of nature was a terrible spectacle in the view of ignorance, and the parts of this grand whole being necessarily subjected to a more scrutinizing inspection of intellect, were discovered to be capable of producing various conjectures concerning spiritual substances and concealed agents of a benevolent or malignant kind. Various moral effects will no doubt be produced by the generation of so many spiritual monsters; but the effects produced upon moral practices are one thing, and the substantial basis of moral principle is another; they are quite different in their essential characters.

It is an old maxim, that evil communications corrupt good manners; and although corrupt associations, even with the pretext that one party is of celestial birth and character, will produce pernicious consequences, yet these are considerations separate and distinct from the true foundation of those immortal principles of virtue, by which the life of man ought to be governed. If a thousand Gods existed, or if nature existed independent of any, the moral relation between man and man would remain exactly the same in either case. Moral principle is the result of this relation, it is founded in the properties of our nature, and it is as indestructible as the basis on which it rests.

If we could abandon, for a moment, every theistical idea, it would nevertheless remain substantially true, that the happiness of society must depend upon the exercise of equal and reciprocal justice. It would also be true, that benevolence is an amiable trait in the character of man; that the cultivation of his faculties is a duty imposed on him, because the faithful performance of his duty extends the circle of his real felicity; that vice is the bane of individual and social existence; that truth is to be preferred to falsehood, activity to indolence, temperance to debauchery, and, generally, that science and virtue claim pre-eminently over ignorance and vice, the universal attachment of the human race. All these, and many other particulars of a like nature, would stand as immortal monuments of the real nature of moral principles, even after cultivated intellect shall have performed the last solemn act of duty relative to the ancient regimen, and shall have recalled bewildered man to the happy contemplation of the laws and immutable energies of the physical universe.

If this be true, in regard to the essential nature of theological ideas, how much more powerfully will it hold upon every sectarian modification of the subject. If pure theism be independent of morality, and morality independent of that, because it rests upon the relations and the properties of human life, then it will be easy to conceive

that the subordinate descriptions of sectarian theology must be still more unconnected with the present subject. The character, however, of all the gods of antiquity, is, of itself, a sufficient consideration to exclude them from any participation in the concerns of an exalted virtue. The Jewish God commands theft and murder; he puts a lying spirit into the mouth of his prophets; he repents and grieves for his past conduct; he is a God of fury, wrath, and vengeance. These actions and qualities are all attributed to him in the Old Testament! Is it possible that any man of common sense can believe, that moral principles which are so important to the best interests of human society, should be placed upon such an immoral and vindictive foundation? Can any one imagine that a being, so destitute of moral justice and benevolence himself, could serve as a solid basis on which to rest these qualities in human nature? No, this sectarian God, this malignant phantom of former ages, this compound of weakness and wickedness, is calculated to subvert all moral principle, both in theory and practice, and present the moral world in the full exercise of the most detestable passions.

The wrathful and unrelenting character of the Christian divinity, is not less hostile to the immaculate principles of a sound and excellent morality; imbittered in anger, and infuriate in his vengeance, he lays his hand upon his innocent Son, and offers him up a living sacrifice for the purposes which reason abhors, and justice utterly disclaims. Under the modification, name, and character of the Holy Ghost, this being introduces himself to a woman, and violates those correct and delicate sentiments which ought to guide an intelligent being in cases of this kind. Under the name and character of Jesus Christ, he exhibits the most flagrant departures from the purity of moral sentiment and moral practice. In proof of this, the reader is referred to the 9th chapter of this work.

The sectarian divinity, which Christianity presents to us, is represented as a consuming fire, as a being possessing fiery indignation and an uncontrollable vengeance; as a being who disregards all just discrimination upon the subject of moral principle. He declares in some parts of the New Testament, that every thing shall be regulated by his arbitrary will without regard to the nature or character of the case. *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* (See Rom. chap. ix. &c.) Is it possible that even a Christian believer can suppose, for a single moment, that the principles of genuine morality can rest upon such an arbitrary basis? No; a divinity of immoral description is the bane of moral virtue. The purest theism is independent of morality, and morality is independent of that; much less then can the corrupt and vitiated conceptions of barbarous ages be produced in support of a principle which could not exist without the intellectual faculties of man, and which cannot be destroyed while these faculties exist. The principle and the practice of immortal virtue will long remain, after the plundering and bloody theology of Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet, has ceased to afflict the human race. The essential principles of morality are founded in the nature of man, they cannot be annihilated, they are as indestructible as human existence itself.

CHAPTER XX.

Universal Benevolence.

THE sentiment which includes the whole sensitive and intelligent world, within the sphere of its benignant operations, is justly denominated universal benevolence. Every organized being, whether of a high or low station in animal existence, is susceptible of pleasure and pain; they are all alternately affected by the wishes, the passions, and the conduct of each other, and this influence is extended much farther than at first view would strike the mind of the most correct and accurate observer. The universe is a vast assemblage of living creatures, whose relations are reciprocal and reciprocated under a thousand different forms, and supported by a thousand different ligaments of an imperceptible nature. The parts are interested in the whole, and the whole is interested in the preservation and diversified modification of the parts. Nothing is foreign or irrelative in the vast fabric to which we belong. Union is most intimate, and the intellectual destiny which awaits the human race will ultimately disclose the consoling secret, that man's highest happiness consists in perspicuously discovering his true connection with nature, and the eternal duration of this connection. The circumscribed condition of man's existence, his wants, his social duties,

his appetites, and his passions, constitute a considerable drawback upon the comprehensive conceptions, which he would otherwise have been capable of forming concerning his relationship with nature, and the ultimate destination to which the powers of nature have devoted the component and immortal parts of his existence. The intellectual properties of man are, however, capable of being expanded so far as to indulge an opinion subversive of those narrow views, which have excited sentiments of hostility between individuals and nations whose interests were the same, and whose duties ought to have been universally reciprocated.

It is, no doubt, extremely natural, and even absolutely necessary, that each individual should feel an anxiety extremely impulsive respecting the preservation of his own existence, and the means by which it is to be rendered tranquil and comfortable; but this sensation, the first which is experienced by a sensitive creature, does not preclude that expansion of mind which would benevolently extend the circle of man's moral affections and duties, and which also prepares for himself an additional portion of exalted enjoyment. Sensation alone, or in other words, mere animal existence, must be deprived in a high degree of the power and the pleasure reciprocating those sentiments of moral sympathy, to which intelligent man is indebted for his highest happiness. The gradual increase of the capacity of sensation constitutes a continual approach toward the possession of those properties on which the sublimity of thought depends, and by which human reason recognizes the benefit of benevolent reciprocation. It is, however, denied by some, that man possesses any other qualities than those which are merely selfish or individual; that his sensual impulses repel every sentiment of comprehensive kindness and affection; that in every respect he is a being of insulated nature and character, and that the powers and properties of his existence are necessarily in a high degree hostile to the interest and well-being of others.

Two points of prominent and conspicuous importance invite the activity of mind in the solution of the present difficulty. The one point is the physical relation of man to all existence: the other is his moral relation to his own species and to all other inferior animals. The component parts of which man is formed are all drawn from the great fountain of existence; they are essentially material in their nature, and destined to return to the source from which they sprang. Organized matter cannot lay claim to a pre-eminent essence; it is modification and refinement which produce visible exaltation, and not the native properties contained in the substance of which man is composed. The constant interchange of matter with matter, is a primary and immutable law of nature, and should teach man through the channel of observation the ultimate destiny that awaits him, it should teach him that the pain which he inflicts upon sensitive existence will return upon himself with interest, and will pave the way for eternizing a system of misery, fatal to the sensations of the whole animal world.

Humanity has lessons of a different kind, pregnant with salutary instructions, calculated to enforce conviction upon the intellectual powers of man. The spiritualization of human existence has made man a fool, it has taught him to spurn at matter, to condemn its power and ridicule its essence; whereas, on the contrary, sound philosophy, which unfolds the connection between man and nature, is calculated to produce in the mind sentiments of respect and tranquillity; respect for the aggregate of existence to which he belongs, and tranquillity at the idea of an eternal interest in this indestructible mass. The successive changes through which he is destined to pass, and the impossibility of relinquishing his connection with nature, should inspire him with feelings of universal sympathy, and with sentiments of universal benevolence. Human reason has an important duty to perform in the institutions which it establishes; for these institutions will effect in succession all the portions of matter destined to pass through an organized predicament.

It is, no doubt, difficult to convince the human understanding of this physical or universal connection, or to make man see his true interest in this respect. It is, nevertheless, a solemn and philosophic truth that our sensations are, at this moment, suffering under the cruel lash of ancient institutions; that the whole animal world are reciprocating with each other a system of extensive and perpetual wretchedness, resulting principally from that contempt which has been thrown upon the capacity of material substance, and our ignorance of an important and an indestructible connection with the great body of nature. If man had a comprehensive view of the successive changes of his existence, and a correct idea of the nature of sensation continually resulting

from the renovation of organic forms, sympathy or universal benevolence would become irresistibly impressive upon his moral powers, and form the basis of his subsequent conduct.

In the second place, man's moral relation to his own species, and to all other inferior animals, furnishes cogent evidence in favour of moral sympathy or universal benevolence. If the subject of man's physical connection presents us with some philosophical difficulties, the repeated and frequent necessity of performing his moral duties will furnish a mass of instruction adequate to every important decision. The single idea of establishing the doctrine of perpetual reprisals, ought to constitute an ample refutation of those selfish opinions which regard only the individual, to the exclusion of all the other members of society. It is the interest as well as the duty of every man to be just and benevolent; an opposite conduct would become the signal of universal discord, and the selfish principle, which at first had for its object the preservation of self, would become the procuring cause of self destruction.

The powers and the properties of human existence are of a similar nature, and require a correspondent method of treatment; beside, the intimate connection which subsists between us in this respect, our enjoyments and our capacity of enjoying, are augmented by every effort which the mind makes in a comprehensive system of philanthropy. The narrow prejudice which makes one man the enemy of another and one country the enemy of another, is not only disgraceful, but subversive of the best interests of human society. Political governments, and the prejudices which have been created and nurtured by these governments, have set individuals and nations in battle array against each other, without any good or substantial reason whatever. What is there in the nature of the case which should make a Frenchman and an Englishman hostile to each other? Are they not both men, possessed of similar faculties, equally indebted to nature for the resources of their felicity, and capable of being made happy or miserable by the operation of the same causes? Yes, and it is the iniquity of corrupt government which has perverted those sentiments of the human heart, by which one human being is bound to another in a general system of interest, sympathy, and universal benevolence.

This principle should also be extended to the whole animal world, so as to exclude acts of cruelty, and annihilate every species of injustice. The child that is permitted in early life to run a pin through a fly, is already half prepared to run a dagger through the heart of his fellow creature! It is the duty of parents and the business of instruction, to correct the ferocious errors of former ages, and inspire society with sentiments of sympathy and universal goodness. But to do this with effect, our political institutions must be changed, and placed upon the broad basis of universal liberty and universal justice. This would be a work of time, but it is as certain in the ultimate issue of things, as the progress of the earth around the sun, or the general revolution of the planetary system. The individual that withholds his intellectual contribution in this respect, is either grossly ignorant, or a wicked traitor in the great cause of human existence.

CHAPTER XXI.

Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet.

THE causes which have produced personal celebrity are numerous, and diversified by a thousand indescribable shades in their modes of operation. It also sometimes happens that the means of popular exaltation and perpetual fame have been either of a passive or uncontrollable nature. Such is the fact in the present case. Moses and Mahomet were active villains, whose characters cannot be examined without horror and detestation. They were both eminent murderers, and their debaucheries have been signalized by acts of barbarous brutality, of which the love-struck Solomon seems to be more destitute. The military ferocities and immoral decrees of these two *celestial* impostors, have placed upon their characters an indelible stain, which the pretended sanctity of the priesthood can never wipe away!

Believers in Christianity, in reading the history and conduct of Moses, ought to blush for his crimes, and spurn at his blasphemy in attributing these crimes to the God whom he pretended to adore. He issues orders for the indiscriminate massacre of men, women, and children, in a defenceless condition, making an exception only

of that part of the captives whose sexual predicament invited the passions of man to indulge in the gratification of criminal desires. (See Num. chap. xxxi. verse 18, &c.)

But this is only a single specimen of the murdering temper of this meek man of God! From the time that he murdered the Egyptian and hid him in the sand, till the moment in which he expired, and was buried without any man knowing where he was buried, he exhibited examples of legerdemain tricks, pretended familiarities with God, scenes of debauchery and malignant slaughter of the human race, which would disgrace the most cruel despot of ancient or modern times. For the truth of this remark an appeal is made to the historic details contained in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

To shew fully the immoral character of Moses, it would be necessary to quote almost every chapter in these *holy and inspired* books. Believers in revealed religion, who still believe that Moses was a pious and meek man, ought, once more, to pass in review the conduct and transactions which the Bible has attributed to him: especially those details which are contained in the books already mentioned. If there be any member of the Christian church who can believe that God and Moses ever united in the execution of those barbarous decrees and immoral sentiments stated in these books, he must be lost to all clear ideas of justice, and must have abandoned every principle of humanity by which the life of man is to be rendered comfortable and happy. The author of "The Age of Reason," has placed these enormities in a striking point of light, and, with his wonted acuteness of discernment, has presented, in the way of Bishop Watson, difficulties which no Christian bishop will be ever able to surmount. Murder and theft are crimes of so detestable a nature, and so destructive to the best interests of society, that they never can be sanctioned either by human or divine power. God and Moses, in these books, are said to have sanctioned both; it follows, therefore, that God and Moses are both bad characters, or else the books are not true. The latter, however, is the fact, and the character of the real God of Nature remains unimpeached.

The character of Mahomet is of a savage, military, and tyrannical cast; but he speaks in the name of heaven, and, like Moses, pretends, that his murders, cruelties, and assassinations have been sanctioned by the divinity which he adores. He frequently begins his chapters in the name of the most merciful God; but, in the course of the chapter, is sure to consign to damnation those who do not accede to the system of revelation which he has received from God. *The chosen people of the Most High*, under the Jewish dispensation, took the liberty of exercising a principle of indiscriminate extirpation toward all heathen nations; the Mahometans pursued a similar course in the destructive wars wherever they have been engaged, and to which they have been conducted by their fanatic leaders. The Christian world is not a whit behind either of these two grand divisions in the exercise of a censorious and military spirit. The crusades and the domestic quarrels of the Christian church will furnish an abundant verification of this remark.

The character of Jesus, considered in an individual and personal point of view, is of a less frightful and destructive nature. The first and the last of these three religious impostors were ferocious men. It was necessary, therefore, to present them conjointly, reserving the character and conduct of Jesus a matter of distinct inquiry. It will not be necessary, however, to say much upon this part of the subject; for while it is admitted that Jesus, in a public and national point of view, has produced less misery than either Moses or Mahomet, yet it is believed that the New Testament presents us with immoral deviations from principle in the personal conduct of him whom the Christian world has declared to be the only begotten son of God.

The followers of Jesus, however, have made up for his personal deficiency, and the Christian world has not been deficient in the number of fanatic phlebotomists disposed to destroy the moral and political plethora of the human race. Christians and Deists have sometimes coincided in their opinion that Jesus was a good character. This opinion, so far as it was acceded to by some of the first unbelievers, was either the result of ignorance, or an effect of fear. The Christian exalted this same Jesus into the character of a God, and, by their doctrine, made him equal to the Creator; such a circumstance struck terror into the human mind, and the idea of associating crimes with the divinity prevented independent inquiry.

The New Testament, so far as proof of this kind goes, furnishes us with facts and

circumstances which make strongly against the moral character of Jesus. Beside the general duplicity which characterizes his answers to the multitude, he is guilty also of sending his disciples secretly to take and carry away a colt which did not belong either to him or his disciples. The doing of such an act in modern times would be denominated theft, even by pious Christians themselves. He is guilty of sowing the seeds of domestic and national warfare, and declaring that no man could be his disciple without hating his father and his mother; and also that he came not to send peace but a sword. If any man at the present day were to enter society with actions and avowed intentions of this kind, he would be considered as an enemy to moral virtue, and deserving of that punishment which domestic justice and public tranquillity required. It is in vain to applaud the conduct and opinions of Jesus, when the same conduct and opinions applied to another being would be considered as criminal, and hostile to the best interests of human existence.

In the first edition of this work, and in the chapter concerning the immoralities of the scriptures, ideas and arguments were advanced that supersede the necessity of prosecuting farther the present subject. Moses, Mahomet, and Jesus, can lay as little claim to moral merit, or to the character of the benefactors of mankind, as any three men that ever lived upon the face of the earth. They were all of them impostors; two of them notorious murderers in practice, and the other a murderer in principle; and their existence united has, perhaps, cost the human race more blood, and produced more substantial misery, than all the other fanatics of the world.

CHAPTER XXII.

Prejudices.

THE discovery and the developement of truth, as it really exists in the system of nature, is of the highest importance to the true interests of mankind; but how to present this truth to the view of the mind in a manner calculated to attract its attention, is difficult to say; for although the uncorrupted faculties of man cannot be opposed to the attractive charms of truth, or the brilliant beauties of her native appearance, yet so numerous are the causes, and so powerful their operation which serve to mislead the mind and produce injurious impressions upon it, that perspicuity and regularity of thought are essentially deranged, and the clearness of scientific deductions are swallowed up in the gulf of error and deception. This process, prejudicial to our mental operations, commences in the early stages of our existence, and proceeds with a regularity of mischievous consequences, to the period when man assumes the dignity of intellectual independence; and fortunate indeed is that individual who arrives to this elevated predicament of mental existence. The energy of thought when applied to the discovery of truth, is naturally calculated to sweep away the rubbish of error, and cut up those deep-rooted prejudices which have so long retarded the useful improvement of our species. The grand object of philosophic philanthropists should be, to extend the sphere of mental energy, to enlarge the circle of its influence, and to oppose a persevering activity of mind to the fallen rancour of superstition, and the destroying fury of fanaticism. Religious enthusiasm, bigotry, and superstition, conjoined with the strong arm of political despotism, have rendered man in the past ages of the world the degraded instrument of their own pernicious and destructive purposes; it is here we must seek for the source of many human misfortunes, and the perpetuation of those prejudices by which the body and mind are both enslaved; it is true that the natural imbecility and imperfection of our faculties, and the extensive nature and variety of those moral and physical combinations, from which science is to be deduced, evince the strong probability that man may frequently be erroneous in the conclusions which he draws from certain premises, because the force of his faculties is not adequate to a full and complete investigation of the compounded and diversified relations of existence; but these natural obstacles to the clear deductions of science, are neither of a discouraging or an insurmountable nature.

The energy of the human mind is prodigious in the disclosure of natural principles, and its activity must be measured on a scale of endless progression. Nature is correct and righteous in all her operations; man is wrong only when he deviates from her laws. Our errors, our prejudices, and our vices, are so many instances of a departure from the beneficial laws of moral and physical existence, and our education is calcu-

lated to favour this unfortunate dereliction. The idle and foolish stories of nurses, and the still more ruinous tales and doctrines of priests, are calculated only to corrupt the heart, and bury the human mind in the gulf of the most destructive prejudices. How is it possible that man should have any clear conceptions of natural truth, when his understanding is constantly insulted with a thousand incongruous and non-existent relations, such as ghosts, witches, and devils, which perpetually disturb the imagination, and draw the rational faculties into the vortex of fancy and fanaticism? and this will ever be the case so long as superstition, or, which is the same thing, a religion claiming a supernatural birth, shall spread its bloody and baneful influence among intelligent beings. The faculties of man ought to be circumscribed only by that extensive circle which embraces the full extent of their native and accumulated activity. When religious prejudices are permitted to mingle their gloomy effects with the exalted conceptions of enlightened reason, the important cause of truth and the dearest interests of humanity become perceptibly retrograde, and darkness instead of light pervades the moral world. When Moses, by authority pretendedly divine, diffused light over the world previous to the creation of the sun, Superstition greedily swallowed the holy absurdity; but when Galileo asserted the sphericity of the earth, they cried heresy, and armed against science and philosophy, and yet the latter was an important truth in the system of nature; the former, a stupid blunder of ignorance and fanaticism. Such, O Superstition! are thy pious efforts to blind the human mind, the better to subjugate its powers, and rob man of the fruits of his industry.

There is no system either of education, politics, or religion, which ought to be excepted from the severest scrutiny of the human mind, or the closest examination which the human faculties can bestow upon it; yet habit and custom of long duration have so strongly attached man to his errors, that he reluctantly relinquishes those tenets which serve only to disturb his peace, and destroy his happiness; while the privileged impostors of the world, or those who feast upon the continuation of error and prejudice, unite their strongest exertions to persuade man that his most important interests in time and eternity depend upon the preservation of ancient and unnatural establishments; which, in fact, are as destructive to human felicity, as they are derogatory to the divine purity of supreme intelligence. The influence of authority, the fear of incurring clerical displeasure, and the dread of eternal torments, have partially annihilated the energy of intellectual powers, and taught man tremblingly to submit to the grossest imposition.

If the disclosure of my thoughts and reflections resulting from a constant habit of contemplating Nature in her diversified relations and real modes of existence, can throw a single ray of light into the darkened intellect of man, it will increase my hopes of future progression, and essentially tranquillize the sensations of my heart. It ought to be perceived by every enlightened mind, that long-established prejudices are not to be suddenly eradicated; but by protruding the activity of intellect into the field of actual existence, some diminution of human misery may be reasonably expected. Man sees not with clearness, that his sufferings are frequently the consequence of his blind attachment to error and superstition; he seeks for their origin in the distant heavens, or the anger or resentment of supposed supernatural agents, while the truth often is, that his own prepossessions are the causes of his calamity.

Nothing is more difficult, while the mind is under the influence of prejudice, than to persuade it of the necessity of removing or destroying that prejudice; prejudice destroys the discerning power of the understanding, and conviction becomes impossible while the force of evidence necessary to produce it is not discovered. The same ideas of right, the same ideas of truth, associate themselves with a prejudiced mind, as are to be found in the clearest operation of the most enlightened; and the fool is as confident in error, as the wise man standing on the broad basis of moral and natural truth. No hopes of reform can be entertained relative to such obstinate minds, until you can render them susceptible of the impressions of doubt or uncertainty; the man who never doubts, or calls in question the truth of any deduction which he has made, is but badly calculated for the developement of real principle; there is no extension or perfection of mind which excludes the possibility of error, and it is only by repeated examination of our own opinions, that we can arrive through the process of investigation to that elevated situation which unfolds the sublime truths contained in the system of nature.

