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T H E
P R E F A C E.

THough it may seem an impertinent attempt in me, to add any thing to confirm, what has already been fully treated of by much abler hands; yet so fond is mankind of novelty, that *fresh objections* require *fresh vindications*; *old* objections stated in a *new* light require answers in a *new* shape; and even the *same* objections, with respect to the capacities of *different* readers, may require answers in *different* forms. Every *fresh* hypothesis started against our religion, and every *old* one revived, must receive a *new* and *full* confutation; otherwise the unbeliever will triumph; and men will be but too ready to admit

mit his chains of bigotted infidelity upon their understanding. The taste of this age being to read *new* books, and not *old* ones: to be more favourable to any arguments *against* religion, than *for* it: for there is bigotry in infidelity, as well as in religious thinking.

Under this view of things, every well-wisher to mankind cannot but lament the bias of the present times to scepticism; wherein nothing of a religious cast can be offer'd to the publick, but straightway a pamphlet must come forth against it; though, introduced without the least support of reason or argument, yet calculated, as much as possible, to prejudice, to delude, or to divert the reader from attention to sacred truth.

For a testimony of this, we need only appeal to the many frivolous, idle, and irreligious pamphlets, which immediately made their appearance, against that most seasonable, unexceptionable,
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and truly pastoral ^a letter, for which this kingdom has been lately obliged to the right reverend the lord bishop of London: a letter purely calculated to do good to the society wherein we live, at a time when the nation had received a solemn summons to amendment, by reminding men, that there is a God who ruleth in the kingdom of nature; that He is a God of justice to punish iniquity; a God of wisdom to vindicate his authority; and that any extraordinary demonstrations of his power, in the works of nature, were intended by it's author, as publick alarms to awaken men to reform their lives.

The ^b contemptuous, unworthy manner in which one of his lordships for-

^a See a Letter from the lord bishop of London, to the clergy and people of London and Westminster, on occasion of the late earthquakes.

^b See an examination of the lord bishop of London's discourses concerning the use and intent of prophecy, with some animadversions on his late appendix concerning the Mosaic account of the fall, by C-y-rs M-d-t-n D. D.

mer works has not long ago been attacked, after it had stood the test of many years, with that reputation which *all* his works deserve, first led me to consider the subject of the following discourses more attentively ; which the solicitations of my friends have since induced me to make publick, after they had been favourably receiv'd from the pulpit, in two congregations, for whose judgment I ought always to have the highest veneration.

It may be here observed, that the writer who gave occasion to these discourses, was living at the time when they were preached, which may account for some expressions in them, that otherwise might not have been so proper. It cannot surely with reason be urged, that objections are not to be answer'd, because the author of them is deceased. For his writings will not follow, so as to be buried in the same grave together
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with him. A sceptical writer may continue to be a living mischief in the *intellectual* world, after his decease in respect to the *natural*. For which reason every faithful minister of Jesus Christ should endeavour to guard, as much as possible, against the infection which began to be spread from so contagious a center, lest the pestilence should be propagated to taint the faith of future generations.

He was a writer industrious in his studies; artful in his sophisms; clear and elegant in his style; entertaining in the matter of his compositions. With so much the greater precaution therefore to be pointed out to readers unexperienced in the wiles of sophistry. For having conceived a prejudice against some of the doctrines of our church, whether from the uneasiness of disappointments in it; or from particular spleen against some of its principal defenders; or, as

it is to be hoped, for his own sake, from what he pleaded, a love of truth, however mistaken in it's inquiries; and a liberty of research in religious matters, however ill directed in it's applications; it is certain, whatever his motive might be, that in the latter years of his life particularly, he employ'd, against several doctrines of assent in our church, those talents, which might much more usefully, and consistently with his Profession, have been engaged in it's behalf.

It will I hope, be a sufficient Apology to the candid reader, for presenting him with the following sermons, if he is convinced, that they proceed from a religious motive: and then, though he may find in them nothing to commend; his goodness, I am persuaded, will incline him to pardon the author.

2 C O R. XI. 3.

--- *Lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve, through his Subtilty, so your Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.*

THE apostle in these words plainly alludes to the Mosaick history of the fall. The persons or things compared in the allusion, are *Eve*, and the *christian converts*; the *serpent*, and the *false teachers*, that had insinuated themselves among the Corinthians. This comparison therefore naturally refers us back to the history of the delusion accomplish'd by the serpent.

A late writer, guided by a confirm'd opinion of his own singular sagacity, and superior judgment in divine matters, thinks he has discovered, that this history is nothing but a meer moral fable; consequently the personages introduced are not *real*, but *imaginary*. Whether this can with any probability be the case, I shall beg leave to make the subject of our present inquiry.