If it were possible to conceive of a mind whose strength and energy had elevated it above all the impressions of associated life, and the deductions drawn from early combinations and the primary influence of scientific pursuits, we should then behold the intellect of man exhibited in that point of view, which would promise a fair discussion of all the diversified relations of existence, by which we are enabled to deduce all those fundamental laws contained in the physical, mental, and moral world. But in those cases where the human mind attempts the discussion of any philosophic subject, under the impression of a previous bias, every part and view of the subject is subjected to the influence of associated habits, and the unreasonable attachment of an unrestrained imagination, or a cruel and atrocious fanaticism. This is remarkably verified by the conduct of every religious sectary in the world, whose opinions, however variant from the standard of truth, are ever considered by the individual advocate as the only true means of obtaining the divine favour. The Jew, the Christian, the Mahometan, are all equally tenacious of those doctrines and opinions in which they have been educated; they contend with equal tenacity for the supposed truth of their respective tenets, and the liberal bestowment of the most virulent anathemas constitutes a prominent characteristic of each religion.

The tenacity of prejudice and irritability of temper, are not difficult to be accounted for. Every fanatic sect of religion speaks in the name of heaven. It has enlisted Jehovah on its side, it keeps up a familiar intercourse with celestial powers, and discerns, in all the operations of those powers, the most decided partiality in favour of the particular doctrines which its members have embraced. With weak and fanatic minds, the confidence is prodigious which results from a supposed alliance with heaven. A being armed in the name of a ferocious God, slaughters with relentless cruelty every other being who does not pay homage to the barbarous divinity, which his own heated imagination has depicted. No prejudices are so deep rooted, none so violent, as those of a religious nature, and their pernicious effects are generally in proportion to the ignorance of the human mind, and the barbarous condition of society. It is the light of science alone that can destroy such causes of human wretchedness; science opposes its own strength to the injurious effects of error and prejudice, and in proportion as the former shall increase, the latter will decrease; so that the hopes of the human race rest upon the diffusion of knowledge, and the general cultivation of science. Ignorance is a soil in which the rankest prejudices appear the most flourishing, and promise the greatest portion of misery to mankind. It is ignorance and interest united, which preserve the prejudices in favour of those systems of religion so injurious to the operation of intellectual power, and so destructive to the general felicity of man.

It is to be remarked, that the prejudices existing between different nations or individuals, are frequently destroyed by an extension of acquaintance, and the farther knowledge of those facts, from which righteous conclusions can be drawn; the same may be said in regard to systems, subjects, or principles. A partial or imperfect view leads to wrong attachments or erroneous deductions; while a comprehensive examination may teach the mind to suspend, alter, or rectify, its final determinations. The different religious sectaries all reject each other's doctrines, and too frequently hate and detest each other on account of difference in opinions; while the scientific mind, rising above early prejudices, perceives the errors of all parties, and pities the ignorance, which binds man to such stupid and senseless doctrines. But it is more lamentable, that such ignorance and error of mind should be found united with the grossest perversion of moral principle; a difference of opinion is followed by a most rancorous spirit of malevolence, and the exercise of the most glaring and destructive vices. It is to be presumed, however, that there is in nature a substantial foundation for moral principle; that the source of this principle is to be sought for in the organic construction of human existence; that doubts or differences upon this subject will be, in a high degree, removed, when stript of theological delusion, and that the human mind is capable of being inspired with a moral confidence, which will seldom be shaken by the current of events, or the difficulty of new cases.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Moral Principle.

IN the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians, in all ancient and theological compositions, the idea of correct and moral principle had been so frequently abandoned, and so grossly violated, that the energy of thought, for many ages, was inadequate to an upright and full investigation of the nature of human actions. The subject is, no doubt, connected with considerable difficulties; but these difficulties have been essentially augmented by the rubbish with which superstition has covered the moral character of man. The proofs of any inquiry, which relate to moral principle, adhere so closely to the realities of physical and intellectual existence, that the errors of an upright and intelligent mind can never assume a frightful and destructive character. They will be continually modified, and undergo frequent corrections by the new information of which the mind is continually susceptible.

Moral science cannot, perhaps, be reduced to absolute certitude, or become susceptible of absolute perfection; it is in its nature progressive, and the infinite diversity of sensations, which constitute the essential basis of all our intellectual combinations and deductions, will furnish, at least, a suspicion, that the decisions of the mind upon this subject ought frequently to be re-examined and subjected to a new and more accurate scrutiny. All the theological systems that ever have been written, have never thrown a particle of light upon this most interesting inquiry; they have established precepts, some few of which are good, and others extremely immoral; but no analysis of the physical or moral powers of man has ever been exhibited; no development of the principle of causation, or the nature of those effects, which have essentially resulted from the constitution of animal or intellectual existence. In all these cases, supernatural theology has prudently observed an absolute silence, probably from a consciousness of the most profound ignorance. This single truth, of itself, evinces the moral deficiency of supernatural religion, and the necessity of returning to the basis of nature for a correct development of principle. Every thing that is discordant to this has been established by the force of authority, and the reasonableness of such establishment has never been a ground of serious inquiry.

If it should be objected, that it is impossible, even upon the basis of nature, to find an universal standard of morality, it will nevertheless appear, that a continual approach toward such a standard must be far preferable to those arbitrary decisions which theology has made upon this subject. There can be no internal force or excellence connected with a system established solely by external power, without reference to the essence or character of the principles which constitute the body of such a system. The internal excellence of the principle itself, together with capacity of mental discernment, is essential to the ultimate benefit which may be expected from the natural operation of legal codes. But there is no better method of rendering a principle intelligible than by showing that it is consistent with nature, that it has resulted from her laws, that it is useful in its effect, that it is capable of being reduced to practice; in a word, that it is suited to the powers, condition, and character of the human species.

There is another previous consideration also, which ought to be taken into the account before we shall be able to comprehend the essence of moral principle, or to understand the nature of those duties which result from our original constitutions. That intellectual part of man, which supernatural theology has denominated a soul, has been viewed separate and distinct from the body, as a kind of spiritual and celestial inhabitant of a mean and material tenement; that their union would be of short duration, and that their final destination was extremely different. This led to reasonings and conjectures that were erroneous; for as the corporeal sensations were entirely excluded from a participation in the cause, by which moral influence was produced, an accurate knowledge of the sources of action was necessarily excluded, and spiritual mystery was substituted for philosophic demonstration.

The human mind is incapable of forming any conception of that which is not material; man is a being whose composition is purely physical, and moral properties or intellect are the necessary results of organic construction. To ascertain, therefore, the foundation of moral principle, it is necessary to revert to the physical constitution of



human nature, it is necessary to go to the source of sensation, to the cause of impressions, and the diversity of these impressions; to the universality of the fact, that all human nature possesses the same or similar sensations, together with all the other additional circumstances resulting from the subsequent intellectual combinations of our existence. All human beings are susceptible of pain, they are also all susceptible of pleasure; they are all possessed of the same senses, subjected to the same wants, exhibit the same desires, and are satisfied with the same enjoyments. These positions cannot be controverted, they are true in the general features of their character, and the inconsiderable deviations resulting from the variations of animal structure, cannot, in any eminent degree, shake the rectitude or universality of these positions. The modification of the principle of animal structure in intelligent existence, is, no doubt, diversified by a nice and inscrutable gradation, but the aggregate amount of organic result must be nearly the same, and though the animal sensation were to vary in a still higher degree, yet it would, nevertheless, be substantially true, that certain comprehensive axioms might be laid down, which would necessarily include within the sphere of their imperious effect, every possible diversification of the sensitive faculties of human nature.

That happiness is to be preferred to misery, pleasure to pain, virtue to vice, truth to falsehood, science to ignorance, order to confusion, universal good to universal evil, are positions which no rational being can possibly controvert. They are positions to which mankind, in all ages and countries, must yield assent. They are positions, the truth of which is never denied, the essence of which is never controverted; it is the form and application only which has been the cause of social contention, and not the reality or excellence of the axioms themselves.

The universality of the principle of sensation generates universal capacity of enjoying pleasure and suffering pain; this circumstance modifies the character of human actions, and renders it necessary that every man should regard every other man with an eye of strict justice, with a tender and delicate sensibility, with a constant reference to the preservation of his feelings, and the extension of his happiness; in a word, that the exercise of eternal justice should be constantly reciprocated by all the individuals of the same species. If I assume to myself the pretended right of injuring the sensations, the moral sentiments, or general happiness of my neighbour, he has, undoubtedly, an equal right to commit the same violence upon me; this would go to the destruction of all right, to the total subversion of all justice; it would reduce society instantly to a state of warfare, and introduce the reign of terror and of misery.

It is a contradiction in terms, to assert that any man has a right to do wrong; the exercise of such a pretended right is the absolute destruction of all right, and the first human being who commits violence, has already prepared for himself a hell of retaliation, the justice of which his own mind can never deny. It is, therefore, inconsistent with truth to say, that there is no such thing as a general standard of moral principle; this standard has a real existence in the construction of our nature; it is ascertained and regulated by the rule of reciprocal justice. It is absolute in the most important duties of human life; but in other cases of less weight and magnitude, it is discovered by the calculations of judgment, by the process of the understanding, and will sometimes vibrate between the impressions of sense and the subtle combinations which constitute an ultimate moral decision.

If it be objected upon the suggestion of this idea, that the system of natural morality is less perfect than that which has been revealed, the true answer is, that revealed morality, in the most intelligible cases, is incorrect and absurd; and in the more refined cases of difficulty, a total ignorance is manifested; so that it is evident, upon the very face of the record, that the subject of moral principle, in its subtle discriminations, was never examined or understood by theological writers. The boasted maxim of the Christian religion, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," is incorrect in point of phraseology, and in point of principle does not exceed any of the moral writers of antiquity, who lived many hundred years before Jesus Christ. If this scriptural declaration means to establish the doctrine of reciprocal justice, it is incontrovertibly right; but the idea of placing the essence of virtue in the *wishes* of the human heart, is not very correct. It is very possible that one human being may desire another to do unto him many things which ought not to be done, and which are in their own nature improper, or immoral. To say, therefore, that our desires should constitute the

basis of moral decision, is a declaration not consistent with truth, and which in many cases, would subvert the very essence of moral principle.

There is a fitness or suitableness in the thing itself, united with the consideration of the good or bad effect that would be produced, which ought to become the ground of uniform and universal judgement in the human mind. My neighbour may wish me to do unto him an act of serious and substantial injury, which being performed, ought to be returned to me in manner and form exactly the same; and thus, by an adherence to this maxim, as it is now stated, a double injury would be produced, and the foundation of virtue be shaken to the centre. But waving any criticism of this kind, and giving to this scripture declaration the full extent of what is contended for, it is nevertheless, no more than a plain maxim of justice, which had been known and practised, in a greater or less degree, at all times and in all countries. All the local and unjust institutions of mankind in former ages have not destroyed the essential relation which man bears to man, nor have they been able wholly to efface a knowledge of those duties which result from these relations, and from the powers and principles of human existence.

The more the subject of moral principle is examined, the more it will appear that there are certain general features in it which the experience of man has partially recognized, and being fully developed and reduced to practice, would constitute a solid foundation for human felicity. The approach to such a standard of perfection will be gradual and slow, but it must, nevertheless, from the very nature of man, be constant and certain. "The following," says Volney, "is conceived to be the primordial basis and physical origin of all justice and right; whatever be the active power, the moving cause that directs the universe, this power having given to all men the same organs, the same sensations, and the same wants, has thereby declared, that it has also given them the same rights to the use of its benefits, and that in the order of nature all men are equal. Secondly, inasmuch as this power has given to every man the ability of preserving and maintaining his own existence, it clearly follows, that all men are constituted independent of each other, that they are created free, that no man can be subject, and no man sovereign, but that all men are the unlimited proprietors of their own persons. Equality, therefore, and liberty, are two essential attributes of man, two laws of the Divinity, not less essential and immutable than the physical properties of inanimate nature. Again, from the principle that every man is the unlimited master of his own person, it follows that one inseparable condition in every contract and engagement is the free and voluntary consent of all the persons therein bound; further, because every individual is equal to every other individual, it follows that the balance of receipts and payments in political society ought to be rigorously in equilibrium with each other; so that from the idea of equality, immediately flows that other idea, equity and justice."

Again the same author observes, that "there existed in the order of the universe, and the physical constitution of man eternal and immutable laws, which waited only his observance to render him happy. O men of different climes! look to the heavens that give you light, to the earth that nourishes you; since they present to you all the same gifts; since the power that directs their motion has bestowed on you the same life, the same organs, the same wants, has it not also given you the same right to the use of its benefits? Has it not hereby declared you to be all equal and free? What mortal then shall dare refuse to his fellow creature that which is granted him by Nature? O nations let us banish all tyranny and discord! Let us form one society, one vast family; and since mankind are all constituted alike, let there henceforth exist but one law, that of nature; one code, that of reason; one throne, that of justice; one altar, that of union."

The foregoing impressive sentiments of this celebrated writer disclose with clearness to the view of the human mind, the nature of moral principle and the foundation of all right and all virtue. It is the reciprocation of sensation, the mutuality of condition, of powers and wants, that constitute the immortal basis of justice, and lead to the establishment of rules, whose operation must ever be in strict coincidence with the happiness of the human species. The exceptions to those fundamental principles are so few, and so unimportant, as to form no strong objection against the general assertion, that there exist in the constitution of human nature those essential properties which confer upon man the character of moral agent. To controvert, therefore, the

existence of these moral principles, or the idea of a general standard in the morality of human actions is to fly in the face of all experience, to oppose the universal consciousness of the human understanding, and deny the most conspicuous facts connected with the life of man.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Matter and Power ; Origin of Motion ; Liberty and Necessity.

THE universe is composed of an infinite mass of matter;* or at least, to the human mind, it is infinite, because to this mass no assignable boundary can be affixed. Space is unlimited or infinite, and in this vast expanse, innumerable bodies of matter, of different magnitudes, are continually performing variegated revolutions. Upon these bodies or higher spheres of existence, other small bodies are discovered, of specific modification and powers, essentially connected in their natures with the larger orbs to which they respectively belong. In all these bodies, great and small, motion is an essential and inherent property. The inactivity of matter is a doctrine contradicted by the evidence of our senses, and the clear deductions of a sound philosophy. It is impossible to conceive of matter without power, or of power without matter; they are essentially connected; their existence is interwoven, and cannot be separated

* The New York Reviewers, in the review which they took of the first edition of this work, after quoting a number of detached sentences from this chapter, make the following observations: "Those who have read the most celebrated atheistical writers, will see that Mr. Palmer is as determined an Atheist as any of them." It is presumed that these learned Reviewers mean to take the Bible and Testament descriptions of God as the standard of Theism. Let us then examine the case upon this ground, and we shall soon discover what it is to be an Atheist in the estimation of the New York Reviewers. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," (see Exodus, chap. xxxiii. 11.) "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." (See Exodus, chap. xxxiii. 23.) From these passages it appears, that God is represented in the form and shape of a man, and that such were the ideas of the inspired and chosen people of God concerning the Creator. But there is another passage in the New Testament, which places this matter in a still stronger light. In Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of Jesus Christ, he says that he was the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person. Now both believers and infidels agree, that Jesus was in the shape and form of a man; and as he was like God, of course God must be like him; therefore, the Christian God is like a man, perhaps like one of the New York Reviewers. Now the fair deduction from all this is, that whosoever doth not believe that God is like a New York Reviewer, is a most profane and abominable Atheist. What a sublime and majestic spectacle of Theism do these *learned* men present to the human mind! In another place they charge the author of this work with *affectation, inordinate vanity, and the want of comprehensive views*. How wonderfully comprehensive must be the views of those who can place the material universe upon the shoulders of a God, resembling in his existence a New York Reviewer. Such *literary* heroes ought triumphantly to exclaim, that they have excelled in brilliancy of conception, and in comprehensive views, the story of the Indian, which places the earth upon a turtle's back, and then declares the turtle stands upon nothing! Permit us miserable Atheists to bow with great humility, before such *splendid* talents, and such *comprehensive views*. Go on, gentlemen Reviewers, and console yourselves in the preservation of that Trinitarian or Polytheistical scheme of religion to which you are so much attached; but remember, the moment will arrive in the succession of future ages, when those very mental *energies* of the intelligent world, which you sneer at so much, will sweep away the whole bundle of theological nonsense, leaving only the mighty power by which the universe is sustained; and of the shape or form of this power, the New York Reviewers have as little idea as *the Author of the Principles of Nature*, or any of the profane and abominable Atheists, whom the advocates of Christianity long ago sent down to the dismal abodes of the damned, to dwell for ever in hell fire.

even in thought. The ancient doctrine of matter and motion, so long exploded, and so much calumniated by theological priests, will probably, at some future day, be considered as bearing a very strong relation to a pure and incorruptible philosophy. Supernatural religion has blinded the human understanding, and prevented upon this subject every clear and correct conception.

A belief in spirits had nearly, at one time, overturned the empire of real existence; the power and excellence of matter were exploded to make room for a world of fictions; of phantoms and things that had in nature no positive, no real, or substantial being. Filled with this idea, the dreams of theology were substituted for philosophic truth, and fanaticism usurped the dominion of reason. Philosophers joined in the race of spiritual or material glory, and the united effects of their different opinions constituted the annihilation of nature. The spiritualists contended against matter, and the materialists against spirits; thus sweeping away, by their opposite systems, every species of existence. Matter, and its diversified modes of operations, are the only things of which human intelligence can take cognizance. It is this vast body which demands our most serious investigation; it is this in which we are interested, and with which we are most closely connected. Much has been said concerning dead or inactive matter; much concerning its *vis inertia*; but an appeal may be safely made to the phenomena of the physical world for a complete refutation of this opinion. Every fact that strikes our eyes, or presents itself to the contemplation of the understanding; every movement in nature furnishes an argument against a doctrine so unphilosophic and erroneous. Every thing that we behold; all the elements are in continual flux; agitation or motion is an universal and eternal law of nature. The earth, the ocean, and the atmosphere, are constantly in a high degree of action; the evidence of these facts are presented to every living creature. The raging element of fire is never wholly at rest; it is always powerfully or more silently operating in every part of the world. If these ideas are controverted, let man inquire into their truth by an immediate recourse to the energetic movements of physical existence. In regard to fluids, this opinion, perhaps, will not be controverted; but it will be asked, whether it be equally true in regard to solids? To this, the answer is unequivocally in the affirmative; at least so far as it relates to the question, motion or not motion, action or not action. Beside the general revolutionary motion which the earth has round the sun, the parts of its solid materials are constantly combining and dissolving, as may be proved by the smallest recurrence to the organic structure of vegetable and animal life, and the property of disorganization essential to each specific mode of existence. It will, however, be contended, that if this be true in regard to organic matter, or to vegetable and animal existence, it will not hold equally in regard to other portions of the material world. There is, undoubtedly, a difference in the activity of matter, or in the degrees of motion, of which the several parts are capable; but there is no such thing as absolute incapacity of motion; no such thing as absolute and entire rest. For the truth of this, an appeal is made to the power, pressure, and dissolving operation of the most inert and stupid portions of material substance. An appeal is made also to the activity of the most stupid parts of matter, in the composition of vegetable productions. What regular industry do the solids and fluids exhibit in the formation of a common vegetable? The march of each particle to its destined post is with firm and philosophic step; with constancy and physical zeal. There is no such thing as dead matter; all is alive, all is active and energetic. The rays of the sun fructify the earth, and these are considered among the portions of dead matter. These rays, however, are so active, as to travel 95,000,000 of miles in the space of seven minutes and a half; a celerity of motion which substantiates, beyond all contradiction, their essential power and activity. Every fact, in the physical world, forces conviction in the human mind, and proves the energetic nature of the material system. An investigation of the properties of matter, a full development of its modes of operation, would lead to the most salutary consequences, by instructing man in regard to his true predicament in nature, and reconciling him to his fate. To corroborate the ideas which have already been suggested upon this subject, the following strong and philosophic reflections are taken from an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, *An Essay on Matter*. "All matter is possessed of life, spirit, action, or motion. What is called inanimate matter, owes its motion or life no more to the elements, than what is acknowledged to be animate. This elementary influence pre-

supposes the animation of bodies ; for as these cannot move without that influence, so neither can that influence where there is no life. To say that the elements alone give motion, is to say that the elements give life, which is denying an universal agent, or making him appear to act more by intermediate agents than philosophy will allow. No one, I presume, will doubt the independent motion of matter in that form which we name animal, at least, that it is as independent as man ; we allow animals to be a composition of matter without soul, yet we allow them to be possessed of the principle of motion. It is from this motion solely that we allow them to be possessed of life ; for there is nothing beside that can or does influence the mind to make it assent to this truth, that animals have life ; and it is from the different combinations of motion and matter that we form our ideas of the different kinds of animals. It is then from motion, and nothing else, that we judge of, and allow matter of a particular kind of composition to be possessed of the living principle ; the same evidence must have the same weight in every other kind of composition. Wherever motion is discoverable in matter, be the form of it what it may, we must acknowledge it to entertain the living principle ; but it may be said, that though motion be an evidence of life in matter of certain forms, and where the motion is of certain kinds, yet motion of every kind will not prove the existence of life in matter of every form. This absurdity of supposing a *caput mortuum*, must appear to every one who considers the connection and dependence which exists in all bodies upon each other, the motion which this connection supposes, and life which motion evidences. There is a perpetual exchange of matter with matter of every form. The animal creation, for instance, is constantly exchanging parts with the earth and its atmosphere. If the matter composing animals be animate, and that of the earth inanimate, how can these be united ? This would be to suppose that two opposites could exist in one body, whereas it is the nature of opposites to recede from each other, and nothing can be greater opposites than life and death. The independent motion of matter in that form called vegetable, can be as little doubted as in animals. Storms, earthquakes, fires, floods, do not cause vegetation any more than they do generation in animals. The natural or preternatural motion of bodies, no more contributes to the motion of matter in vegetables, than in animals ; they, like us, receive only the natural and gentle influence of the elements, and thereby mark a link in that chain which connects all matter, and which is the harmony of creation. We shall be more particular in speaking of motion in vegetables, when we come to treat of the nicer operation of matter in that action which we call thinking. We come now to speak of the motion of matter in those forms where it is less observable upon a superficial view of things ; but where, upon a nearer view, it is not less evident than in either of the other forms mentioned.