Now

Now in order fully to understand any writing, the first rule is, to learn, as far as possible, the intention of the writer. The manifest design of Moses, in the first chapters of his inspired book, was to give an account of the origin of the world, the formation of man, and his defection from original righteousness. Since it is plain, that man could not come *corrupt* out of the hands of an all-wise, and good-being.

That image of himself, which, among the other works of his creation, God at first pronounced to be very good, could not have been sent forth tainted with that depravity of vicious habits, and that violent propensity to wicked desires, which now gives so prevailing a tincture to the human complexion.

It had, no doubt, been observed, as far as history could trace back, that vice was almost co-æval with the world itself. The first descendant of Adam is recorded as a murderer; and *the wickedness of man became great upon the earth*. The original introduction of this moral evil was a subject, of which some account was wanted: it was a subject which, no doubt, had puzzled many speculative inquirers in that generation; as in the succeeding ages, it has perplexed many, who have not been satisfied, or acquainted with the Mo-saick narration. What allurements could be a counter-

counterbalance to that original purity of nature, with which man came into the world? What could seduce him from duty, and corrupt him? was the question.

And what now was the writer to do in this case? Would an apologue or moral fable be an answer adequate to the inquiry? Speculative truths, or maxims *may*, and *have* often been deliver'd in this way; much friendly reproof, and instruction has been convey'd through this channel to prejudiced ears. But the business of the writer here was to relate a fact; to give a satisfactory account of the origin of a *real* evil still subsisting. Men were to be acquainted *how*, and by *what persons*, sin was introduced.

The fable, as our ^a author informs us, conveys the following truths; "that man had deviated "from the law of his nature," or in other words, was a sinner: but this was no more, than he knew before: conscience no doubt had taught him this melancholy truth: "that by giving "himself up to the rule of his lusts and appetites, he had debased the dignity of his nature:" this also he must have known before: Reflexion, and the law of God written in his mind, would have suggested this truth to him: "that the natural effects of sin and guilt are

^a Vid. pag. 133—136. of the Examination &c.

"seen,

“seen, in depriving man of his happiness, in plunging him into misery, sorrow, and death.” Experience would mournfully teach him *this*. But the question still was, *how* he was first betray’d, and corrupted, and subjected to death? *What* was the temptation? And *what* the offence? Moses undertakes to inform us in this point. The next question then is, Why his account is not to be credited as a *real historical* narration? The succeeding inspired writers allude to it as such: christians of all ages have admitted it as such: neither Christ, nor his apostles, have said any thing to obviate this interpretation: let our author produce his objections; and let these contrary tenets be weighed in the balance together.

For another acknowledged rule of interpretation is, to compare scripture with scripture; and to explain one passage by another. Divine inspiration cannot contradict itself, any more than infinite wisdom can at any time deceive, or be deceived. If then we are necessarily led to consider the Mosaick relation of the fall, and the manner in which it was accomplish’d, as a *real historical* narration in *one* part of holy writ; we must conclude that it is so to be understood in *every other* passage.

In my further prosecution therefore of this subject, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, that St. Paul alludes to the Mosaick history of the fall in general, by the disobedience of Adam, as a *real* fact.

Secondly, that he alludes likewise to the same account of the particular manner, and circumstance of the fall, accomplish'd by the temptation of the serpent, as a *real* fact.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to answer some objections made, by our author, against the literal interpretation of this account: and then conclude,

Fourthly and *lastly*, with a remark, or two, seasonable to ourselves, at the present Juncture.

The two first of these heads will afford sufficient matter for the subject of our present discourse.

First, then I am to shew, that St. Paul alludes to the Mosaick history of the fall in general, by the disobedience of Adam, as a *real* fact.

The apostle, in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, draws a contrast between the consequences of Adam's transgression, and the obedience of Christ. *As by the offence of one,*

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faith he, not offences, *judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

I would here beg leave to ask our author, whether the persons in this contrast, are *real*, or *imaginary*? If they are *real*, then here is a plain allusion to a certain fact, to a certain offence, and that, the offence of *one* man: for the apostle speaks all along in the singular number, and indeed the force of his reasoning depends on this, in magnifying the free grace of God, and the redemption by grace in Christ. The transgressor pointed at, in the former part of the contrast, is plainly Adam: and it appears from this, and other passages, that St. Paul had in his view the Mosaick account of Adam's transgression, and *it's* consequences; as he had likewise in the other part of the contrast, the obedience of Christ, and *it's* consequences. He must therefore acknowledge the history of the transgression to be a real fact; as he believed the redemption likewise to be *real*. Otherwise both parts of the contrast would not be equal: consequently nothing of any importance could be infer'd from one, to the other. But let both be real, and the apostle's

apostle's reasoning will be of weight: the grace of God will be illustrated: and the expediency of the gospel dispensation proved. ^a *Death*, saith he, *reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* Here is a plain allusion to some particular transgression. *But not as the offence,* (we see the word is singular, alluding to the one offence of Adam, recorded by Moses, not plural, *offences*, or *corruption in general*, which our modern author would have to be the meaning of the fable :) *not as the offence*, saith he, *so also is the free gift.* For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation: i. e. by one offence a judgment, or a sentence of condemnation came upon all men: but the free gift is of many offences unto justification: i. e. notwithstanding a great number of offences, many sincerely faithful, and penitent persons shall be justified by the free favour and grace of God. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign by one, Jesus Christ.