“Whoever doubts the motion of matter in the form of a stone, let him take the trouble to look upon the first rock in his way, and he will see its surface mouldering. Whatever decays, must be replenished ; for matter cannot waste. Stones, then, give to, and receive matter from other bodies. Circulation is a very perfect motion. Will any one assert, that the motion of giving and receiving of its substance, does not exist in the stone, with only that assistance, which, in common with us and animals, it receives from the elements ? The motion of matter in the various forms of minerals is more observable, as it is more lively. There is a constant fluctuation of matter in all mineral bodies. When miners open a mine, and do not find the ore they are in pursuit of, in the quantity which they expected, they say the mine is not ripe, and close it up again, that the metal may have time to grow. If matter have not the vital principle, then have I the power of creating. The bulk of my form is increased by the matter which in the action of eating, inspiration, and absorption, I add to myself. If this matter have not the principle of life, how can I make it partake of me, and thereby partake of life ? Can I unite dead and living things, or can they be united in me ? Chemists tell us that the union of bodies depends upon the affinity, *i. e.* the likeness which matter in one form has to matter in another form, and tell us no further. We have before mentioned the different kinds of union produced by affinity, the perfect and imperfect ; but what gives the quality of union, and preserves the existence of the compound ? It is the living principle in one body, inclining it to associate with the living principle in another body. Without this living principle, that inclination which supposes motion could not exist.”

The above observations exhibit, with philosophic clearness, the nature and property

of matter. It is by a constant recurrence to the operations of the material world, that man will be able to discover those solemn and important truths on which his happiness is founded. Our bodies are composed of the elements, compounded and organized by the skill and energy of nature; from this organization, certain consequences necessarily result; composition, decomposition, and recomposition, are established in the order, and supported by the laws of physical existence. The materials which are employed in any specific composition possess inherent and indestructible qualities, but the result may be augmented and power increased by organic construction. Thus, for instance, matter in its most simple form, may, perhaps, be destitute of intelligence; but when combined and modified in the form of a man, intellect is a uniform consequence. It is impossible to say, how far the properties or qualities of matter may extend in a simple and uncompounded state. It is impossible from the want of communication, to affirm, or deny with absolute certitude, relative to the internal essence of the particles of material existence. There must be in the essence of matter a capacity, when combined in certain forms, to produce specific results. The principle of life must be essentially inherent in the whole system and every particle thereof; but to attribute to each particle a specific kind of life analogous to that which is discovered in large compositions of matter, cannot, perhaps, be warranted by the knowledge or experience of nature. In all the specific modifications of life, disorganization, or death, is a universal law; but the universality of this law among specific combinations upon the earth, cannot, perhaps, be extended to the earth itself. The analogy is broken, when we go from individuals or particulars to generals or universals. But more of this hereafter.

It is by the laws of motion that combinations are formed, it is by the same laws they are dissolved. Motion is an essential property of universal existence. The following paragraph upon this subject, is taken from the System of Nature, a powerful work, translated from the French of the celebrated and philosophic Mirabaud.

"Every thing in the universe is in motion; the essence of nature is to act, and if we consider attentively its parts, we shall see that there is not a particle that enjoys absolute repose. Those which appear to us to be deprived of motion, are, in fact, only in relative or apparent rest; they experience such an imperceptible motion, and so little marked, that we cannot perceive the changes they undergo. All that appears to us to be at rest, does not remain, however, one instant in the same state. All beings are continually breeding, increasing, decreasing, or dispersing, with more or less dullness or rapidity. The insect called *Ephemeron* is produced and perishes the same day; of consequence, it very rapidly experiences the considerable changes of its being. The combinations formed by the most solid bodies, and which appear to enjoy the most perfect repose, are decomposed, are dissolved in the course of time. The hardest stones are by degrees destroyed by the contact of air. A mass of iron, which time has gnawed into rust, must have been in motion from the moment of its formation in the bowels of the earth, until the instant that we see it in this state of dissolution." Mirabaud's System of Nature, Vol. I. page 42.

A philosophic investigation into the laws of nature, would probably furnish a pretty clear solution of all the phenomena of the intellectual world. A certain portion of matter organized upon a certain specific plan, produces, in the animal we denominate man, all the energetic and astonishing effects of mind.

A question has been stated among speculative metaphysicians, whether it be not probable that the earth and all the higher spheres of existence in the planetary world, are possessed of strong intellectual powers? Indeed, this conjecture has been carried so far as to combine the whole of material existence, and attribute to it all the properties, qualities, and powers of intelligent life. Nature is considered as possessing a central power, a brain, or cogitative faculty, whose operations on a higher scale are supposed to be analogous to the brain or thinking faculty of man. And this, perhaps, would be the most philosophic method by which to arrive at the idea of supreme intelligence, or the governing power of the universe. But whether the planets in their individual capacity be considered as intellectual beings, or whether nature in its aggregate combination be thus considered, are questions of speculation, concerning which, perhaps the human mind will never receive any adequate or satisfactory information. Man, however, should not fear to extend his contemplation to the whole

of nature, and, if possible, subject the whole to the powerful examination of his intellectual energies.

From the ideas that have been disclosed in this chapter, it will be easy to perceive, that if the inquiry were now made, *where is the origin of motion?* the philosophic answer would be, that it is in matter itself, co-essential and co-eternal with it, and cannot be separated from any part thereof, not even in thought.

A further question, in some measure connected with the present subject, is that which relates to the principle of action in the mind of man, or the opinions relative to Liberty and Necessity. Moralists and metaphysicians have for a long time been in a state of altercation on this subject, nor is the point of discussion between them yet completely settled. Perhaps the preceding reflections may furnish us with some information and aid in the solution of a problem so difficult. The principle of motion and action must exist essentially somewhere; if this principle be in matter itself, or in a foreign agent whose existence is presumed to be wholly extraneous from the body of nature, the same consequence will, however, necessarily follow. Man is an organized being, possessing powers of motion and action; if the motion of which man is susceptible be the result of the essential nature of matter in specific organic construction, the motion in this being must be as independent, absolute, and self-existent, as in the body or any part of nature; that is, it must belong to the thing itself, co-essential with its being, and acting by the internal force of the principle itself. If the principle of motion be sought for in any intellectual agent foreign to the body of nature, it must be independent and absolute there; it must be self-existent, and as man must have proceeded from one or the other of these two sources, he must be like the source itself from which he emanated, and possess, in a partial degree at least, that independence of power and action, which are so justly to be attributed to these two great sources of all existence. To suppose an infinite series in the principle of causation, exhibits nothing more than a feeble effort of the mind, to get clear of a metaphysical difficulty. The last point that is discovered, includes in it an equal necessity of discovering another point, on which the last may depend for its existence. The links in this chain would become innumerable, its length infinite, and, after all, the difficulty remain as great as ever.

This doctrine, concerning the origin of motion, and of giving a solution to the subject by means of an infinite series in the principle of causation, can never satisfy the mind that is seriously in quest of a first point, or essential spring of every action; in short, it is nothing better than the story of the Indian, who placed the earth upon a turtle's back, and afterwards declared that the turtle stood upon nothing. The fact is, man is independent in his mind; it is the essence of his nature to act, and he feels, or ought to feel, that he is not the slave of any of the phantoms of superstition, or the fine spun reasonings of metaphysical philosophers.

In a moral point of view, the doctrine of necessity is still more objectionable, and goes to the destruction of all human merit, and with it the dignity of the human character. If man be a moral slave, his actions in relation to himself are neither good nor bad; he is impelled by an irresistible necessity, and can no more in justice be punished for his conduct, than a cannon ball, which is propelled forward by the explosion of gunpowder, can be punished for taking off a man's leg. The one upon the doctrine of necessity is as much a moral agent as the other, and punishment, in both cases, equally absurd. It is essential to the dignity of man that he be free and independent, both morally and politically. Political slavery is not more derogatory to the human character, and human energy, than moral slavery. They both sink and brutalize mankind; they both have a tendency to diminish his efforts, and destroy his active zeal in the cause of virtue. It is essential to the true and elevated character of an intellectual agent, that he realize the strength of his powers; *that he be confident in his energies*; that he hold in suitable contempt every species of moral and political despotism. This sentiment will raise him from a degraded condition, and form him into the stature of a perfect man in the glorious system of nature.

CHAPTER XXV.

Commencement of the Nineteenth Century ; Christianity ; Deism ; Reason ; Science ; Virtue ; Happiness.

THE nineteenth century opens to the human race with prospects of a most extraordinary and astonishing nature. It is impossible, at this moment, for the human mind to contemplate the past, and anticipate the future, without yielding to the mingled emotions of regret and joy ; without perceiving itself to be alternately agitated with sentiments of misery and happiness. The commencement of a new century necessarily revives the idea of a recursive view of those great events which have had the most powerful influence, and produced the most important changes in the condition of human society. The history of mankind has, in general, consisted either of uninteresting details, or a frightful picture of universal carnage and military ferocity. During the last century, however, something more valuable and important has been combined with a mass of historic matter, and amidst the unjust and destructive wars which the poison of monarchy is still generating in the very bosom of the community, there is to be seen a splendid display of those philosophic principles which sustained the universe, and direct the operations of the physical world ; of those moral axioms which are essentially interwoven with intelligent life, and by which it is rendered susceptible of universal amelioration ; of those political laws whose essence is at war with tyranny, and whose final effects will shake to the centre the thrones of the earth.

It has been during the last century that these things have been accomplished ; the force of intellectual powers has been applied to the developement of principle, and the combination of human labours already constitutes a colossus, against which the storms of unequal and aristocratic governments may dash in vain. The art of printing is so universally known, or rather the knowledge of it is diffused in so many countries, that it will henceforth be impossible to destroy it. The present moment exhibits the most astonishing effects of this powerful invention in the hands of nations, by that universal diffusion of principle and collision of thought, which are the most substantial guarantee of the future scientific progress of the human race. An effectual stand has been made, and resuscitated nations at this moment bid defiance to the double despotism of church and state.

The nineteenth century opens with lessons awfully impressive upon kings and tyrants ; with lessons, the truth of which has already penetrated into the sacred recesses of ecclesiastical wickedness and spiritual domination in high places. America, France, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, Germany, and England, are in a high state of intellectual fermentation ; if the government in some of these countries acts in opposition to the spirit of improvement, this circumstance will constitute only a partial drawback on the rapidity of the progress ; the general agitation is national, the power of thought has become vastly impulsive in all these countries. The printing-press is operating, and if it be in some measure restrained, it will, nevertheless, gradually undermine, and eventually subvert the thrones of civil despots, and teach the hierarchy of every country, that the time is fast approaching in which, if they pretend to speak in the name of Heaven, they must exhibit unequivocal proofs of their celestial authority ; it is this pretended intercourse with Heaven that has subverted every thing rational upon earth. Upon this subject, and in describing the fatal effects of fanaticism, the following passage from an original and eccentric writer ought to be quoted. The passage exhibits in strong colours the indiscriminate folly and mad enthusiasm of which ignorant and uneducated man is susceptible.

“ It has been the constant practice for moral doctors or teachers to pretend to a new faculty of mind, called inspiration, or communication with supernatural power ; this is practiced by priests in all parts of the world, from the Lapland Magi to the civilized Pope, and if it was not an insult to good sense, to attempt, with argument, the refutation of such absurdity, I would observe, that inspiration, in proportion as it approaches and identifies with Deity, the common source, the diversity of its streams or opinion is augmented : the inspired Catholic abhors the inspired Protestant, this the inspired Jew, the Jew the inspired Mahometan, and when these bedlamites break loose, their victims burn each other at opposite piles, despising that inspiration in others which they rage with themselves.

“ I know but one remedy for this moral pestilence of superstition, which is, to assemble the inspired idiots of all countries, that the view of their contortions, convulsions, and delirious ravings, in the presence of each other, might exhibit the portraiture of folly in so strong a light, that Reason would burst her sides with laughter, and Judgment must be restored.” Revelation of Nature.

The meek and humble character of Christianity in its origin, the fanatic zeal of its partizans, and the pretended renunciation of worldly grandeur, led to a conclusion, that every attempt of uniting with political tyranny would be pointedly discarded by the votaries of this new and supernatural religion. The subsequent history of the Church has, however, placed an indelible stamp of error upon this opinion, and proved that the intimate associates of the celestial Jesus were willing also to become the associates of terrestrial lords, for the purpose of acquiring the support and strength of tyrannical governments. Those who declared that their kingdom was not of this world, were soon discovered to be willing to unite with the kings of the earth, justly considering that earth and heaven united would be competent to every object, even the universal subjection and slavery of the human race. Such was, in a high degree, the effect, when Christianity was embraced by the strong arm of the Roman government. This holy religion at first sought for simple protection from the mistress of the world: but no sooner was this accomplished, than a new and more impulsive desire was perceived to be the ruling sentiment of the Church, and it claimed from the civil power toleration in all religious and ecclesiastical concerns. This new success was followed with a new exhibition of ambitious views, and the open disclosure of a bolder confidence in the ultimate triumph of the then infant church of Christ. Spiritual domination, and the ruling of nations with absolute despotism, which at first constituted no part of the feeble hopes of Christian believers, was at length attempted, and the success of the attempt was completely satisfactory to the most ardent hopes of the new hierarchy.

Thus it was that the meek, the humble, and the poverty-struck followers of the meek and humble Jesus were transformed into what sectarian secession has since denominated, *the scarlet whore seated upon the throne of the Cæsars*. This event was followed by many centuries of Christian barbarism, in which the spirit and principle of the Gospel triumphed over and subverted every species of science, and buried beneath its despotic weight the intellectual energies of the intelligent world. This long period has been justly denominated the night of ignorance, and may, with equal propriety, be denominated the pure and uncontaminated reign of the Christian religion; because it was at that period that the authority of the church was complete, and the civil power was subjected to its absolute will; because at that time the ecclesiastical dominion was believed to be essentially incorporated with the purest directions of the founder of that holy religion; and because every subsequent secession has, in the estimation of the mother Church, been considered as a damnable heresy, and an awful departure from the true faith.

These secessions from the original Church have constituted a cause which has been gradually operating for the amelioration of the human species, and which must ultimately terminate in the triumph of reason over the compound despotism of the world. The Church of Christ received its death wound by the conduct of two bold and fanatic leaders of the two grand sectaries which first protested against the unqualified authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther and Calvin, with more fervent zeal and holy piety than those whom they opposed, nevertheless, laid the foundation of subsequent events, calculated to overturn every species of ecclesiastical dominion, and bury in one common grave the various branches of celestial tyranny, which for many ages had held the world in bondage.

The spirit of sectarianism spread itself far and wide, dividing and diversifying the opinions of the Church, and each new sectary seemed to be endowed with a new portion of that rancorous malignity, which has so universally marked the conduct of those whose pride and folly have led them to conclude, that they spoke in the name of heaven, and were the favourites of the Most High. Such sectarian altercations, however, were destined eventually to destroy each other. Men of contemplative minds began at length to suspect the divine originality of a religion, which branched itself into so many different species of doctrines, and generated amongst its professors endless wars.

Another consideration still more powerful, accelerated the progress of moral improvement, and constantly diminished the force of attachment toward the Christian system. Every new sect discarded some of the absurdities of that from which it had separated, and passed a general sentiment of condemnation upon all those who were in the rear of this long and religious train. Luther and Calvin hurled their religious thunderbolts against the power and absurd tenets of the Church of Rome, and especially against the Pope, by whom this Church was governed. The Armenians, the Arians, the Socinians, and the Universalists, successively followed, with a purifying hand of reason, pruning and chopping off the decayed branches of the old theological tree, approaching still nearer to the source and principles of nature, till at length, by regular progression, the human mind discovered, that moral principle was placed upon a more solid foundation than the reveries of sectarian fanaticism. It has been in this manner that some portion of society has once more obtained a true idea of the religion of nature, or of that which may be denominated pure and simple Deism.

It is this religion which, at the present period of the world, creates such frightful apprehensions in the household of faith, and threatens to shake to the centre the chief corner stone on which the church is built. These apprehensions are daily disclosed by Christian professors, and they depict in such strong colours the fatal effects of Deism, that ignorant fanaticism believes it to be an immoral monster, stalking with gigantic strides over the whole civilized world, for the detestable purpose of producing universal disorder, and subverting all the sound principles of social and intelligent existence. Such are the horrid ideas which the enemies of this pure and holy religion are every where propagating amongst their credulous and deluded followers. This circumstance renders it necessary, that the true idea of Deism be fairly stated, that it may be clearly understood by those whose minds have hitherto been darkened by the mysteries of faith.

Deism declares to intelligent man the existence of one perfect God, Creator and Preserver of the Universe; that the laws by which he governs the world are like himself immutable, and, of course, that violations of these laws, or miraculous interference in the movements of nature, must be necessarily excluded from the grand system of universal existence; that the Creator is justly entitled to the adoration of every intellectual agent throughout the regions of infinite space; and that he alone is entitled to it, having no co-partners who have a right to share with him the homage of the intelligent world. Deism also declares, that the practice of a pure, natural, and uncorrupted virtue, is the essential duty, and constitutes the highest dignity of man; that the powers of man are competent to all the great purposes of human existence; that science, virtue, and happiness, are the great objects which ought to awake the mental energies, and draw forth the moral affections of the human race.

These are some of the outlines of pure Deism, which Christian superstition so dreadfully abhors, and whose votaries she would willingly consign to endless torture. But it is built upon a substantial foundation, and will triumphantly diffuse happiness among the nations of the earth, for ages after Christian superstition and fanaticism have ceased to spread desolation and carnage through the fair creation of God.

In surveying the history of man, it is clearly discovered, that the miseries and misfortunes of his existence are, in a high degree, the result of his ignorance and his vices. Ignorance renders him savage and ferocious; while science pours into his mind the benign sentiments of humanity, and gives a new colouring to his moral existence. Reason, which every kind of supernatural theology abhors; reason, which is the glory of our nature, is destined eventually, in the progress of future ages, to overturn the empire of superstition, and erect upon its ruins a fabric, against which the storms of despotism may beat in vain, against which superstition may wreak her vengeance without effect, from which she will be obliged to retire in agonizing tortures.

It has been the opinion of some honest and intelligent minds, that the power of intellect is inadequate to the moral and political emancipation of man. This opinion, though sometimes it is found to be operative upon benevolent hearts, seems, however, to be at war with the intellectual structure of our existence, and the facts furnished by modern history. In the great question which relates to human improvement, the cause which is productive of thought, cannot, in any high degree, be included as influencing the final decision. It is probable, however, that the opinion which refers intellect to organic material combination would favour most an unlimited improvement of the hu-

man species. If thought be an effect of matter finely organized, and delicately constructed, the best method of augmenting its power would be, to preserve the whole human system in the most pure, regular, and natural mode of operation. Parents and instructors, in this respect, are capable of doing great injury, or of producing most important benefits to future ages.

The science of the world has been, in some measure, diminished by the propagation of an opinion, that there are only a few human beings who are possessed of what is called genius, to the exclusion of all the rest. This looks too much like mystery, and seems to include in it the idea that man is sent from heaven, to occupy for a short time a miserable and material tenement, and then return to its native home. It ought to be recollected that earth is the abode of man, and that of this the materials of his existence are composed, all are confined to this place of residence, and to the amelioration of sensitive and intelligent life all his labours ought to be directed. He should learn to respect, and not despise his reason. He should learn to consider moral virtue as the greatest good, as the most substantial joy of his existence. In order, however, to be eminently good, a full scope must be given to the operation of intellectual powers, and man must feel an unqualified confidence in his own energies.

The double despotism of Church and state has borne so hard upon human existence, that man is sunk beneath its dreadful weight; but resuscitated nations are about to teach kings and tyrants a lesson awfully impressive, in regard to the destiny which awaits the aggregate injustice of the world. The period is at hand, in which kings and thrones, and priests and hierarchies, and the long catalogue of mischiefs which they have produced, shall be swept away from the face of the earth, and buried in the grave of everlasting destruction. Then will arrive the æra of human felicity, in which the heart of unfortunate man shall be consoled; then will appear the moment of national consolation, and universal freedom; then the empire of reason, of science, and of virtue, will extend over the whole earth, and man, emancipated from the barbarous despotism of antiquity, will assume to himself his true predicament in nature, and become a standing evidence of the divinity of thought and the unlimited power of human reason.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Philosophical Immortality.

“ See matter next, with various life endued,
 Press to one centre still, the general good.
 See dying vegetables life sustain,
 See life dissolving vegetate again :
 All forms that perish other forms supply,
 By turns we catch the vital breath and die.
 Like bubbles on the sea of matter borne,
 They rise, they break, and to that sea return.”

POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN.

THE subject of a future life, has, in every age and country, in a greater or less degree, engaged the attention of man. That strong sentiment by which we are attached to life, has given to human sensations a most powerful impulse, and induced us to overleap the boundaries of the visible world, and seek in unknown or non-existent countries, the continuation of that existence which experience taught us it was necessary to abandon here.

The diversity of opinion which has prevailed upon this subject shews the difficulties which in some measure are essentially connected with the nature of the inquiry. The strong and active impulse which binds man to his personal identity has led to extravagant conceptions concerning the means of his preservation, and the new modes of existence, which, in the succession of ages, he imagined he was destined to experience. Religious fanaticism has indulged itself in the most unguarded manner, and enlisted heaven, earth, and hell, on its side, the better to accomplish its purposes; while philosophy, disgusted with the wild vagaries which religious imposture every where presented, seemed to incline to the opposite extreme. A contest commenced which has not yet terminated, and which presented alternately to the hopes and

fears of man, the means of satisfying the one, and of destroying the other. Real consolation, however, was not furnished to the human mind by the virulence of their diversified discussions. It was to be expected in a case embarrassed with so many difficulties, that speculations would be endless, and decisions extremely variant.

As it commonly happens that people see more ghosts and spectres in the dark than in the light; so in the present case, the eagle eye of Superstition saw, or pretended to see, in the distant ages of futurity, and in the strange countries to which every intelligent being was hastening, all the peculiarities and local circumstances which would hereafter encircle the life of man. Thrones were erected, marble seats prepared, pomp and splendour in abundance, as the portion of that select company, whose ardent and fanatic hopes gave them a full assurance of a triumphant entry into the mansions of eternal glory; while, on the other hand, the hot, sulphurous, and infernal abodes, presented to the vicious and panic-struck mortal the dreadful considerations which stand connected with the idea of endless torture. Philosophy viewed the frantic ravings of religious enthusiasm with a mixed sentiment, composed of compassion and disgust. She sought in the constitution of nature for the discovery of some solid truths on which intelligent man might repose his existence, without fear and without trembling.

The progress of thought upon this subject has excited in superstitious minds the most rancorous sentiments of malignity; opprobrious epithets have been let out in abundance, merely because Reason laboured to discover, and declared that it had in some measure discovered, the real connection between man and nature. The terrific idea of annihilation still hovered around the dreaming abodes of Fanaticism, and the most substantial and philosophic truth, which a knowledge of nature presented to man, became the ground of a most personal persecution and envenomed malice. Theology, however, frequently exhibits her weakness by condemning in others what might with great justice be charged to her own account.

If we advert for a moment to the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians, the folly of their high pretensions to a superior immortality will become very visible. The Old Testament furnishes no information relative to the subject of a future life. *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return: man has no pre-eminence above a beast, as the one dieth so dieth the other*, are phrases contained in the Old Testament; and are sweeping clauses against every hope of a future life, so far as such hope is founded upon this part of revealed religion; but it will be said, that the Gospel has brought life and immortality to light, and on this account rises in its claims to respect above the contemptible materialism of modern philosophy. It is true that the New Testament speaks of a future life; of Heaven and Hell; of the resurrection of the dead, &c. but it is necessary first to prove the truth of this part of the system before substantial deductions can be drawn in favour of any species of immortality. It is very easy to make naked and unsupported assertions, but unless the reason and evidence of the thing accompany these assertions, they are good for nothing. Paul, speaking of the human body, and of the resurrection of the dead, says, *It is sown a natural body, and it is raised a spiritual body*; by what kind of chemical process it is that matter is to become spirit, must be left to Paul and other spiritual chemists to determine.

The physical universe presents to the human understanding a grand and important spectacle of contemplation, in which the whole and the parts are essentially and indestructibly connected. There is no such thing as flying off in a spiritual or metaphysical tangent; every thing is bound by eternal laws to pass through the routine of its successive modes of existence, through the progressive changes to which the laws of matter and motion have destined it.

There are two species of philosophical immortality; first, the immortality of matter, in its essential nature and character; and, secondly, the immortality of sensation in the aggregate mass of sensitive and intelligent life. These two perceptions must form the basis of every thing comprehensible upon this subject. The first needs no particular explanation, as the truth of the axiom, *that something can never become nothing*, is now generally admitted to be true; but the second idea ought to be rendered more intelligible. The opinions upon this subject have always supposed the existence of a spiritual, immaterial, and indestructible soul, which was capable of making its escape through the body, and passing in a light and airy manner through the atmos-

pherical regions, spending an unconfined and uncontrollable existence in a manner inconceivable by our gross senses in their present condition.

The doctrine of transmigration is a branch of this system, and supposes that the souls of men may pass into other animals of an inferior kind, and reside there for a given time, by way of atonement for past crimes. These ideas of intellectual transmission, of solitary and distinct spirituality, are among those theological departures from philosophic truth which reason has to deplore, and which have retarded, in a very considerable degree, the progress of knowledge. It is in vain for man to deceive himself; a knowledge of his true condition in nature, and his relationship with all existence, will furnish a consolation far superior to all the theological reveries of antiquity. Matter is every where in motion; it is matter and motion, or the laws of the material world, by which innumerable sensitive and intelligent creatures are successively modified and disorganized. The rotation is eternal, and all the parts of nature may in time pass through the strictures of animal existence, and partake of the capacity of enjoying pleasure or suffering pain. In this warfare there is no discharge; an undying succession, an immortal mutation awaits the existence of every living creature. Nothing is durable in regard to modification or identity. In short, nothing is immortal but matter, its combinations and results; to wit, sensation and intellect.

But it is easy to perceive, that the continuation is specific and not personal; that man is destined to pass through an infinite diversity of predicaments, partaking at all times of the immortality essential to matter, and the perpetuated immortality of sensation in successive forms of animal existence. That this idea, so far from terrifying his mind, should furnish it with instructive lessons of sympathy, justice, and universal benevolence.

If it should be objected here, that this is not the immortality to which man is so strongly attached, the answer is obvious, he must be reconciled to that kind of immortality, which nature prepares for her children, and which diffuses through the intelligent world a sentiment of equality, terrifying to every species of spiritual or political aristocracy.—It has frequently been said, that the ardent wishes of the human mind, in regard to immortal existence, furnish strong presumptive proof in favour of retrospective identity; but this error is visible upon the very face of the record. Thousands of individuals most ardently wish to continue their life here for ever; but this furnishes no barrier against the certain approach of death and final dissolution of the body. Human nature is accustomed to wish for more than it can obtain; its wishes, therefore, can never be brought as the standard of truth. It might as well be expected that man should become immensely rich, because he wished to be so, as that he should immortalize his personal existence by the extent of his desires in this respect. It is true, however, that whatever does exist must continue to exist for ever; this assertion regards substance and not forms; forms continually perish, but the essence of things is indestructible.

The ancient and orthodox idea is, that the universe,* with all its component parts, was made out of nothing; and if so, it must remain nothing, for it must be of the essence of which it was composed. It is a gross error to imagine that the eternal nature of things can be changed or destroyed by the operation of any power whatever. The great machinery of nature is governed by immutable laws; its motions are the result of its own internal energy. Hence it may be inferred, that it is at once the cause and effect; the mode and the substance, the design and the execution, and active and never ceasing operator.

The existence of man is essentially connected with this vast whole, and it is impossible that he should ever detach any part of himself from the immortal system of which he forms a component part. The intervolutions of matter with matter, are universal and eternal; the essence of which man is composed, will therefore eternize its reciprocal relation with the vast fabric of material substance, which is presented to intelligent beings throughout the regions of space. A comprehensive view of the energies and relations of the material world, would, no doubt, shake to the centre the theological absurdities of antiquity; but it would leave to contemplative man the

* Some of the remarks herein contained are taken from the manuscript of a philosophic friend.

high consolation of having discovered from what source he originated, and to what destination the unalterable laws of nature have devoted his existence.

The highest intellectual joy consists in the discovery of truth; a knowledge of this truth will constantly tend to the practice of an exalted virtue; this virtue will serve as the stable foundation of human happiness, the immortal guarantee of the felicity of the intelligent world. Reason anticipates a progress, which all the powers of superstition can never arrest. Let Reason then perform her faithful duty, and Ignorance, Fanaticism, and Misery, will be banished from the earth. A new age, the true millennium will then commence; the standard of Truth and of Science will then be erected among the nations of the world, and man, the unlimited proprietor of his own person, may applaud himself in the result of his energies, and contemplate with indescribable satisfaction the universal improvement and happiness of the human race.



THE following, with all the Chapters of "Palmer's Principles of Nature" subsequent to the fourth, is that part of the Defendant's Defence which he was prevented from making.

HAVING gone through the whole of the volume, Gentlemen of the Jury, which I trust cannot have failed to convince you that it is a most important work, and one that is a credit to the literature and philosophy of this country, it becomes my duty to analyze the extracts taken from it for the purposes of the prosecution. In doing this I have no fear but I shall be able to shew you that there is nothing in them, to publish which, forms an offence against the law of this country. You must have seen, Gentlemen, that the work throughout is strictly moral, nay, that it describes the very essence of humanity and morality. There is not, in fact, a sentence in it but a father may explain to his daughter, or the mother to her son, and this is much more than can be said for the books on which this volume is called an unlawful critique.

It would not have been necessary for me to have gone into so long a defence, if ever the real state of the law relating to libels had been explained before; it would not have been necessary for me to have touched the volume for which I am prosecuted, had not much prejudice existed against persons charged with publishing blasphemous libels, and much ignorance about the nature of such charges. My object is now to explain the whole matter, and to shew you, Gentlemen of the Jury, that you cannot tread safely in the steps of those who have given verdicts of Guilty against the publishers of this work heretofore. You will see in my case, that, the Attorney General has not brought before you a tittle of evidence of the breach of any law. There is no property in the question before you; there is no injury complained of; there is no breach of law proved, none can be proved. I proceed to notice the extracts from

the work set forth in the record. The first is as follows; "Moses and Mahomet governed their followers with a rod of iron, and a military despotism, they were savage and ferocious men, crafty and intriguing, and they knew how to subject to their will, the stupid but unfortunate followers who were devoted to their views. If Jesus was more mild, benevolent, and temperate, it was because he had less power, and because his disposition was less cruel and resentful. His followers when clothed with power have not paid a very high compliment to their master, for the history of their conduct evinces the most malignant design, and the earth has been drenched in blood to defend that system of religion of which the meek and lowly Jesus is reputed to be the author. The Christian religion is a compound and combination of all the theological writings of the followers of Moses and Jesus: we have no evidence that either of these men wrote any part, either of the Old or New Testament. From Genesis to the Apocalypse of St. John, a vast variety of fact, fable, principle, wickedness, and error, is exhibited to view. The book, though bound together, appears to be in many respects discordant; the historical part has no accurate connection; the moral part is distorted, deficient, or wicked; the doctrinal parts are either unintelligible or contrary to moral and philosophical truth. The last resort of the believer must be to the authority and command of his Majesty, who has kindly interfered for the purposes of rendering divine and holy, a book, whose indecency and immorality shocks all common sense and common honesty."

There are six counts in the record, and this forms the first; and as far as the truth or falsehood of the matter is in question, I shall defend the former.

The extract opens with introducing three characters, whose names have figured in history: namely:—Moses, Mahomet, and Jesus. Twelve hundred years have elapsed since Mahomet was alive, and he is the only one of the three, whose existence can be proved. The extract, Gentlemen, is a piece of history, and I must make an historical defence, if I am not to pass it over without notice. I cannot defend the extracts upon any other ground than by shewing you, that, as a matter of history, they cannot be made cognizable by English law, and that the contents, or the publication of them, do not constitute a breach of law.

I am agreed, with the general opinion of the people of this country, that Mahomet was a wily, a courageous and successful impostor. The religion he established was of that description, which could only be propagated by the sword, and his followers had nearly enveloped the whole of Europe as well as Asia, and the Mediterranean coasts of Africa with it. It was the mere turn of a battle in France, fought between the Christians and the Mahometans, and which was unfavourable to the latter; that preserved to Europe the Christian religion: the Mahometans had a sound footing in Italy, and all the Islands of the Mediterranean Sea; they possessed

all Spain, and had penetrated France, and could they have joined their dominion from Italy to Spain, the Christian religion must have gone down, as this Island could not then have resisted the Mahometan arms. I presume, Gentlemen, that it is not necessary for me to prove the truth and legality of the attack upon Mahomet. I believe the Attorney General is not so avaricious over religious creeds as to wish to protect that established by Mahomet from criticism. The Government of this Island has no support from Mahometan Priests, so the religion must seek its defenders elsewhere. In Turkey it would be worthy the support of the Grand Sultan's Attorney General, and the Christian religion would not be worth a sheet of parchment to write an accusation upon in its support; in that country the Government can exist without it. It is every where a piece of state-craft, and each defends its own to the contempt and condemnation of all others.

That such person as Mahomet did exist we have every species of proof that can be desired, in the shape of authentic history; but of the existence of Moses or Jesus, there is not only no proof, but not even an historical probability. Of Moses there is no collateral mention in any other book than those of the Jews, and we can no where or way, discover that they had any books among them when they were led captive to Babylon. That they brought back books from Babylon to Jerusalem, or compiled them soon after, is evident from the existence of their translation into Greek by Seventy-two Jews at Alexandria, under the reign of one of the Ptolomies. There is evidence that Egypt and Babylon were once the two main seats of learning, but there is no evidence that the use of letters was known at Jerusalem before the Babylonish captivity, and much less evidence that the books, which form the Old Testament, are deserving of protection from criticism on the ground of divinity! The names which are mentioned in that part of the Old Testament which extends to the second book of Kings, are names so familiar in all Asiatic traditions, and names that are claimed as the heroes and originators of nations, not Jewish, that we have as good, or better reasons to believe that the Jews borrowed those names and the traditions connected with them from their neighbours, than that they were really Jewish characters.

Since then the Attorney General cannot adduce any proofs that such a character as the Moses mentioned in the Old Testament ever existed, what ground in law has he to complain of the publication of a compendium of his traditionary character?

Elihu Palmer has written as if such persons as Moses and Jesus had existed, as represented in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; but a fair enquiry into the matter will prove, that no such characters ever did exist, but that they are characters invented, just as our modern novel writers delineate characters that do not exist, and describe as actions what never occurred. Moses was delineated as a captain, as a prophet, as a legislator, and as a priest; and doubt-

less, is drawn upon the scale of what was, with the writer, considered the highest order of morality; though with us, some parts of his character appear detestable. Before the time that the Christian religion originated, the Chinese, the Persians, and the Grecian philosophers had described a higher order of morality, and the character of Jesus is drawn accordingly; and, though very exceptionable, is much superior to that given to Moses: the one is made the founder of a nation, and its laws, after a series of bloody conquests; the other is made a philosopher, and the founder of a system of morals that then appeared to be good; and some of them are certainly perfect. But all this does not prove the identity of their existence, and as my book does not impeach what is good in either character so ought it not to be considered an objectionable criticism.

We can trace the name of Jesus so far back as the days in which Tacitus, and Pliny the younger flourished: we can trace it within the first century of that which is now called the Christian era; but we cannot trace it within the first eighty years of that era. We find, that, neither Josephus who lived at or near Jerusalem, nor Pliny the elder, who lived at Rome, many years before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, make the least mention of the Jesus of the New Testament, or of the sect of Christians. The New Testament would persuade us, that, before Jerusalem was destroyed, a great portion of its inhabitants had become Christians, but Josephus, in his minute and direful details of that destruction, evidently knew no such sect, although he was well acquainted with, and an eye witness of, almost every thing that occurred from the date of the alleged crucifixion of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem.

There is another point which makes the existence of Jesus a matter of doubt. Death by crucifixion was a Roman mode of executing malefactors, and it is well known that the Jews would never deviate from their laws, and those were to stone an offender to death; now the tales of the death of Jesus represented him as crucified by the Jews; I would as readily believe that they ate the swine in which the Devils are said to have drowned themselves, as believe that they would so far deviate from their law of putting to death, as to adopt the Roman mode of doing it by crucifixion.

But this is a mere incident in the argument; the main point on which I rest is the absence of all testimony to corroborate the contents of the book called the New Testament, and the certain knowledge that a hundred different accounts of the fable, existed in the early ages of Christianity; and that the four now received were selected from the others as most alike, and the remainder rejected as apocryphal, on no other authority than their variance! This took place so late as at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century. For 250 years all manner of stories were circulated about Jesus, and the grossness of some, with the contradictions of others, caused the Roman Emperor, who was first corrupt and credulous enough

to listen to the tales, to make a selection of those that were the most plausible.

Such, Gentlemen of the Jury, is the foundation, and the only foundation of the Christian religion, and as there is not an atom of truth connected with it, and as it cannot form a part of any law, you cannot find me guilty of a malicious intention in questioning it, or the tales of its supposed founder: phantoms, such as are the names of Moses and Jesus, cannot be brought under the protection of law. They are fit matters for every one's opinion and discussion, and if the Attorney General can shew equal argument and ground for the truth of the tales about them, as I can for their falsehood, and for the non-existence of the persons, whose characters are delineated, I will consent to take any imprisonment he may wish me.

The truth of the different systems of religion is now being generally questioned, and in this country, a daily prosecution of this nature will not stop that questioning. It is the common duty of mankind to enquire into the right and wrong of every matter that comes before them, and not to receive, as truths, the mere hearsays and assertions of others. Pray what injury can be done to the political state of this country, if free discussion upon the merits of the Christian religion should prove it to have no good foundation? Will the Attorney General answer this question? If not, I will answer it for him. It would do no kind of injury; but a very great degree of good: the Christian religion occasions an annual waste of the capital of the country, to the amount of near twenty millions of pounds sterling! A sum of money that would support a political government that should bid defiance to the world! Every shilling that is spent upon religious matters is a waste of human happiness, and the strength of the country. It becomes a premium for idleness. Every unproductive man is a caterpillar to the property of the community, if he be supported from the produce of the labour of others. Every such a man is a draw-back upon the happiness of a community, and a weakener of the common wealth. At the lowest computation, he may be considered to consolidate the constant misery of one family of human beings.

Gentlemen, it is quite unnecessary for me to go into the particulars of every sentence set forth from the volume on the record; when I say their general tenor is a questioning of the truth and character of the book called the Bible, and the religions that have been founded upon it, I shall have embraced the whole. To explain and defend each sentence will lead to a repetition of the same arguments for a defence of one is a defence of all; I shall therefore deal in general argument and meet the whole question fully.

The contents of the book called the Bible are impugned, and upon what principle of right, I would ask, is that book to be exempted from criticism more than any other? If you say it is a holy book, then let its contents speak for themselves and defend their own character. Words will not change the quality of any thing;

and here I am tried for the publication of words only; words that do not relate to, or effect any living human being. Malice, Gentlemen, cannot apply to any person that is dead; a man cannot bear malice towards that which is not alive; the very notion is ridiculous, and yet such is the charge on the record! Really, Gentlemen, if you sit there to try, you must see that the Attorney General has not supported a tittle of his charges against me! Nothing of it can he support. He will tell you that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, but how does he prove it? His assertion is no better than that of another man. He cannot shew you when it was first constituted a law. He cannot show you how it can be made a part of the law, because he cannot define what the word Christianity means. I say boldly, and challenge the contradiction, that shall lead to discussion on the matter, that Christianity does not form any part or parcel of the law of the land.

Law is always definable, and capable of being expounded by the Judge, or the Magistrate; if any thing called law cannot be so expounded, the Magistrate cannot act upon it. But who will expound Christianity? Who will even venture a general assertion in what it consists? Such a thing may be done in the pulpit, agreeable to the taste of the different sectarians, but cannot be done in a court of law; for I would turn the whole attempt to expound it into shame and ridicule in a very few minutes. I would shew that an exposition of the matter was utterly impossible, for I would have something more than words; I would have words that were the signs of known existences and physical relations. Without these, nothing can be made to constitute law. There is that difference between law and despotism, that the former requires a moral and a physical foundation, and the latter operates without any thing of the kind. If you, Gentlemen, administer law, you must return me "Not Guilty," because the contrary cannot be shewn to you; if your verdict be "Guilty," you will administer despotism; because no species of guilt has been proved against me. The Attorney General's Information is an attempted defence or protection of the Christian religion, for as to law, or an offence against the law, there is nothing of the kind between us. I have no more offended the law, than the Attorney General himself, or either of you, Gentlemen of the Jury. But what a burlesque upon his religion is this attempt of the Attorney General to defend it! Will his getting me into a prison be an ornament to it? Does its strength and its splendour depend on the punishment of those who question its truth? Is he, and are all the learned doctors in divinity afraid of "Palmer's Principles of Nature," a work written, like our great Milton's "Paradise Lost," by a blind man? Yes, he proclaims it for the learned doctors, that, they fear a single volume will be sufficiently powerful to shut the gates of their paradise, and to deprive them of the heavenly loaves and fishes! It becomes and behoves you, Gentlemen, to exhibit a more manly and philosophical spirit. To put a stop to these persecutions, and to say

that the Christian religion shall stand or fall by its own intrinsic worth. If it cannot be supported without the aid of those prosecutions; it is good for nothing, and ought to fall, that the expence which attends it may be saved; an expence which is incalculable, which pervades every part of the community, and every where produces misery without the slightest amount of good.

The only error into which Elihu Palmer has fallen, is the admission that such characters as Moses and Jesus have lived, and that the romance or novel in which they are the heroes is true. What he has written of them is the just inference of what is described in the Jewish or Christian writings. He has invented nothing; and if his book be objectionable, so must that be on which it is a comment. He calls the Bible immoral and indecent: there is a gross immorality and indecency connected with the sketch of the life of Lot, of Judah, of Onan, of Jacob, his wives, and his sons, of David, of Amnon, of Absalom, of Solomon; in fact, with the exception of Job, there is scarce one virtuous character sketched throughout the Bible. It is the history of a sinful nation, as the Lord Chief Justice said on the trial of Mr. Carlile. But if it be the history of a sinful nation, what pretensions can such a history have to holiness? Was there any need to give historians divine inspiration to describe sinful characters? Better that they had never been described; particularly, as they are held up for imitation as God's chosen people, and not as beacons to be avoided. There is not one strictly moral character sketched in the Bible, and this makes it a book of less value to public morals than any of our modern novels: it will bear no comparison for utility with the writings of Fielding, of Richardson, of Scott, or Lady Morgan. It will be a fortunate event for the present Christian nations when they leave the Bible to the amusement of the Jews, and improve themselves by better writing; by history that is true; by morals that are unexceptionable, by sketches of character that are worthy of imitation; and by writings that will not put the matron or the maid to the blush.

To make a full defence to the charges of the record, it would be necessary that I took a copy of the Bible and examined almost every sentence of it, but I am not prepared or disposed to do this, though I can promise you that preparations will be made to do it, if these prosecutions are to be continued. I am a great admirer of such books as this of Palmer's, but I never sold it with any desire to be prosecuted. I am not a volunteer to meet a prosecution. I had not sufficient confidence in my ability to make a defence worthy of the cause I advocate, but being forced here unwillingly, I have done and will continue to do my best.

I shall here introduce to you a few extracts from another work of Elihu Palmer's, which contains a critique on the four first books of the Pentateuch. I am only sorry that he had not an opportunity to have gone through the whole book, as it would have formed an admirable mass of matter in defence of that part of his "Principles

of Nature" which is selected into the information. As far as these extracts go, however, they will be found to be strictly relevant, as a reply to the charges against me, and a proof of the truth of every unexplained passage on the record that relates to the Old Testament. I wish, Gentlemen, that I could prudently read to you every sentence written by Elihu Palmer in the volume from which these extracts are taken, it would tend to convince you that his writings ought to be cherished as pregnant with pure moral and philosophical instructions, and not to be suppressed by the arms of despotism (for law would not suppress them). The name of the blind American Author will rise superior to the name of Milton, inasmuch as the former taught a purer philosophy, and a purer morality. Milton was a spotless character, an admirable politician, and a poet, but his mind never suspected the unsoundness of his theological reveries. Palmer was a Scotch Priest originally; his detection of his errors on matters of religion, and his honesty in acknowledging them, compelled him to fly to America for an asylum, from Christian persecution, and it was there alone at that time, that he could have displayed the bright coruscations of a mind as sound as truth, and as pure as gold!

It is worthy of your notice, Gentlemen, that both the works of Elihu Palmer, the "Principles of Nature," and the one from which I am about to quote, have been freely and openly circulated in the United States of America for many years. We hear of no prosecution of books in that country, yet such works as these before you do not seem to produce the effect there, which the Attorney General and the Canters General of this country affect to dread here. The Government and people of the United States of America are more moral and powerful than are the people and Government of this country, and the only thing which there detracts from their dignity, lessens their morality, or weakens their community is that fanaticism and superstition which this prosecution here seeks to support and to cherish. This is a matter worthy of your consideration, and if either of you, Gentlemen, know any thing of the United States of America, you will assent to my statement. To attempt to suppress a book by prosecution at law, is now become one of the maddest projects that was ever attempted. A book is now no sooner advertised as a prosecuted book than it spreads all over the country instantly, and all the money that could be expended in advertisements of its sale, would not produce the same effect in giving it publicity and interest. All the puffings and favourable criticisms of Magazines, Reviews and Newspapers, are contemptible in effect when compared with a prosecution. No law that can be made, short of putting to death all who would sell it or hold it, would prevent the sale. Men who may be devoid of all the principles of the work will be stimulated to publish it from the certainty of profit. Nothing that is honourably profitable, however dangerous, will ever want producers and traders. The game laws, and the revenue laws, are completely inef-

fectual upon this principle, notwithstanding the immense expence, and the prodigious amount of human misery they generate.

Under this view of the matter, I trust, Gentlemen, you will see the folly as well as the illegality of these prosecutions, and use your present authority towards putting a stop to them. A very few verdicts of "Not Guilty" will sicken the persecuting despotism of the conspirators who would chain knowledge to a standard, and such an one only as shall conduce to their immediate interests! Every honourable high-minded man must feel disgust at these persecutions, and when it is shown to him that they are not founded in any law, as I have shewn it in this case, he would not hesitate a moment to make up his mind for a verdict of "Not Guilty."

Gentlemen, I am by no means disposed to weary you, particularly as my own task is extremely fatiguing, but I am deeply solicitous to shew you that I can defend myself and the book which I have published, in every shape, and upon every point, whether it be in law, in morals, or in truth; I shall therefore proceed to read the extracts from an examination of a portion of the Bible by Elihu Palmer. He is far from being a prolix or elaborate writer, and you will find every point treated in the most concise, though in the most effectual manner. I do not know that I can follow a more prudent course than to make the author explain and support the contents of his own book, but I have another point in view; I wish to shew you that Elihu Palmer is one of those chaste philosophical writers, who could not pen a sentence that is morally objectionable, You will see this in a strong light when you hear him commenting upon the most disgusting and most indelicate subjects, without the use of an offensive word.

"COMMENTS ON THE MOST SACRED WRITINGS OF THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS; BY ELIHU PALMER. Genesis, chapter first. There is a single reflection which forces itself upon every contemplative mind, and which ought to create a strong suspicion relative to the divine origin of the Scriptures. It is this; these sacred writings are said to have been given by the Creator to man for the special purpose of enlightening his understanding, in regard to sacred and interesting truths, a knowledge of which he could not otherwise obtain! Heaven deigned to descend to earth, to instruct a wicked and apostate race of men! The ideas communicated were of a supernatural kind, they furnish an explicit direction to weak mortals, concerning the path of religious duty, which they ought to pursue, and their terrestrial travels were to terminate in a triumphant entrance into the mansions of eternal glory. In this land of promise, in this celestial and blissful country, these redeemed worms of the dust, are to sing loud Hallelujahs to the Lord for ever; the means of accomplishing such glorious objects are said to be so plainly revealed in these sacred books, as to be easily understood by every one, and form a sure guide to the wavering and sinful soul, for a direct ascent to those realms of purity and happiness. But notwithstanding all the

pains that God has taken, and the marvellous intelligibility presumed to be contained in this revelation, we find that thousands of comments, and commentators, have appeared for the specific purpose of explaining and rendering intelligible, the already clear and intelligible word of God! The world has been filled with these theological productions from penny pamphlets up to huge folio volumes, and yet, after all, there are found upon the earth more than two hundred different Christian sectaries, cavilling and quarrelling about the word of God, and the true meaning of the sacred scriptures! They have filled the world with their violence, they have drawn their daggers upon each other with savage ferocity, they have made the earth one great aceldama, one extensive field of blood, and all this because they could not understand in the same point of view, the plain and simple word of God, revealed from heaven for the express purpose of illuminating a lost and wicked world! Amidst such religious discords, such diversity of ecclesiastical opinions, it will perhaps be pardonable, and even useful to present one more comment for the consolation of agonising and distracted man. It is believed that we have as good right to tread upon this sacred ground as any of those splendid dignitaries, those divine theologians, who have preceded in the contested race of religious glory.

“The first chapter of Genesis commences in the following manner.

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void.’

“Chronological accounts of terrestrial origin are enveloped in clouds of thick darkness, different nations have presented to view such contradictory traditions, such a mass of superstitious credulity, that no certain information, no clear deduction can be drawn from this source. Historical accounts are in their nature exposed to a thousand objections; this remark applies generally, but redoubles its force when the subject includes the origin of the world and the universality of its existence. That mind is narrow and extremely circumscribed in its views, which has never reflected upon the character and properties of matter, and the essential connection which subsists between organized and unorganized matter. The theological tales which have descended from former ages, are of little consequence in a case of this kind, the question is philosophic, and to this important tribunal, the enquiry ought to be presented. If in the beginning, *and by the way nobody knows when that was*, God created the heaven and the earth, out of what materials did he make them? Was there in the great workshop of nature, a parcel of raw and half worn out materials, from which this beautiful structure could be erected? Or did the mighty power of the mighty God, cause nothing to become something? If so, nothing possesses properties of a marvellous nature, and susceptible of an energetic transformation of which the human understanding can form no possible conception. But the account in this first chapter of sacred writ, says, that the

earth *was*, and yet the earth had no form! Now the word *was*, implies pointedly being or existence, it remains therefore for Christian theologians to inform us how a thing can exist without any form, shape or modification whatever! Whatever does exist must exhibit some external appearance, this is form, and in deficiency of this, there can be nothing within the recognition of the human understanding. If the earth had a form, then the declaration herein contained, that it had no form, is false in fact, and ridiculous in philosophy. The earth is also said to be void, no definite idea can attach itself to this epithet when applied to a thing of positive existence becomes equally unintelligible. In either case the opinion of the encephalologist, if applied to non-existence, it includes a contradiction, and revelationist is placed in a dilemma, from which there seems to be no escape. Perhaps a fanatic mind, that is capable of spiritualizing every thing, can furnish a satisfactory solution; but in the eye of reason it sinks below truth, philosophy and common sense.

It is in vain for those who are attached to the sacred books to affirm by way of apology for incorrectness, that they are not books of philosophic instruction; that they were not intended for any scientific purposes of this kind: this subterfuge will not do. If we admit for a moment the truth of the assertion, that they were not so intended it will not follow on this account that the writers possessed a latitude of introducing the most unpardonable blunders and flying in the face of the most solemn facts, in the physical world. The word of God, if it be not philosophic, ought, at least, to be consistent; it ought to possess correctness of statement, purity of principle and universal conformity to common sense; if however we proceed one step farther in this first chapter of holy writ, we shall be struck with the irregular and blundering account given of the creation: "God said let there be light, and there was light," But from what fountain did this light proceed? There was then no sun, for the sun was not then created, as we shall presently see!

But it is proper first to remark, that it was after God saw the light, that he discovered in it properties of excellence and utility; for it says that God saw the light and it was good, did he not know before what sort of a thing it would be? Had he no idea of its nature and properties before he had made a thorough examination of it? It seems not, and we shall have occasion to observe a thousand times, before we get through the Old Testament, that this Bible-God of infinite knowledge, is frequently represented as meeting unexpectedly with things and events, often disappointed, and sometimes repenting of what had been precipitately performed without sufficient reflection! The account goes on and says, that God divided the light from the darkness: it seems then, that the almighty mandate, the almighty fiat of God, by which light was produced, was not sufficient in the first instance to render the work complete; a second process became necessary to disentangle the rays from darkness and give to them a discriminative character! When this was

done, the first day appeared in all its splendour contrasted with the night, for the book says that the evening and the morning were the first day! Here then is made a clear distinction between day and night, and the sun was not yet created, but every body knows that what makes day and night is the appearance or absence of the sun! Let Christian theologians inform us how this matter is to be reconciled; the same chapter mentions two more days and nights in regular succession, and declares that the evening and morning were the third day. After this, comes in the following passage: "And God said, let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." In this passage it is affirmed, that one special purpose, for which the lights were created, was to divide the day from the night; but this, if the account above be true, had already been done: three days and three nights are spoken of, as passing in regular succession. Is it probable, is it possible, that the spirit of God should dictate such a blundering account? Yet this is all holy writ, and he that believeth it not shall be damned!

Perspicuity is certainly an essential property of every book which has for its object general instruction: correctness and connection of historic detail are equally important. Believers, however, in revelation, ascribe to God a kind of divine license, in imitation of literary critics, who screen their poetic friends under the slender cover of what is denominated *poetica licentia*. But, if apologies for blunders in composition be necessary to a being of infinite wisdom where shall the weak, the unlearned, and the imperfect appear.

The account given in these chapters concerning the formation of the supposed progenitors of the human race is of a very extraordinary nature, and stamps upon the very face of this book the most blundering incorrectness, and not divinity of character. In the first chapter it is said, verse twenty-seven; "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." Here is an explicit affirmation respecting the existence of both a man and a woman, they were made with competent powers to answer every important purpose of human life, the line of conduct was in part marked out to them and directions given in regard to several prominent objects to which they ought to devote their attention. This may be seen by a perusal of the passages subsequent to the twenty-seventh verse, but if we turn to the second chapter, we shall find mention made again of the creation of man, for it says, verse seventh: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." How is this matter to be explained? Did God so soon forget what he had performed, or did the writer of this second chapter so soon forget what he had said in the first? This was evidently a new creation spoken of here, for it is said just before, (verse fifth) that there was not a man found to till the ground. What then had become of the first man spoken of

in the first chapter? Was he dead, or had he so soon escaped the all-piercing eye of omniscience? But this was not all, the woman also, it seems, had abandoned her station, and was no more to be found. God therefore takes a new method of creating another out of one of the ribs of Adam. This was done because there was not found for Adam an help meet, of course the first female creation had dwindled into nothing, or was forgotten by the Creator. In whatever point of view we look at this matter, we shall see the most positive internal evidence that this book was not written by the inspiration of God. We cannot surely charge the Supreme Being, with such egregious blunders, with such terrible departures from propriety and correctness. We must therefore be driven to the necessity of ascribing these writings to the folly, the imbecility and the ignorance of human nature. It is said also, that this man, when made, was placed in the garden of Eden, to keep it and to dress it; now, a garden implies a spot of earth highly cultivated, of course somebody must have been working there for a long time before Adam was appointed gardener! By whom was the labour performed anterior to the agricultural improvement of Adam? The account says that God planted the garden himself. Do believers in this book mean to assert that God was really a gardener, that he laboured on a spot of earth like a human being? Have they no better conceptions of the majestic author of nature, and will they never cease to ascribe to him the feelings, the conduct, and the passions of human beings? No! it seems as if man was so attached to the properties of his own nature, that he is determined upon a terrestrial prototype becoming an object of celestial imitation!

The mythological matters contained in the third chapter of Genesis, form the basis of a system of religion which has extended itself over a considerable portion of the globe, and involved within the baneful vortex two hundred and fifty millions of the human species. When reason, however, takes a view of the prominent ideas and features herein exhibited, it will easily perceive that fiction, extravagance, and absurdity, are visible upon the very face of the record. It is pretended that the matter of the primitive apostacy, or what is commonly called the fall of man, is here unfolded with moral and theological correctness, but we shall prove in this comment that it is destitute of both of these properties, and presents such singular departures from the laws of propriety and the principles of truth, as must necessarily annihilate all divinity of character. This system of religion proceeds upon the supposition, that the Creator had given to the first parents of the human race, a restrictive command relative to a certain fruit in the garden of Eden, annexing at the same time to the breach of this command the positive penalty of immediate death! "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," but they did eat, and did not die upon the same day, nor for many days and years afterwards! Subsequent to the command which God gave, it seems, that there appeared to the woman a loquacious ser-

pent, denouncing the character and impeaching the integrity of the Most High. This speaking serpent ventures to affirm, in opposition to the celestial mandate, that death should not be the consequence of their disobedience, for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good from evil.

By what means had this serpent the powers of speech? It was not an inherent and essential property of his nature; but it was the Devil, say theologians that entered the serpent, and produced this marvellous event; it is evidently an event of a miraculous kind, and therefore should be examined in its relation to the several characters herein mentioned.

In the first place we know that the serpent could not speak without some extraneous assistance of an extraordinary nature. Now the laws of the physical universe are as immutable as God, their author; to presume, therefore, that the devil has the power of arresting or violating these laws, is to place him upon an equal footing with the Creator, to cause him to usurp the authority of Jehovah himself! All the devils in the infernal regions, if any there be, have not the power to make a serpent, or any other beast of the field, articulate a single word in manner and form similar to the human voice. But this serpent, it is said, was more subtle than any other beast of the field; what then, does it follow from this that he could talk? No, nothing short of the supernatural power of God could give him the power of utterance, nor even this without involving the divine attributes in absurdity of operation, and inconsistency of character. But suppose for a moment, that God had lent his aid in this case, which is the only means by which the serpent could speak, what consequences would follow? It will be recollected that the Creator had before threatened the violators of his command with death; if therefore, he told them in one place that they should die, and empowered the serpent, in another place, to tell them they should not die; this amounts to a contradiction. It is God, *versus* the miraculous power of God, and what is worse than all the rest, in the character of a deceiver too! But this strange account goes on involving the honest and discerning enquirer, in still farther difficulties, for it is stated that the woman took a view of this delicious, but forbidden, fruit, "and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." The account then states, that the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. It was after they had eaten that they came to their sight, and yet the woman before she had touched the fruit is represented as standing gazing at it, admiring its beauty and capacity to produce wisdom? What strange contradiction is this? Madam Eve must surely have had a very keen eye when she could see the fruit upon the tree with both of her eyes shut! This it is pre-

sumed is one of the mysteries of Godliness, and not to be explained or understood by vulgar minds.

But, further, it is upon this extravagant fable that all the monstrous absurdities of revealed religion have been established and propagated for eighteen centuries, throughout the Christian world! The doctrine of original sin, as unjust in its nature, as it is derogatory to the character of God, has originated from this source. It is unjust, however, that one being should suffer for the crimes of another, moral merit or demerit is personal, and not transferable. It adheres solely to the criminal agent, and theology in this respect is incapable of destroying the just and essential discriminations of the moral world. If the progenitors of the human race, had transgressed in manner and form herein stated, it is no reason that their guilt should descend with all its dreadful consequences to millions of unborn posterity. Reason has marked out to itself a line of eternal justice, and the character of God is in coincidence with this line, because he is the author of reason. Let the fictions of past ages be subjected to the peaceful and bold enquiries of mind, and they will soon descend to the tomb of oblivion, leaving man in the full exercise of his intellectual powers, and that sublime happiness to which he is justly entitled.

The incoherency, discordance, and want of connection, so often presented in these sacred pages, ought to convince every candid mind that they have no just claim to the character of truth, to divine inspiration, perspicuity of composition, or utility of influence, either in morals or philosophy. The 6th chapter of Genesis in its commencement presents us with three different kinds of characters: the sons of God, the daughters of men, and giants. Who these sons of God were we are not specially informed; whether they were a celestial race of beings, of an extraordinary size, and sent down from the upper regions for the purpose of paying their respects to the female beauties of this terrestrial world, or whether they were of earthly origin, and the peculiar favourites of the Most High—whether after they had taken to themselves wives of the daughters of men, this procreative operation produced these giants, or whether the giants sprang from some other source, on all these points we are left in a state of total ignorance, and the very manner in which the ideas and the composition are put together, proves that it was done by some body who possessed neither the spirit of God nor the spirit of reason to guide him in his labours. Another point of importance which calls for attention in this chapter, is that which exhibits a most destructive abandonment of the exalted character of God, and consigns the care of the universe to a being as changeable and as imperfect as man himself. For it is here said: (verse 5,) “That God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually.” Verse 6, “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

Here the omniscience of God is indirectly called in question by saying that he saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, which seems to imply that he was not apprized of this result at the time of the creation! His immutability, another essential attribute of the Creator, is here completely destroyed! Can any one believe that an all perfect being can repent? Will any Christian believer affirm, that the munificent ruler of nature, who holds in his hands the destinies of universal existence, could really repent, could be grieved at his heart for his former conduct? The admission of such an idea would effectually destroy the infinity of divine perfections and reduce the character of Jehovah to a level with feeble and imperfect man! These Jewish writers, this chosen people so highly favoured by heaven, were surely as ignorant of the principles of true theism, as any of the most savage nations upon the face of the earth. If they worshipped but one God, he however was so vicious, imperfect, cruel, ferocious, and vindictive in his character, that they would have done better without any, and the bloody murders which the Jews committed under the sanction of authority, declared to be divine, would never have stained the annals of human history. The remaining part of this chapter is taken up with stating that disgust which God seems to have exhibited in regard to his own works, for he says that the earth was filled with violence, and that all flesh had corrupted his way—that the whole scheme from beginning was wrong, that he had been disappointed in his prospects, and that a redress of grievances must be had some way—a flood or universal deluge was considered as the best means of gratifying divine indignation, of removing the errors of former and imperfect design. This deluge, presumed by Christian theology to be a fact, is so important an item in the discussion of Christianity that it will be necessary to make it a subject of some future comments. Noah's ship and voyage were curious and singular circumstances, not easily reconciled to the laws of nature, to the character of God, or the general experience of mankind.

Inspired men are generally unacquainted with the laws of nature. They are seized with a kind of religious fanaticism, which blinds them in regard to the most stubborn facts, and the gross inconsistencies which they themselves have fabricated. In the wonderful account of this most wonderful flood, it is said, "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth—and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered." The expression contained in this passage, in regard to the elevation of the waters, is in some measure ambiguous. If it means fifteen cubits from the common surface of the earth, this is only about twenty seven feet and would go but a little way towards covering the highest hills, if it means that the water rose fifteen cubits above the tops of the highest mountains, this would involve the flood

makers in still greater difficulty, because it would be impossible that the atmosphere should contain a body of water sufficient for such a purpose, especially when the height of the mountains in both hemispheres is brought into the account. The two following paragraphs taken from the "Doubts of Infidels" will serve to shew the impossibility of a universal deluge.

The account of the flood is very embarrassing. It is described as the effects of natural agents in the hands of God: it rained, no mention is made of waters for the purpose. The deluge is universal: all the high hills that were under the whole heavens were covered; it did not cease in consequence of the annihilation of the waters, but they were evaporated by a wind. Now, from whence came the water? The weight of the whole atmosphere, with all its vapours, is equal to no more than a hollow sphere of three or four and thirty feet thickness, environing the whole globe, and, consequently, the whole of its contents, if condensed into water, could not deluge the earth to the height of an ordinary house.

"It is to no purpose to break open the fountains of the abyss or great deep, if any such fountains there are; for gravity would prevent the waters from issuing out, neither can unbelievers be persuaded to believe that the windows of heaven were opened, while they know it has no windows; so that we have but three or four and thirty feet of water to deluge the highest mountains, some of which are about twenty thousand feet high.

"The weak in faith find themselves equally at a loss respecting the ark. It seems strange to them, that so vast an assemblage of animals, could be inclosed in an ark or chest, which had but one window, (which window was kept shut for more than five months) without being stifled for want of air: it appears equally remarkable, that Noah and his three sons could unstow and serve out the daily allowance of provisions and water to the passengers—and if their wives were supposed to help them, the work to be done is still prodigious. The lions, and other carnivorous animals, must have lived on salt provisions, which no doubt they were glad of, as seafaring people are not very nice, especially in long voyages."

"If we take the assertions made in the Bible for truth, we shall be compelled to admit that the former or primitive state of the world, was very different from what it is at present;—that the laws of nature have undergone several essential alterations, and that some of the philosophic facts with which we are at present acquainted, had in ancient days no existence. By the account in the ninth chapter of Genesis, one would suppose that the rainbow, the natural causes of which are well understood, was of post-diluvian creation, verse 12, "And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth, and it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will

remember my covenant, which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh—and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” By this passage, it appears, that God created the rainbow at that time; and for a special purpose, and that in an arbitrary manner he set it in the clouds to give consolatory assurances to an ignorant and wicked world, that he would never become so far out of humour again, as to send another flood. But how is this business of creating the bow at that particular time to be reconciled to the principles of philosophy, or the properties of the natural world? The sun existed before the waters also had their being, exhalations, evaporations, and of course, showers of rain must have been the consequences. The properties of refrangibility and reflectibility must also have been essential in the rays of the sun: under these circumstances every one knows, who knows any thing about it, (Christians only excepted) that the appearance of rainbows must have been unavoidable. But it is said that this bow was created at that particular time to answer another special and important purpose, that of the refreshing the memory of the Creator, and preventing him in another fit of anger from drowning the world, “and the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant, &c.” And did these Bible-makers really believe that their God was so stupidly forgetful as to require a thing of this sort to induce him to do his duty? This is degrading him to the condition of some foolish people, and children, who tie a string round their fingers, in order that they may remember at some particular time what they otherwise expected to forget. When the character of the Almighty thus suffers by the descriptions contained in this revealed system of religion, it is high time for all honest believers to enquire into the grounds of their confidence, and the reasons why they believe a book to be divine which is destitute of all the essential features of pure and genuine theism.

The more we examine divine revelation, the more we shall discover that it is full of fiction and extravagance. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis, there is a wild and marvellous project set on foot for building a city and a tower whose top should reach to heaven. Those people must have had very strange ideas of the distance between earth and heaven, when they conceived the lofty plan of erecting this lofty and exalted tower.

It is said to have been upon the plains of Shinar, that this wandering people formed the mighty scheme, and it was there they actually set about collecting the materials for the accomplishment of this great object, and the completion of this superb and magnificent building. “And they said, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly; and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach into heaven;” to what point in the heaven

they intended to go, it is not said; if to the sun, then they would have to build their tower ninety-five millions of miles high, for this is the distance between the sun and the earth. But to give them a fair chance, since the job is a heavy one, we will suppose they intended to carry it only to the moon; this is sixty semi-diameters of the earth, or about 240,000 miles. Let any one calculate the quantity of materials, the portion of labour, and the length of time necessary for the accomplishment of such a work, and he would be inclined to believe that God Almighty was not quite so much alarmed as he is represented to have been, according to this account, but more of this hereafter. At present let any one reflect upon the folly of the scheme in regard to time and distance. Suppose they had reared their tower half way to the moon; then the men carrying brick and mortar, must have travelled an hundred and twenty thousand miles with each load; one turn up and down would have taken each labourer more than thirty years, travelling at the rate of twenty miles a day; besides what they were to do for water, provisions, &c. on the road, must be left for Bible-makers and inspired men to explain. But suppose all these difficulties to be surmounted, a new one would arise when they approached so near the heavenly bodies, as to feel more forcibly the power of attraction from that quarter than from the earth; in this case, men, bricks, and mortar, together with all their tools and other materials, would fly off in a direct line to the moon, and for ever prevent the completion of this wonderful project; the folly and impossibility of the thing, stamp the story with a character which ought to make Christian believers ashamed of calling such stuff divine revelation! But God, it is said, came down to see the city, and the tower which the children of men builded; he could not see it where he was; it was necessary to make a journey from heaven to earth, in order to discover what plots and conjurations were going on against him. This revealed system of religion will never cease to represent the Creator as a jealous God, full of apprehension for his safety, and terrified at the designs of those poor feeble mortals, of whose existence he was himself the author. "And the Lord said, behold the people is one, and they all have one language; and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Can any man of common sense believe it was necessary for God to confound the language of any people, to prevent an invasion of his celestial dominions? What nonsense is this, and how inconsistent with the perfections of him who holds in his hands the sceptre of the universe! one would suppose that the writer of this chapter believed that these Babel-builders intended to take heaven by storm, dethrone the Creator, and seize upon the government of the world; and they make God in his apprehensions conform to this contemptible idea. One remark further is necessary, and this chapter of revealed extravagance may be passed over. In

the first verse of this chapter it is said, that the whole earth was of one language and of one speech; but if we turn back to the tenth chapter, we shall find mention is made of different tongues. By what means these different languages became so soon consolidated into one, must be left for the pious and learned believers of Christianity to explain. This book of God, this book of divine revelation, is remarkable for inconsistencies; but God's ways are not like our ways, and so there is an end of the matter.

In the first part of the eighteenth chapter, there is an account of Abraham's hospitality to three travelling gentlemen whom the heading of the chapter denominates angels. They make some affectionate enquiries about Sarah, Abraham's wife; comfortable assurances are given to her, that she should hereafter become the mother of a fine son, and this sets the good old lady a laughing, fine fun indeed, and a very pretty bundle of stories it is to be called the word of God! All these matters may be passed over as uninteresting, and we shall come next to the sulphurous Sodom and Gomorrah. "And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." Here is another awful departure from the principles of pure theism, and from that respect which man owes to his Creator. God is here represented again as a great being ignorant, he had heard as many flying reports concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, the truth of which he could not well vouch for; he could not certainly tell whether things were altogether so bad as they had been represented, and therefore, said he, I will go down and make the enquiry myself, and then I shall know. Weak, imperfect man would have been under the necessity of pursuing such a plan, in order to reduce doubt to certainty; but to represent the omniscient Creator as subject to similar imperfections and necessities, is to strip him of the brilliant attributes of divinity, and reduce him to the standard of a man. God never made such a revelation of himself as this, and it is ignorance or prophanity which ascribes it to him!

The remaining part of this chapter is taken up with a very familiar conversation which is said to have taken place between God and Abraham, concerning the destruction of Sodom. In this familiar interview, Abraham takes occasion to reduce the claims and stipulations of Jehovah as low as possible, and in the true spirit of bargaining, really accomplishes the object of making God promise that he would save the city, if ten righteous persons were found in it, whereas the first stipulation was fifty. After this degrading interview was over, God, it is said in the last verse, went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place. How feeble, how imperfect, must have been their ideas concerning the Almighty Creator of the universe, when they could make such representations concerning his being and con-

duct! Like two men standing in the street, holding a conversation concerning their own affairs, and when they had done, bid good bye, and each one went to his own house. Such might have been the God of the Jews, but he falls infinitely short of that splendid being, that dignified character, that eternal Creator, whom believers in the religion of nature adore!

The twenty-second chapter contains a story of a very wicked and unnatural kind; it merits serious condemnation from every upright and intelligent mind. It begins in the following manner: "And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham and said unto him, Abraham, and he said here I am. And he said take now thy son, thine only *son*, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee in the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." If all the immoral and contemptible qualities which this book ascribes to the Creator, were collected together and presented in one point of view, there would be formed a picture of wickedness not surpassed by the Alexanders and the Neros of antiquity. God, it is said, did tempt Abraham to go and perform an action against which all the virtuous sentiments of the human heart revolt. The Devil is called the old tempter, and, according to the belief of Christians, he goeth out for the purpose of tempting and deceiving mankind. Is God to be placed on a par with the Devil, and the same kind of conduct ascribed to him? But he not only tempted him, but also, according to this account, gave a positive command to Abraham to go and kill his own son. Here opens a scene of injustice, cruelty, and inhumanity, which ought to stamp this book with eternal infamy. What, God himself laying a positive injunction upon a man to violate all the paternal affections of the human heart, to draw the murdering knife upon his own son, and subvert the very foundation of those tender attachments, by which families are united in the bonds of peace and friendship! The real God of the universe, is a God of perfect justice and universal benevolence; the God who gave this murdering command, must therefore have been a very different kind of a being, and the religion that is founded upon this corrupt theism cannot be the religion of reason and truth. The bloody system of sacrifices, whether those sacrifices consisted in offering up brutes, or human beings, is proof positive upon the face of the record, that the theology by which they are sanctioned is not of divine origin. God cannot be pleased with such ferocious deeds; he cannot delight in the carnage of his creatures; it is the homage of a virtuous mind, it is the performance of actions which comport with a pure and incorruptible morality, that can alone become acceptable to him. To say that he ever gave this command to Abraham, would be to strip him of the attributes of mercy and justice, and reduce him as low upon the standard of goodness, as imperfect man himself. If ever Abraham made an attempt of this kind, it must have been the effect of bloody and ferocious fanaticism, a fanaticism that triumphs over all the sympathetic

affections of the human heart, and brutalizes the character of man. Such a command God never gave, such an action man should never commit. The book in which such a mandate is found, and such actions are recorded, is exposed to the severest reprehensions, by the voice of reason and humanity.

We find, by further attention to this account, that Abraham was also guilty of deception, and that he concealed the truth from his son. When arrived at the fatal spot where this bloody tragedy was to be acted, Isaac with solicitude observes, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering." Abraham, as if conscience convicted, evades a direct answer, by declaring that God would provide a lamb for the purpose. After all the parade and preparations in this business, it seems that the bloody order was countermanded; an angel appears, and arrests the murdering hand of Abraham! But this does not mend the matter, for the command and the intention to obey, has marked the character of Abraham and his God with an indelible stain. But Christian believers say all this was done for the trial of Abraham's faith; was God then ignorant of the true state of Abraham's mind, and was it necessary to play off such a farce to ascertain the truth? The angel says, for now I know thou fearest God; and God knew it before whether the angel did or not.

Abraham, however, still thirsted for blood; when he found he was prevented from murdering his son, without any fresh command for slaughter, he hunts about in the bushes for some object on which he could commit violence; at last he discovers an old ram, and at him he goes with savage cruelty. Something, says he, must die, without the shedding of blood my soul will never rest. This is the true spirit of the thing, and in this manner was the father of the faithful gratified in his blood-thirsty desires. This immoral business closes by a promise of reward on the part of God, that he would bless Abraham for what he had done, and that in him all the families of the earth—be blessed. Fine compensation for such wicked, such murdering designs!

The God who holds in his hands the destinies of the universe, is incapable of such detestable transactions, and the books which contain them cannot be a revelation dictated by his wisdom and his goodness.

The twenty-ninth chapter is taken up with a long story about Jacob's courtships, contracts, and intrigues with his two cousins, Rachel and Leah, daughters of his uncle Laban. The story is trifling, destitute of all the features of interesting facts, and wholly unworthy of the dignified appellation of holy writ. The thirteenth chapter is still worse; it contains an account of the conjuring manner in which Jacob swindled his uncle Laban, out of his flocks and herds, and then gave him leg-bail for security; the story is not remarkable for delicacy, or even decency: it is a ring-streaked and speckled revelation, as may be seen by reading the 37th, 38th, and 39th

verses. It would be well for the learned believers in Christianity, to peruse with attention this chapter, and then show us, if they can, the divinity of such an indelicate piece of conjuration. Such gross impositions upon credulity, are really to be deplored, and the more so, as they tend to corrupt the purity of youthful ideas, upon the important principles of decency and philosophy.

In the 32d chapter, we have an account of the athletic exploits of Jacob and Jehovah, in which, however, Jacob comes off second best, and no wonder for the match was not equal. In verse 24, it is said, "and Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until break of day." In the caption of this chapter, it is said, that Jacob wrestled with an angel; here it is said to be a man, and in the final issue of the business, it appears to be God himself; for he says, in verse 30, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved, but whether it was God, an angel, or a man is not material, for the story carries on the face of it, the marks of fiction and not revelation.

We must seek for the mind and will of God in other sources; we must read it in a book of a very different character, than that of the Bible; that book is the volume of nature; it contains the science of life, and directs us in the path of substantial happiness.

Now, Gentlemen of the Jury, we come to speak of Moses. In the progress of our enquiries we shall find that this man Moses will cut a splendid figure. He is called a servant of the Lord, he is called the meekest man, and his character highly extolled as the intimate friend and companion of God himself; yet from the second chapter of Exodus it appears that he commenced the career of his earthly glory by committing murder, that he endeavoured to conceal the fact, and at last was obliged to run away to save his life. "And he spied an Hebrew, one of his brethren, and he looked this way, and that way, and when he saw that there was no man he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." (ver. 11 and 12.) If this had been the only murder of which Moses was guilty, his character would have descended to posterity much less stained with blood, enormity, and crime, than it is at present; but in proportion as we make investigation we shall find it savage, cruel, and ferocious; we shall find that he was the author of actions and commands which even the blood-thirsty Suwarrow has not exceeded. But some will perhaps affirm in the present case, that Moses was justifiable in taking the part of his countryman against the Egyptian because the latter was smiting the former; but from the circumstances of the case, it is to be presumed that the contest between the two was nothing more than a common fight, and that the conduct of Moses resulted from resentment. This presumption is supported by the manner in which Moses behaved himself upon the occasion, The account states that he looked this way and that way, to discover whether there were in view any witnesses who could afterward bear testimony against him, and when he found that no person was in view he fell upon the Egyptian and slew him.

His guilt is still further confirmed by the circumstance of his burying him in the sand after he was dead. If the action was righteous, why all these precautions against detection? If it was unrighteous, why did he commit it? Perhaps, believers will say, it was at the command of God; since they can point out other cases in which God is said to have given commands to Moses still more wicked and abominable. If the God of the Jews ever issued such mandates, then the God of the Jews is not the God of Nature—he is not the God whom Deists adore; he is an abandoned wretch no better than Moses himself.

The theism and morality of the third chapter may, with much propriety, be called in question; there is an evident incorrectness in both, and whenever this appears it must invalidate the supposed divine origin of any book whatever. Moses, who at this time was acting in the capacity of a shepherd to his father-in-law Jethro, saw a wonderful sight, a bush in flames, without being consumed. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, here am I. And he said, draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Here is a strange confusion of ideas, and such as represent the Jewish divinity in a contemptible point of light. First, it is the angel of the Lord that took his seat in this flaming predicament; then it appears to be God himself. This case is similar to that of old Jacob, who wrestled all night with an angel, and afterwards it turned out to be God himself. Do these inspired writers acknowledge no difference between angels and the Supreme Creator of the universe? It seems not, and of course their views must be very limited concerning the splendid perfection of the eternal God. But Moses marches up to this flaming bush to examine the singular phenomenon of its not being consumed; when it appeared that God himself was there, and called out for Moses. Moses made his responses, and received the mandate of the Most High, which consists in a solemn injunction that Moses should pull off his shoes, because the ground on which he stood was holy! Very important command, sublime revelation indeed! That God should take the trouble to seat himself in a flaming bush for the simple and foolish purpose of telling a man to pull off his shoes! Such degrading representations of the Supreme Being are strong evidences that he was not concerned in any shape whatever with those who fabricated this book.

In the last verse of this chapter we find God directing his chosen people to rob the Egyptians of their property, under the specious name of borrowing, but without any intention of returning the

things again, or any equivalent for them. "But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians." How far such proceedings and directions are consistent with the principle of immutable justice, Christian believers ought to explain.

Moses is now about to commence the career of his conjuring glory, in which, however, notwithstanding the assistance of his God, he does not appear to triumph much over the profane conjurors of antiquity, while some of modern times have certainly surpassed him. If Moses were here now with his rod and his serpent he would be obliged to yield the palm to the ingenious Rannie, while the latter would possess by far the greatest merit in as much as he forewarns the spectators that he intends to elude the vigilance of their senses and play off upon them a complete trick of deception. Not so with the miracle working Moses, for he pretends to speak in the name of heaven, and thus blinds the eyes of his deluded followers by a superstitious reverence for his character. If men of the present day can perform as great miracles as those of Moses, and these too by human art and ingenuity, why should a supernatural power be resorted to for the purpose of lifting the Jewish conjuror out of his difficulties? Those who are such strong advocates for miracles, and do believe that they constitute an insurmountable proof in favour of the divinity of the Scriptures, ought first to compare the two kinds of conjurors—those who pretend to be divine, and those who operate by mere human ingenuity. To bring a full fledged bird out of a fresh egg, is as great a miracle as to turn a rod into a serpent; yet the former has been recently performed in this city—that is, to the view of the audience, such appeared to be the fact! If the enlightened people of this age and country can be thus deceived, why should we form any better opinion of the Hebrews and Egyptians? They were not so well informed, they were more superstitious, and of course were more subject to greater impositions. This affair, therefore, of Moses turning his rod into a serpent, mentioned in the third verse of this fourth chapter, has nothing in it so very miraculous; any one well skilled in legerdemain tricks could do the same. The miracle mentioned in the 6th verse, where it is said Moses changed the colour of his hand, is still more easily performed. This could easily have been performed by means of artificial colouring. But there are other matters contained in this chapter which merit severer reprehension, and which prove with indubitable clearness that it is not a revelation from God. In the 21st verse these words are put into the mouth of God, "But I will harden his heart (that is Pharaoh's heart) that he shall not let the people go." Here is a piece of villainy at which every fanatic believer in Christianity ought to blush! God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, and afterwards to have brought distress and plagues upon him and the

people of Egypt, because he would not do what he could not do, for God himself had prevented it. Do believers in this book believe that God is such an unjust being? If they do, they destroy all our confidence in him; and if he is not such a being, the book that makes him such is without credit. There is another circumstance mentioned in the 24th verse, which is really laughable, and which overthrows at once the pretended divinity of the scheme. God is said to have met Moses at some Egyptian tavern, and from the manner in which the affair is represented, we ought to conclude that some difficulty arose between them, or that there was an old quarrel existing which had created in the bosom of Jehovah a spirit of resentment against Moses. That is, in plain common language, he had laid up a rod in soak for him a long time, and whenever he could catch him at a tavern, he intended to give him a sound whipping, or put an end to his existence. The words in the 24th verse are these: "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." Now the word *sought* implies effort without success. Whether the Lord chased him up and down through the several rooms of the tavern, or whether Moses was an overmatch for him, is a matter concerning which we cannot decide—we leave this for Christian commentators, they understand these matters well, and can doubtless give satisfactory explanations, How this matter was finally settled with him does not appear; but one thing appears very plain to the unprejudiced eye of reason, that such a degrading scandalous description of the character and conduct of God, must subvert the supposed truth and divinity of any book whatever. If any person, at this period of the world, were to say that God met the Bishop of New York, or any other clergyman at the City Hotel—that a difficulty arose between them, and that God sought to kill either one or the other, would not every reasonable man, who respects the attributes of the Creator, cry out shame upon such blasphemous representations! Is your opinion of God no more exalted than to imagine that he goes about in taverns, or other public places, with a design to kill some one of the creatures of his power, when, if he chose, it is well known, he could crush the world to atoms in a single moment. Such however is the fact in the present case before us. Let those who reverence the Bible and hate Deism read this affair and blush, either for their ignorance or their impudence.

The 21st chapter of Exodus gives an account of a number of laws, either moral, immoral, or possessing a neutral character; some of them peculiar to the Jewish nation, and some have been incorporated into the civil codes of other countries. The general character of the matters contained in this chapter, shews at the first view that it cannot be of divine origin; so far from having any just claim to this, it carries internal evidence of having been written by some person who had not been accustomed to contemplate, in an extensive manner, the nature of moral and political laws. The most ex-

ceptional thing contained in the 22nd chapter, is a law concerning witchcraft. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (See verse 18) This passage of holy writ has laid the foundation of the most cruel and detestable laws, and the most bloody enormities, at which civilized and enlightened men ought to blush and be confounded. New England, and Old England both, bear testimony to this solemn truth, and their laws upon the subject of witchcraft will stand upon the records of history as eternal testimonies of their ignorance, superstition and wickedness. The history of the Salem witchcraft in this country has marked that epoch with an indelible stain which no time can ever efface. Judges and Jurors, Clergy, Lawyers and Doctors, were all engaged in the savage work; accusation and death were then synonymous terms; in that warfare there was no discharge. This wicked book, this book of superstition, called the Holy Bible, was the cause of all these terrible outrages, these cruel murders! "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" was enough to raise the hue and cry throughout the land. Their ferocious prejudices prevented the enquiry, whether there ever was, or could be, such a thing as a witch: they took this for granted upon the authority of the Bible; and immediately proceeded to the work of death and destruction. The poor old women then stood no chance, for religious fanaticism seems to have singled out this class of society as objects on which to wreak its vengeance, for crimes supposed to have resulted from a spirit of witchcraft. It is high time to discard a book which contains a precept so foolish, so absurd, and so wicked as that in the 18th verse of this chapter. Every well informed man and woman in society knows, that there is no such thing as a witch; they do not believe a word of it, and yet many of them pretend to believe in a book which contains such antiquated nonsense. If the book be retained the witches must be retained too; it would be better to throw them both away together, and then man would become a reasonable being.

The progress of science is fatal to every species of error. We see with indubitable clearness that the witchcraft, enchantment, and sorceries of former ages, are vanishing before the diffusive light of knowledge, and men of literary habits, even though in some measure superstitious are becoming every day more unwilling to subscribe to such degrading follies. Societies will be considered as a fortuitous aggregation of children until they shall emancipate themselves from the degrading bondage of a belief in the stupid nonsense of witchcraft, sorcerers, dreams, ghosts, and a thousand other phantasms, of which religious superstition is the legitimate parent.

Moses and his God contradict themselves; for in verse 11th of the 33d chapter of Exodus it is thus written: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend;" and in verse 20th thus: "and he said, thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord

said, behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by that I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by, and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen." What a strange contradiction is here! According to the 11th verse, Moses is talking with God, face to face; and according to the 20th verse, this was impossible without producing instant death. How are these inconsistencies to be reconciled? If God revealed this book he certainly could have made it free from such gross and palpable errors; and if Moses or any other man wrote it, he ought to have been ashamed of committing such egregious blunders. To call such a chapter as this divine revelation, is a departure from every thing which common sense and the reason of man consider correct.

This chapter closes with a childish curious kind of hide and seek account of God and Moses among the rocks. Formerly Moses had the honour of looking God full in the face; but now it seems he is reduced to the degraded condition of being permitted to view only the posterior parts of the divinity! What stuff and Jewish nonsense is all this! Have Christians no better idea of the Supreme Being than to suppose he is creeping about the rocks and mountains with Moses, and that he exhibits all the parts, form and appearance of a man? Absurd as this is, yet such is the fact, and therefore their book and their opinions predicated upon such a miserable relinquishment of genuine theism are false, and merit not the attention of a reasonable being. The only attention which ought to be paid to the book is, an exposition of its fallacies, and a refutation of its destructive errors.

In the 23d chapter of Exodus, and third verse, we have a specimen of the ideas which the chosen people of God entertained of the principles of justice; but it is holy writ, and therefore, whether right or wrong, must be swallowed down under pain of everlasting damnation. The phrase and the principle to which we allude is this: "Thou shalt not countenance a poor man in his cause." The high-toned hypocritical atheistical advocate for Christianity, the celebrated Bishop of Landaff, whose arrows fall pointless from the invulnerable Paine, this great champion of blood and superstition has advanced the abominable sentiment, that God has made in this world both rich and poor;—a sentiment that dishonours God and tends to corrupt and demoralize the heart of man. When man abandons the plain grounds of fact, the visible phenomena of nature, and entangles himself in the labyrinth of incognizable causes and principles, he becomes a superstitious idiot, and his writings are calculated only to injure the science and virtue of the world. Take away all the poverty produced by kings and priests; take away all that which results from human indolence, profligacy, and extravagance; take away that which is the effect of unavoidable misfortune, and it would be fair to presume that there would be

very little balance left to charge to the account of God. But Bishop Watson wished to make God the author of poverty, and then there would be more reason for not countenancing a poor man's cause; for if God has shewn his displeasure in making some men poor, it will surely be right for man to join with God and shew his displeasure against those on whom divine power has impressed the terrible mark of poverty. Eternal justice, however, holds the balance even, and administers to all mankind, whether rich or poor, with an equal hand. Justice shews no distinction; but the sympathetic and benevolent properties of human nature are often invited to bestow upon the poor and unfortunate what the rich neither need nor ought to possess. If then we take this passage of holy writ contained in the third verse of this chapter, and bring it before the bar of truth and justice, we shall find it essentially defective in point of moral principle. According to this doctrine a man already poor and unfortunate is to be made more so by the tyrannical persecutions of society: he is not to be countenanced in his cause; he is not to obtain even common justice—the courts of law are to set their faces against him, and for no other reason in the world, only, because he is poor, and stands in greater need of justice and humanity than those whose conditions in life are more affluent and fortunate. Society ought to be just to all—to the poor and miserable, not rendered so by their own vicious actions, it ought to be sympathetic, humane, and beneficent. If this be holy writ, which contains such injustice, then save us hereafter from all kinds of holy writs, and give us legal writs, or any kind of writs except those of holy writs.

Exodus, chapter 32. "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, thus said the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his neighbour, and every man his companion." Here is a mandate of cruelty and bloody ferocity which would disgrace an Indian savage in the western wilds of America; yet this decree of murder is charged upon God himself! Brothers, companions, and friends, all fall a sacrifice without distinction and without mercy! Ye pious and learned divines of the Christian church, what have you to offer in palliation of crimes so abominable? Do you really believe that God ever issued such a command? Can you believe a book to be divine which contains principles so cruel and ferocious? Have you no sympathy? Have you lost all sense of justice? Where are the feelings of humanity when you call such wickedness the word of God, and a revelation from the all-wise Creator! Read this passage, contemplate the horrid principle therein contained, throw aside your prejudices, exercise your reason, and then tell us, if you please, what you think of this book called the Holy Bible?

Numbers, chapter 31. In the first eighteen verses of this chapter, we are presented with the gradations and the climax of Jewish rascality. The Hebrew Divinity, the Jewish Jehovah, has also covered himself all over with malignant and murdering glory, and completed, in the most detestable manner, the savage brutality of his character. His unjust, his cruel and bloody commands, mark the conduct of a barbarian, and describe the character of an unrelenting tyrant. The chosen band second the rapacity of their God, and heaven and earth combine in acts of horrid cruelty, against innocence and virtue. The greatest Christian fanatic on earth, is challenged to offer any thing like a reasonable apology for the abominable wickedness exhibited in this chapter. Ye heated and persecuting advocates of revelation, ye followers of the meek and humble Jesus, you are invited, you are called upon, by the voice of truth and humanity, to read and contemplate this extraordinary portion of holy writ. Here it is, ready for your perusal:—

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying: arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, through out all the tribes of Israel shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses: and they slew all the males, and they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also, the son of Peor, they slew with the sword. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle; and all their flocks, and all their goods: and they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and beasts. And they brought the captives and the prey, and the spoil unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan, near Jericho. And Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them have ye saved all the women alive? Behold these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, kill every male among the little

ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves."

This shocking mandate will tarnish for ever the character of Moses, and the God whom he adored. The whole passage is destitute of all the features of genuine morality; it possesses none of the characteristics of individual or national justice; it sinks the character of the Bible below the murdering histories of ancient or modern Alexanders, and leaves the human mind to contemplate, with extreme disgust, the savage brutality of the Jewish Jehovah, and his chosen people. We demand, most pointedly, of believers in revelation, an answer to this question—are not the ideas contained in the 17th and 18th verses inconsistent with justice, decency, humanity, and divine perfection? The married women were all to be murdered; the male children were all to be murdered; and the unmarried women were all to be kept alive for the purposes of debauchery, in the hands of unrelenting enemies, who had murdered their mothers, their brothers, and their nearest relations! Great God! this is not thy book; it is a book of wickedness and fanaticism; it is a book of murder, conflagration and carnage; it is a book of the most detestable debauchery; and if superstition had not hardened the heart of man and annihilated his moral temperament, he would be ashamed to call such dreadful wickedness a revelation from the Supreme Creator of the universe!

Numbers, chapter 33. It is not to be wondered at, that all national justice has been set aside by the followers of the meek Moses and the humble Jesus, since it can be demonstrated from the Bible and Testament, that the Jewish Jehovah and his miraculously Begotten Son have, in defiance of the immortal principles of justice, sanctioned the nefarious sentiment of national hatred, war, and universal animosity. In proof of this assertion and high charge, we shall cite two passages, the first is in the chapter of Numbers now under consideration, beginning at the fiftieth verse: "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho, saying, speak unto the Children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places. And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell therein; for I have given you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families." This unjust, cruel, and predatory mandate will stain for ever the character of that national divinity whom the Jews sometimes adored, and sometimes reproached with a neglect of duty. Man has been so deceived by false religions, that he has become as timid, and as weak as a child, in regard to examining the theological phantoms of antiquity. He has been taught to believe, that the God in the Old Testament was the real

God of Nature, and of course, he dare not look him full in the face, or call in question the morality of his conduct, or the nature of his attributes. No wonder, for whoever should make the attempt, would behold an immoral monster, moving with vast and destructive powers over the face of the earth, commanding murder, destroying nations, and breaking down everywhere the great pillars of justice! If we were to follow this God of the Jews through all the directions which he gave to his chosen people we should see but little to admire, and much to condemn; we should see theft, individual murder, national carnage, conflagration of towns and cities, universal pillage, and wide spreading devastation, frequently commanded by the Jewish Jehovah, and as frequently put in execution by the vagrant tribes, which he had chosen for his peculiar favourites. We have proved, over and over again, the truth of these assertions, in these comments, and we challenge the strongest believer in Christendom, to destroy the evidence by which we have established the truth of our positions. We are willing to take all the consequences of the charge of vanity, when we affirm that we sincerely believe that the comments which we have made upon the four first books in the Bible, do really present a truer explanation of this part of the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians, than all that has ever been written by believing commentators, from the time of Moses down to the present day. In consequence of this impression, we most earnestly recommend these comments to the unprejudiced perusal of all Jews and Christians; especially we invite the clergy, whose business it is to understand well the meaning of these sacred books, to pass them once more under their pious inspection, and compare these comments with the original text. It is very important that every man should understand what he reads, and that giving a wrong construction to any author, is frequently productive of the most serious and incalculable mischiefs.

We have before asserted in this comment, that the Jewish Jehovah, and his miraculously begotten son, had sanctioned war and national animosities. It has been proved in regard to the former, it now remains to adduce the evidence against the latter. It is as follows: "Think not, (says Jesus), that I came to send peace on earth, I tell you nay: I came not to send peace, but a sword." A more explicit declaration could not have been made by a mortal or immortal being! The object is avowed, the design is apparent; and Jesus, like the Jewish God, stands justly exposed to the high charge of sowing discord among nations, and scattering war and devastation over the face of the earth.

Book of Leviticus. Justice is the first great and important principle of social existence. It appertaineth to all intelligent beings, and ought to form, in a pre-eminent degree, the distinguishing characteristic of their nature. A state of injustice, is a state of predatory warfare; it is a state where all the rancorous passions are let loose, and where discord forms the hell of social life. Without jus-

tice, man is but a brutal savage—the enemy of his species; and all his actions are hostile to the common and best interests of the whole community. If justice be a necessary attribute in the character of a human being, it must be still more so in regard to the character of the supreme God. A book which licences injustice, when written by man, we should call a false book; how much more forcibly will this idea apply, when God is said to be the writer or dictator of a book, and this book is found to contain commands of the most barefaced injustice! Such, however, is the fact in regard to the Bible, as we shall prove from the 25th chapter of Leviticus.

No wonder that Christians, or believers in revelation, should hold, without a blush, millions of their fellow creatures in a state of slavery: for the Jewish God has here sanctioned the nefarious practice, by his own commands; “Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families, that are with you, which they begat in your land; and they shall be your possession; and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bond-men for ever: but over your brethren, the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.” Reason and justice, and the American constitutions, in conformity to these principles, have declared that all men are born free and equal. This great moral axiom, this doctrine, which forms the only consolation in regard to the future destiny of individuals, and of nations, is here contradicted by a book which claims divine origin, and pretends to be the word of God. Is then, the word of God at variance with the voice of reason? Does it oppose the principles of immortal justice, and give celestial sanction to the abominable custom of slavery? Yes, such is the character of this *holy religion*; such are the doctrines which revelation inculcates. This single passage is of itself sufficient to stamp on the book the mark of infamy, and hold it up to the derision of the free citizens of all countries. Men who think society ought to be governed by principle, and that this principle should include justice and utility, ought instantly to abandon, at least in theory, the idea of unconditional servitude; they ought to place a sentiment of condemnation upon any book where the doctrine of slavery is inculcated: they ought to perceive that all national distinctions serve only to generate national hostility, and to destroy that sentiment of universal philanthropy, so necessary to be cherished for the general happiness of the world. When I am instructed to love my own family, and hate that of my neighbour, I am placed in a predicament which circumscribes the useful and benevolent affections of my nature, and I become a creature of instinct, instead of exalted reason. When I am told that I should love the spot of earth on which I was born, in preference to any other part of the globe, I ought to perceive in this kind of instruction the imbecility of ignorance, and the tenacity of narrow prejudice, When

I am told that my own nation is superior to that of all others in science, virtue and happiness, I ought to suspect the correctness of the observation, and compel my mind to take a comprehensive view of the opposite evidence. Above all, when I am told that one nation has a right to enslave another, I ought not to hesitate a single moment to denounce this as a damnable political heresy, and to return, with hasty steps, to the solid ground of reason, and the permanent rights of human existence. Turn, for a single moment, to this passage of Leviticus; the Jews were not permitted to enslave or treat with rigour their own people; but they might buy, sell, and enslave surrounding nations, with the greatest impunity, and under divine protection. If this be a decree of God's, then we may truly say, that *God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts*, but that one system of tyrannical dominion hath, by divine command, covered the whole earth, and produced universal ignorance, wretchedness, and misery.

Whatever tarnishes the intellectual glory of the supreme being, or strips him of the benevolent affections of his nature, ought not to be denominated a divine revelation; but, on the contrary, it is proof upon the face of the record, that God has had nothing to do with it, for he cannot, and he will not, speak against himself. In the 26th chapter of this book, however, there is a string of curses, with which God has threatened his chosen people, in case of certain specified defects of conduct, and these curses include in them such brutal ferocity of character and temperament, as would effectually disgrace the most uncultivated savage. Punishment for crimes is undoubtedly necessary and proper; no one, however, but the Jewish God, is capable of exhibiting such proofs of malignant asperity, as those which are exhibited in this chapter. He says, in verse 16, "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain; for your enemies shall eat it." The first of the threats is sufficiently cruel and malignant, and marks the character of a savage, instead of a God; but the second is a thousand times more detestable, and places the Jewish Jehovah upon a par with the barbarians of modern and ancient times, who, in certain cases, are said to have fed upon human flesh. This brutal command of this national divinity, lets down his character below all conception, and proves that the book in which it is found, is not a divine revelation from God, but an imposition upon the world. If any Deistical writer of the present day, were to insert such a clause in his book, and advise his readers to eat up their own children, there would be, and with great justice too, a hue and cry of vengeance after him through the whole country! Look, then, ye believers in the Old Testament, to the bloody, brutal, barbarous, and murdering commands, contained in this book of Leviticus, and after perusing it with attention, once more ask yourselves this important question: Is this book true, is it divine, is it honourable to God, or is it useful to man? Some of it is so indelicate that nobody can read it without blushing for the bestial inde-

ency of the priesthood, and a great deal of it is so foolish, that it is not worth reading. Under these circumstances, it would be much for the honour, as well as the interests of society, to turn its attention to the sublime and immortal truths of the moral and physical world, and leave these filthy systems of ancient theology, to sink into that universal contempt which the progress of science and virtue is preparing for them.

Book of Numbers. The first ten chapters of this book do not contain a single idea which deserves the notice of an intelligent man for a moment; but in perusing the eleventh chapter, we behold, once more, the angry passions of the Jewish Jehovah let out against the meek and heaven-struck Moses. These irascible qualities of this national God, are attacked by the chosen servant of the Most High, and Moses appears in conspicuous contest, with the divinity which claims his adoration and the homage of the Jewish nation. As we are determined not to quit this *holy bible* till we have exposed it in all the native deformity of its character; so it will be necessary, in conformity to this resolution, to make frequent quotations from the book itself, to demonstrate, beyond all contradiction, the impurity of its principles, and the immorality of its precepts. Here follows a passage which requires our attention. "Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. And Moses said unto the Lord, wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant! and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burthen of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou dealst thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness. And say thou unto the people, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh; (for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt.) Therefore, the Lord will give you fish, and ye shall eat: ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? And Moses said, the people amongst whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" Is there any reasonable man that can read the foregoing passage and not see in it all the jarring conten-

tions, all the angry passions and the reciprocated recriminations of altercating and malignant partizans. It appears, however, that Moses was rather the best character of the two; for in verse 10 it is said, that God was angry, and Moses was only displeased. Anger rises in its character above displeasure, and of course in the present case the Hebrew God was rather more heated than his terrestrial competitor. In the 12th verse, Moses pointedly interrogates his God, and inquires of him relative to the origin of the Hebrew people; he says, have I begotten this people, that I should bear the whole burthen? This implies strongly that God was their maker, and that in the estimation of Moses, he ought to have done more toward taking care of them. Fine language this to pass between mortal man and the God whom he adores. In the 15th verse, Moses gets in a rage and reproachfully says to his God, "If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand." This sentiment of reproach is mingled with a kind of defiance, and proves very clearly that Moses did not care a farthing whether he was any longer upon good terms with Jehovah or not. The 20th verse of this chapter, is most disgustingly indelicate; God makes Moses tell the people, that "*they shall eat for a whole month, until it come out at their nostrils, and it be loathsome unto them!*" Oh, shame upon you, ye learned believers in revelation! Did you ever see, upon the face of the earth, a book so abominably filthy? In the 31st verse, there is a whale of a story concerning sending quails upon the earth two cubits deep, to the extent of a day's journey this way and that; this appears also to be matter of spite, and adds something to the revengeful lustre of Jehovah's character. Christians, let me tell you, that one page of morality is worth millions of such foolish stories

In the 13th chapter of this book, we have some more specimens of Jewish plotting and contriving for the commission of murder, and for setting on foot a plan to dispossess an inoffensive people of the rights and property to which they were justly entitled. The meek, but blood-thirsty Moses, sends off a number of spies to the land of Canaan, to ascertain the number of its inhabitants, quality of soil, &c. The following verses will show the temperament of this man of God. "And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain. And see the land what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not," ver. 17. This temporizing proposition of Moses, for which, however, he was not remarkable, was opposed by one Caleb, whose blood at that moment had become more heated than his coadjutors in villainy. He speaks peremptorily in the 30th verse, "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Here is the true spirit of conquest; neither Moses nor Caleb cared a single farthing whether the cause was just or unjust, whether it was right or wrong; the

land they were determined to have, and in order to accomplish their object, they must murder men, women, and children, and trample down all the exalted principles which ought to adorn the character of man. Great God! Are these savage and brutal conquests the consequences of thy divine and immortal mandates? Ye pious believers in revelation, whose moral sensibility has been blunted by the cruel spirit of fanaticism, will ye never learn to divest your God of savage ferocity? Will you never ascribe to the divinity whom you adore, the high characteristic features without which even man himself would be a wretch and a scoundrel? In short, will you never perceive that wisdom and virtue are essential ingredients in a good character, whether that character be human or divine.

This, Gentlemen of the Jury, is the conclusion of Mr. Palmer's comment on the Bible, at least, the whole that we, in this country, know to have been written by him. You cannot fail to have marked the high, the enthusiastic, even the indignant morality of his character: indignant at the very thought that immorality should be scattered among mankind under the imposing sound of divine revelation. The writings called the Holy Scriptures are as inferior to the writings of Elihu Palmer, as the dauber of the most rude and ridiculous country Ale-house sign-board is inferior to a Raphael, a Titian, or a Michael Angelo! What then can be the motives for instituting such prosecutions as these before the Court? What, but to perpetuate ignorance, massacre, plunder, and all the evils which desolate, impoverish, or demoralize society?

I shall now pass to the second count of the Information, which is set forth as follows; "This story of the virgin (alluding to the fable of Jesus and his virgin mother) and the Ghost, to say no more of it, does not wear the appearance of much religion, and it would not, it is presumed, be difficult, in any age or country, to find a sufficient number of men who would pretend to be Ghosts, if by such pretences they could obtain similar favours, especially with the consoling reflection superadded, of becoming the progenitors of the pretended Saviour of a wicked and apostate world. How absurd and contradictory are the principles and the doctrines of this religion; in vain do its advocates attempt to cover this transaction with the machinery of Ghosts and supernatural agents. The simple truth is, that their pretended Saviour is nothing more than an illegitimate Jew, and their hopes of salvation, through him, rest on no better foundation than that of fornication or adultery." Such is not the simple truth, Gentlemen of the Jury; the simple truth is, that, no such characters as Jesus, his Mother, and supernatural father, ever existed. That is the simple truth; and that settles the whole matter at once. In answer to this count of the Information, I have merely to plead the Unitarian Act, the 53d of George the Third, which especially provides for the encouragement of the disbelief of the divinity of Jesus. An act passed for that express purpose; to tolerate and to encourage that which, before, was never an offence against law. If I could any where trace the proof of the existence

of such persons as Jesus and his mother, I should feel it my duty to dilate upon this count; but as I know the Attorney General, nor his Lordship on the Bench, with all their University learning, cannot lead me to those proofs, I forbear to offer a word of comment upon that, which if introduced in any shape, must be indelicate, and not fit for public conversation; so I pass to the third count, which contains the following paragraph.

“ If the Christian Religion be the work of a divine and Almighty mind, it should have been presented free from blemish and moral impurity; it should have been clear, intelligible, upright and immaculate in all its principles; it should have come clothed with innocence, and untarnished by that debauchery and blood, which now constitute so considerable a portion of this Holy and Divine system. But when we behold in a book the grossest violation of theoretic moral excellence and practical purity; the greatest indecency and the most disgusting indelicacy of sentiment, there is good ground to suspect that such a book has been the production of weak and vicious men, and not the work of infinite wisdom.”

Well, Gentlemen, this is the third count, and what does it contain? Why the language of truth and morality, to the very letter. Has the Attorney General got a Bible with him to show that it contains the language of falsehood? Will he dare to lay open the pages of that book to the court, and prove Elihu Palmer a deceiver? I challenge him to the task. If he cannot do this, for what purpose does he come here with his Information? He is as much ashamed to exhibit here and comment upon the contents of the Bible, as I should be; and I do candidly assure you that my powers of face are not equal to the task. What then does he want to protect? Not the public morals, for they have no kind of connection with the Bible. What he wants to protect are, the public immoralities, the lewd stories, the obscene sketches of the age, and whatever can degrade and deteriorate the human character. This is the ground and the only ground, Gentlemen of Jury, upon which he can ask you for a verdict of Guilty against me; and further, it is the only ground upon which you can give such a verdict. I am not ashamed to discuss with any one the contents of any book that I have ever published; nor am I ashamed to discuss privately with the Solicitor General the contents of the Bible, though I tell him to his face, that he is ashamed to meet me on that ground, and that he dares not. He comes here armed with powers. He has had the power to form his own Jury, to choose his own time of trial. He has the Judge for his patron, and a host of wigged gentry about him as noddies to menace you into a verdict that will suit him. But I tell you, Gentlemen, fearlessly, that if there be one honest, unprejudiced man among you, a verdict of Guilty will never be yours, because it cannot be morally and legally returned. If my conduct be tried, if there be any trial in the matter, I must be acquitted.

The fourth count is the last I have to notice, as the fifth and last are repetitions; it contains the following words:—

“ The cursory survey that has been taken of the immoral pre-

cepts and principles contained in the Old and New Testament, clearly proves that these books are not of divine origin. The God of the Jews and Christians, according to their own showing, is a changeable, passionate, angry, unjust, and revengeful being; infuriate in his wrath, capricious in his conduct, and destitute, in many respects, of those sublime and immutable properties which really belong to the preserver of the universe. The characters spoken of in the Scriptures, as the favourites of heaven, such as Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Paul, are none of them good moral characters; it is not probable, therefore, that they were selected by the creator as the organs of celestial communication. In the Old Testament, natural and individual justice is disregarded, and God is made the accomplice of crimes which human nature abhors. The maxims of the New Testament are a perversion of all correct principles of moral virtue. The whole system is calculated to take man out of himself, to destroy his own confidence in his own energies, to debase his faculties, vitiate his social affections and brutalize the most useful qualities of human existence. Moses, Mahomet, and Jesus, can lay as little claim to moral merit, or to the character of the benefactors of mankind, as any three men that ever lived upon the face of the earth. They were all of them impostors; two of them were notorious murderers in practice, and the other a murderer in principle; and their existence united, has, perhaps, cost the human race more blood, and produced more substantial misery, than all the other fanatics of the world."

I have now, Gentlemen of the Jury, taken from the record every sentence it has taken from the volume in question. I have shrunk from nothing of it. All that can be said of it is, what I said at the commencement of my defence, that it is one book commenting upon the contents of another book. Now, if my book be an unfair comment upon the Attorney General's volume, let him shew it; let him display the beauties of his work; let him turn to the pages and read where I will direct him, and then let him leave you to judge between the superiority of the two volumes. If he shrinks from doing this, he comes here in the character of a tyrant and a deceiver, and deserves to be treated by you as such. I shall not spare him, and I am only sorry that his book should be so indelicate as to screen itself from all public exposure. Let him shew to you, Gentlemen, that such characters as Moses and Jesus did ever exist, before he calls upon you to protect them from a fair comment upon their fabled characters. The Attorney General is altogether a man of the law; this court is altogether a court of law; his Lordship on the bench is altogether a Judge of law, and you are a Jury met and sworn to try nothing but whether I have committed a breach of the law. Now, in the publication of this book, there is nothing that relates to law. I am not aware that it alludes to any one living character, and if it does, he is not found here to complain, or to accuse me of doing him an injury.

Christianity is attacked, cries the Attorney General; so is Juda-

ism and Mahometanism, but Christianity has nothing to do with law, often as it has been stated to be a part and parcel. If Christianity be part and parcel of the law of the land, now let it be expounded, now let it be shewn when it began to be so; and, above all, let the lawyers tell us what physical combinations constitute Christianity. Unless they can do this, they can make no law of it, for law has nothing to do with phantoms. You are sworn "well and truly to try," Gentlemen, and to do this you must try whether I have committed a breach of intelligible law. What you do not understand you cannot try. What the Judge cannot explain to your comprehension, can never be law. I admit that my book is a comment upon the system of words called Christianity; but I will not admit that Christianity makes any part of the law. I know that it does not, and I know that no lawyer can shew the contrary of what I affirm. If they can do it, now is their time. Witchcraft was once called a part of the law, or a breach of law, but where is that power gone? Heresy, too, was called a breach of law, but how has that nonsense been dispensed with? Blasphemy is equally an unfounded charge, and Christianity is nothing more of a physical power than witchcraft was. The one is priestcraft, the other is witchcraft, both are, and were, delusions, and neither of them have any thing to do with law.

I am now, Gentlemen, about to draw my defence to a conclusion, and it becomes necessary that I should recapitulate and enforce that part of my argument which relates to the question of law; though in fact the whole turns upon this; but I mean that part of it which shews that I have committed no breach of the law, and that you have no evidence produced before you to shew, or even to hint any thing of the kind.

You have heard it sworn that I have sold a book; the Attorney General has called it a very bad book; and I have called it a very good one; which constitute the whole of the case before you for trial. This may be law, or a legal proceeding upon the star chamber practice, of which we have seen no small portion in the Court of King's Bench, since that favourite court of despotism was abolished; but it is not a legal proceeding upon the known and defined laws of the land.

Trials for libel were not known in this country before the star chamber introduced them, and the want of a star chamber was not felt by ancient despots until the printing press began to work. In all old governments knowledge is dreaded, particularly when it is introduced in some new shape, such as is the case of the volume now before the court. There is not a sentence in that volume, which the Attorney General can refute by sober discussion; and it is because he knows this, because the book innovates upon an established and an existing system, and because he knows that the advocates interested in the support of that system, cannot refute a sentence of my publication, that he comes here to get a verdict that may imprison the publisher. Let him discuss the contents of the book. Let those discuss the matter who are trained at our universities for such

purposes; but do not you, Gentlemen, lend yourselves to such despotic views, as to crush the publisher because the book cannot be answered.

The inference that this is a question of law is drawn from the following ground, namely, that Christianity is part of the law, and that this book questions the truth of Christianity. But this is a most lame conclusion, as I will shew in a few words. In the first place, if we admit that Christianity is part of the law, it may be shewn that it is no offence to question its truth or value, because every man is at liberty to pass his opinion upon a law, and say it is bad or it is good, without being guilty of a breach of it. Expressing an opinion of the law, or a law, and violating it, are two distinct things; so that, upon this point of view, I claim an acquittal at your hands, for in the very worst point of view, I have committed no breach of law. I have done no more, upon the Attorney General's own shewing, than to publish another man's opinion, a foreigner's opinion of English law.

But Christianity can make no part of law, because it is not a property. It can neither be given nor taken away, and, what is still more unlike law, it cannot be defined. No man can tell what the word means, so as to make himself understood by another. He has no signs for his ideas; no relations for his words, when he speaks of Christianity. A law may be made to make every one go to a church and practise certain ceremonies; but a law cannot be made to make a man believe or embrace Christianity, because it is nothing that can be touched by law. It is above the influence of law, and those who would wish to designate it as something subject to law, pay it but a very poor compliment. It is just like saying, "our human laws have more power than those we call divine." Those who seek to protect their religion by law or despotism, proclaim themselves hypocrites, for they confess that they fear to trust that to discussion on which all their hopes are centered, and which they call almighty! They profess to adore what they fear to discuss! This is an anomaly peculiar to Christians. A Mahometan, a Brahmin, or even an American Indian, would scorn to shelter under such a subterfuge and inconsistency.

Be bold and honest, then, Gentlemen of the Jury, and proclaim to the world that you, as Christians, do not fear discussion on the merits of your religion. But above all, respect your oaths. You have sworn to try, "well and truly to try," whether I have committed a breach of law, and whatever may be said to you from the bar or the Bench, I defy any one to prove that I have committed a breach of law. This is not an action for damages, where the matter is left to your opinion as to the right and wrong, the injury given and sustained; but if it cannot be proved by competent witnesses that I have broken a law, and it has not been proved; (and without such proof by witnesses, the word of an Attorney General, or Chief Justice, is nothing at all) you are bound as good men, and true to your oaths and the laws, to give me a verdict of Not Guilty. To give a contrary verdict, without any proof of a breach of law, corresponding

with it, will be to stamp trial by Jury with infamy. You may well say, how is it the verdicts in such cases have nearly all been verdicts of Guilty? I tell you, that it was because Juries were ignorant of the matter they had to try; a proper defence was never laid before them as a proper guide, and they bowed to the nod of the Judge, for want of better authority.

JUDGMENT.

COURT OF KING'S BENCH, THURSDAY, FEB. 6, 1823.

The Solicitor-General prayed the judgment of the Court on William Tunbridge, who had been convicted, at the last Sittings at Guildhall, of selling a "scandalous, infamous, and blasphemous libel of, and concerning, the Christian religion, entitled, 'Palmer's Principles of Nature.'"

The Lord Chief Justice having read his notes of the trial, called upon the defendant to state whatever he had to offer in mitigation of punishment.

No affidavits were put in on either side.

The Defendant then proceeded to deliver the following address:—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIPS,

THE purport of my present address is, to shew why no kind of penal judgment should be passed upon me, and as I mean to reason the matter fairly with your Lordships, and as I really wish to avoid, as far as truth will permit, the utterance of any thing that can be offensive to the most fastidious person, so I trust you will hear me out, and not interrupt me in the midst of a sentence, or even of a paragraph, where the sense of what precedes is expressed by what follows. I wish to make this provision, this treaty, with your Lordships, in consequence of the practice lately followed, exhibiting some very bad precedents. In cases of this kind, interruptions and suppressions of speech seem, I regret to say, to have become almost matter of course. On the 20th of January, I appeared before the Lord Chief Justice, at the Guildhall, in the City of London, to defend myself against the charges in an ex officio Information filed by the Attorney General. When different police officers, of the Bow Street Establishment, swore that a book, called "Palmer's Principles of Nature," was purchased at a shop, or in a house, in Water Lane, Fleet Street, and that I was in the house at the time. Not one of them would swear that I delivered the book, or that I saw it delivered. Now, though I candidly acknowledge to your Lordships, that I had been in the employ of Mr. Carlile for the last three quarters of the last year, I was not privy to the sale of this identical book. I candidly acknowledge that I did sell many copies of the work, and that I continued to sell them as long as there was a copy of the edition left, yet this confession is no evidence for your Lordships, or for a Jury, and no one has shewn, no one can shew, that I did sell the copy which has been made the subject of this prosecution; were I ever so willing to avow it, I could not safely do it, as nothing has been shewn to bring any recollection of the matter to

my mind. Your Lordships have no evidence before you that I did *publish* the book which is set forth in the Information, and the verdict of the Jury was not a deliberate verdict, but a hasty expression, caught up in a squabble, and given before the proper time.

This I offer to your Lordships as one reason, and a legally sufficient reason too, why no kind of punishment should be inflicted upon me: but I have other reasons of far greater weight and importance.

To the want of evidence, I would add, that one of the officers stated in Court, that he thought me the proprietor of the business: yet so far from that statement being true, I here publicly declare that I was not even engaged directly by Mr. Carlile, but by the person to whom the business was entrusted. I had not the slightest influence over the management of the concern, and I never sent a line to, or received a line from, Mr. Carlile, after I was engaged in the business, nor until I had pleaded to the Information in this Court, and then only upon the subject of the prosecution. As far as there was any subordinate part in the business, I filled it, and though many have entered the same concern, desirous of, or willing to, brave prosecution, my desire was, from the first to the last, to evade it, and to do nothing that would subject me to it. I had no desire to encounter such Judges, such Juries, and such practices, (*laws*, I know they are not) as put the philosopher on the footing of a felon, and punish both alike; which, whenever mercy does operate, operates in favour of the felon, who becomes exclusively the favourite.

The Lord Chief Justice.—You cannot, Sir, proceed in this manner.

The Defendant.—My Lord, I was sentenced to a dungeon with common felons, nay, with men convicted of detestable offences, and that too, by you, a Christian Judge in the 19th century.

The Lord Chief Justice.—If you persist in this line of defence, the Court has but one course to pursue. We are willing to hear you as long as you have any thing to urge in mitigation of punishment.

The Defendant.—I have stated that I had no desire to encounter prosecution; but I am not disposed to mask, or to deny my principles: they correspond with those developed in the highly philosophical work now in question, and I feel the fullest assurance that no persecution can destroy them, no, nor even bring them into disrepute for a single moment, with those who comprehend them. The bigot may rail, and the despot may punish, but principles remain the same, they are eternal and immutable. You cannot check their eventual triumph, your *very prosecutions* and *punishments* will prove in the end inimical to your wishes and intentions.

The next reason, in the scale of importance, why no penal judgment should be passed upon me, is that I have had no trial: I have been denied the right of making a defence.—I entered the Court prepared to make a defence, a defence which must have left a favourable impression on every honest and enlightened mind. My intention was, first, to shew the Jury that there was no kind of evi-

dence laid before them to support the charges of the Information, or to shew that I had committed any breach of the law : second, to read the whole of the volume prosecuted, and thus to prove to the Jury, that its morality and its philosophical character were of the best and highest order, that its publication could not constitute a breach of the law : and, third, to lay a number of cases and a mass of reasonings before them, for the purpose of exposing the real character, the absolute wickedness of such prosecutions: and thus to dissuade the Jury from giving their support to such mischievous perversions; but I was stopped by the Judge before I had read a quarter part of what I had to offer: I had no trial: there was no defence allowed; I was condemned unheard.

I was prepared with an analysis of every extract from the volume set forth in the Information; I could and would have shewn, that they were warranted in truth, sound in morals, and conformable to law. These things I shall, in some measure, attempt to do this day. In short, I was prepared with as complete and as relevant a defence, as ever was offered to a Jury; and when the whole shall appear in print, it will reflect no credit on those who were unwilling, any more than on those who refused to hear it.

The statement I have just made, forms, of itself, a strong argument, I may say a conclusive argument, in law, why no punishment should be inflicted upon me, but the stronger and the higher argument which I shall now lay before you is, the impolicy and wickedness of this prosecution. Impolitic, because it defeats the alleged purpose of its being instituted, wicked, because it is an attempt to chain down intellect; to curb the enquiring mind, and to counteract the good effects which would follow a free and open discussion on all subjects; and particularly, on a subject so expensively supported, as to form the principal feature in the taxation of this country. I mean the religious institution of this and the neighbouring Island.

The high ground of justification which I have now to proceed upon, is this; that your Lordships, as Judges of the law, have nothing to do with protecting the religion of the country; and that you cannot, upon any principle of reason or justice, connect the *religion* with the *law* of the land. The Church has its peculiar government, its legislature, its court, and its judges, and is the only existing legal power to take cognizance of matters connected with religion. No formal transfer of this power to the Court of King's Bench has ever taken place, and it was the ancient law and practice of this country, that the Church, as a government within itself, should manage all *its own affairs*. When *hereticks were burnt*, they were not, I believe, sentenced to death by the Court of King's Bench, or any other of our Common Law Courts, but by officers of the Ecclesiastical Courts. The Judges of the Court of King's Bench, or the Judges of the Assize Court, had the merit, the honour, and the credit, of destroying a few harmless old women, under the denomination of witches, but the power to destroy heretics was reserved to the Ecclesiastical Courts. I am an heretic of the present day, and

I deny the power of your Lordships, as Judges of the political law, to become, or to take upon yourselves, the character of Religious Inquisitors.

The assertions which have been of late so often made, that libels which blaspheme the religion of the country are offences at Common Law, are totally without any just and proper foundation. Before the days of Sir Matthew Hale, such an assertion was never heard, and nothing has grown up since those days to add to the Common Law of the land. In fact, the improvements, to which we have arrived in legislation, ought to have rendered the whole of the Common Law obsolete for a century past.

Religion, in point of meaning or definition, is a word of no more weight, and can have no more connection with law, than the word, *Witchcraft*. *Witchcraft* was once part and parcel of the Common Law of the land, and, as a word, had even more influence, and carried more terror with it, than the word *Religion*. Both words express a fear of supernatural powers, which the philosopher smiles at and dispenses with: and as surely as the idea of the word *Witchcraft* has been scouted among intelligent men, so surely will the word *Religion* be subjected to the same fate. It relates to nothing, and demonstrates nothing; it can have nothing to do with law, which to be valid, must be a compact that relates to property. Life is a property; liberty is a property; but religion cannot come under the denomination of a property of which one man can be deprived by the intervention of another, against the will of the other. If it be a property, in any sense of the word, it may as such be held or yielded at pleasure, without affecting the interest, or property of another. Religion is a thing of fancy, a thing of the imagination, about which there can be no compact between man and man; and, consequently, there can be no religion of the law, or according to law, or in any way connected with the law. It is not sufficient that it has been so held by Sir Matthew Hale, or by different judges and lawyers since his time, I stand here to shew, that the thing is both a moral and physical impossibility; this I have shewn, and this I will continue to shew by other arguments: here is a point upon which no lawyer in this Court can oppose me, nor can your Lordships punish me, without violating the most just and most important conclusions.

Blasphemy towards religion, or to blaspheme religion, is no offence against law. If I blaspheme, that is, if I speak evil of another man's religion, I do nothing more than dispute the propriety of certain opinions. If I blaspheme, I cannot deprive him of his opinions, so long as he is convinced of their certainty; but if I convince him that they are wrong, I do a moral act, and he had better be deprived of them than hold them. All this has nothing to do with law; yet this is the sum and substance of the charge against me, set forth in the Attorney General's Information; yet it was against this absurd charge that I was not allowed to defend myself! the Chief Justice certainly did tell me, that I might go on as long as I kept to a *legitimate* defence, but *legitimacy*, according to its modern definition,

is become a most odious word, and expresses nothing short of absolute dictation, or the will and pleasure of despotism.

Mr. Justice Bayley.—Sir, you were interrupted by the act and pleasure of a Judge, bound by the solemn sanction of an oath, and he would be guilty of a violation of that oath, if he permitted a defendant to persevere in a defence, which was not legitimate.

The Defendant.—Oh, legitimacy is a curse. It is the miserable pretence upon which Spain and Portugal are about to be attacked.

Mr. Justice Best.—As long as you confine yourself to topics in mitigation, we are willing to hear you; but we owe it to the other suitors of the Court, not to allow the time to be consumed with a parcel of unintelligible trash, which has no connection whatever with the subject.

The Defendant.—Spain and Portugal are told by the despots of Europe in power, that their existing governments must be put down, because they do not proceed upon the *legitimate* plan of these despots; and because the people of these two well constituted governments are obstinately honest, and convinced of the rectitude of their opinions and proceedings, they too are to be punished with all the miseries that war and invading armies can inflict. If such be *legitimacy*, either in cases of government abroad, or in cases of trial in our Courts of Law at home, I will war with it to the utmost of my power.

It is curious to observe, and worthy of your Lordship's notice, how the advocates of these persecutions have been obliged to shift their positions, and excuses for their conduct, with the growing knowledge of mankind. When heretics were burnt, a plausible reason was assigned, that it was to the advantage of the victim to destroy his body for the purpose of saving his soul. Had the idea been founded in truth, it would have been not only plausible, but praiseworthy, and taking a comparative view of the knowledge of the times, then and now, there is a greater excuse for those who destroyed heretics, than for these who now imprison the bodies and confiscate the property of individuals, for publishing philosophical books, the truth and morality of which are unimpeachable, and the arguments they contain unanswerable. Yes, my Lords, I look upon the Bonnors and the Gardiners of former times, as much less criminal and mischievous to society, and as possessing more of humanity and patriotism, than the present Judges and Law Officers, who of late have been so much employed in ruining and destroying the healths of moral and honest individuals, whose only crime was, and is, a desire to improve the condition of mankind.

When the cry of heresy ceased, that was when the majority of the people became heretics, as they will soon become Deists, and when it was no longer fashionable to burn bodies for the purpose of keeping up that brutal notion of preserving an ideal phantom called the soul, from eternal burning, power was gratified with the increase of human misery upon the pretence that those men who differed from men in power were blasphemers. When there were no Deists, different sects of Christians were the blasphemers, and the established Church punished all as blasphemers who dissented from

her tenets, until the dissenters became very numerous, and exhibited the madness of persecution in its proper colours and its inefficacy to produce the desired effects.

Now the Deists are become the only blasphemers; and Churchmen, Dissenters, and all, are united to persecute them; until it has become a question, which has the majority of the people, Deists or Christians.

The first cry against the Deists was about the horrors which follow an absence of all religion, and the destruction of public morals arising therefrom; but it has been both theoretically and practically proved, that morals have no connection with, or dependance upon, religion, that the Deists and Atheists of this and other countries are the most distinguished moralists, and that social order and social improvement are matters wholly connected with morality, totally unconnected with religion, and in a great measure dependant upon free discussion, and the absence of all persecution and mental fear.

Under all these views of my case, considering, first, that there is no evidence of my having sold the book: second, that I have had no trial, that I was not allowed to read my prepared defence to the Jury: third, that there is in fact no breach of law in this case; and fourth, that the impolicy, the immorality, and the mischief of all such prosecutions, to say nothing of the odious hypocrisy which every where attends them, and results from them. I feel proud and undaunted, at my position, and am confident, that the law does not allow, and that the Court cannot *justly* award me any punishment; but that, your Lordships are bound in duty, in truth, in morality, in justice, and by your oaths of office, to set me free from this prosecution.

After some consultation with the other Judges,

Mr. Justice Bailey pronounced the following judgment:—

William Tunbridge, you are here to receive the judgment of this Court. You have been convicted by a Jury, upon an Information exhibited against you by his Majesty's Attorney-General, for the publication of a blasphemous libel. This is not the first time that prosecutions have been instituted for publishing the same libel. It has at an early period been prosecuted, and a person of the name of Carlile convicted, who afterwards received the sentence of this Court. That, therefore, was a warning to you and others, that this book ought not to be sold. You state to day, that before the time of Judge Hale, blasphemy was not an offence by the law of the land. It is quite clear that in his time—in the time of a most pious and most conscientious Judge, the question was carefully considered, and that, from that time to this, blasphemy has been held to be a crime by the law of the land, and prosecutions have been instituted which would have never been passed over by the Legislature unnoticed, if they did not think them justifiable by the law of the land. The law of this country, upon religious opinions, is as liberal as the law of any country in the world. It allows every man to judge for himself. It does not prescribe any system of faith to any man. It leaves every man at liberty to adopt what species of worship he pleases, and it leaves him at liberty not to adopt any if he pleases, but it does not suffer any man to abuse and vilify the religion of the land. You are not aware of the mischief, which, by these publications, you might do, nor of the high religious crime which you might have to answer for. If you unsettle the opinions of the young and unwary, who have not had an opportunity of judging for themselves—if you take from their minds the sentiments which religion had inspired, you might be the author of all their future crimes; that is a most serious and important view which you ought to take of your conduct. This is not a place for discussing the principles of the Christian Religion; but this I must say, that the wisest and best of men have applied themselves to the subject, and

have believed it; and whoever looks to the principles and doctrines of the Christian Religion, will see, that they are calculated for the suppression of vice, that they are calculated for the suppression of the violence of the strong; and whoever looks to the tenets of the religion, if he believe their truth, will be thankful that so much light has been shed upon the world, and such a restraint placed upon those who, but for the sanction of religion, might apply their strength and violence to the oppression of the weak and unprotected. Thank God, that I myself have examined that book, and have formed a firm belief of the doctrines which it contains and the principles which it inculcates. That is not a foundation for the Court to act upon, but the ground upon which the Court proceeds is this—although it is legal for any man, temperately and decorously, to examine and discuss the evidences of the Christian Religion, yet it is not competent for any man to vilify and abuse it; and no man can read the paragraphs in the record without seeing that it is abuse, and nothing else, of the Christian Religion. If this, or similar publications, have the effect of unsettling the minds of the young—of removing from their minds that belief which the Christian Religion inculcates—that there is another world, and that all must answer for their actions here, before Him who can see the heart—they do not advance morality or the good of society, but they strike at the root of the best interests of society; and whoever, by such publications, unsettles the opinions of the young, may conscientiously have to answer for whatever crimes they may subsequently be guilty of; that is one of the reasons for which they have considered offences of this kind, offences against the law of the land; your publication was one for which another has been convicted, and, therefore, the publication by you, was a publication in defiance of law. You state there was no evidence of publication by you; I think there was an abundant evidence to satisfy the minds of the Jury, and that it was impossible for them to come to any other conclusion. As to your having been stopped by my Lord Chief Justice in the progress of your speech, that seems to me most proper. You had a right to use topics, in your address to the Jury, to shew that in publishing this book you had no guilty intentions, but you had no right to make an attack upon the religion of the land. The Court, taking into consideration all the circumstances, and feeling it their bounden duty to protect those who have not an opportunity of judging for themselves, from the mischievous and poisonous influence of such publications, doth order and adjudge, that you be imprisoned in his Majesty's House of Correction, Cold Bath-fields, for two years; that you pay to the King a fine of £ 100.; that you enter into recognizance for your good behaviour for five years, yourself in £ 100. and two sureties in £ 50. each, and that you be imprisoned until such fine be paid, and such recognizances entered into.

The Defendant then exclaimed—"There is a pious sentence, pronounced by a Christian tribunal, for opposing a Christian Church, of which the Right Reverend Father in God, Percy Jocelyn, Lord Bishop of Clogher, is one of the ornaments*!" He was immediately removed from the Court.

* This expression was used in the heat of the moment, immediately after the Judge had pronounced the judgment of the Court. But Defendant would by no means have it understood, that he condemns principles because of the vices of individuals, as he has the pleasure of knowing a number of Christians, whom he sincerely believes to be honest and good citizens.

To condemn Christianity because the Bishop of Clogher was one of its principal supporters, would be as unjust as it would be to question the soundness of the political principles of Thomas Paine, because there have been dishonest and licentious Republicans.

House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields, Jan. 21, 1824.

THE END.



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