^a Rom. 5. 14.

If our author shall boldly declare himself at once, and say that both parts of the contrast are imaginary; then the apostle's argumentation is trifling, and of no use: he is only arguing from one apologue, or moral fable to another: nothing is proved in favour of christianity: and we may drop this part of the epistle to the Romans at once, without suffering any real loss.

If he maintains, that only one part of the contrast is imaginary, the other real; we may ask him, *which* is so? And by what criterion are we to distinguish the one from the other? Upon this supposition, how is the pertinency of the apostle's reasoning to be supported? He has undertaken to prove to the Romans the benefit of the gospel dispensation, and the expediency of faith in Christ. By what medium is he to prove this? Why by a thing which never happen'd: by an allusion to a meer apologue, or moral fable: by the effects of a certain transgression, which was recorded indeed by one Moses; but never committed: being purely fabulous; like any of the fables of Æsop. Such is the force of reasoning, with which our author would supply an inspired apostle of Christ! And for which, the cause of christianity, no doubt, is much obliged to him!

But further, St. Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians carries on the
same

same contrast. *Since by man came death, faith he, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Here is something plainly expressed to be recover'd by Christ, which was lost by Adam. Life was the advantage regain'd; life therefore must have been the forfeiture made. So far is agreeable to the Mosaick history: where we find a forfeiture of life to have been the penalty laid on disobedience: *a in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* But this history is meerly fabulous! The transgression is a meer fable! Consequently the penalty inflicted on the transgression is a meer fable also! For where no transgression is, there can be no punishment. Nothing was forfeited by the *first* Adam: nothing therefore was to be recover'd, in consequence of that forfeiture, by the *second*: the apostle has all along been mistaken: he has argued from a fact which never happened: and therefore, as far as concerns the apostle's argumentation, at least, (pardon the blasphemy of the expression!) *so far Christ is dead in vain.*

I proceed now to the

Second thing proposed, which was to shew, that St. Paul alludes to the Mosaick account, of the *particular manner* and circumstance of the

fall, accomplished by the temptation of the serpent, as a *real* fact.

The expression in the text is an instance of this kind. *I fear*, saith the apostle, *lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* But our author has made a new discovery: the serpent never tempted Eve; and consequently could not beguile her. The Mosaick account of the fall could be no reasonable ground of fear, or solicitude: and therefore he might very well have spared the allusion: he conceived fear, *where no fear was.*

But let us consider a little the connexion of the passage: the apostle in this, and the foregoing chapter, is endeavouring to shew the little reason, that the false teachers, who had insinuated themselves among the Corinthians, had to glory in any particular privilege over him, or to prefer themselves on any account before him: *being jealous over his converts with a jealousy*, which was for God. He tells them that he had fitted and prepared them for *one husband only*; that he might present them, as a chaste virgin unto Christ. But he feared, *lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds should be corrupted from that simplicity, or singleness, which was due to Christ.* What then was the ground of his fear in
this

this place? Why lest these false teachers should have the same evil influence upon *their* hearts and affections, that the serpent had once experimentally upon Eve. But let us strike out the reality of this temptation, and then see what sense our author will make for the apostle in this passage. *For I have prepared you for one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent, who was really no serpent, no real external agent, but a meer imaginary being, tempted Eve, so your minds should be corrupted by the false teachers, that are among you, from the simplicity, that is in Christ.* If our author shall say, that these false teachers are correspondent to the evil lusts, that corrupted Eve, then it will follow, that Eve was possess'd of these evil lusts, before she was beguiled by them: i. e. in other words she was corrupt, before she was corrupted. For our Saviour, in the ^a fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel determines *lust*, or evil desire, to be of the nature of Sin, even before it proceeds into action. In the best sense that can be made of this passage, according to the principles of our author, the comparison lies between the false teachers among the Corinthians, and the lusts that beguiled Eve: between *external* seducers, and *internal* passions: between which

^a Matth. 5. 28.

there seems to be no just, and equal comparison, even if we could suppose Eve to have retained sinful lusts, before she was corrupt. For even upon this supposition, the Corinthians were possess'd of inward lusts, and sensual appetites, which might betray them, as well as Eve. Consequently the terms of the comparison should lie between the *inward* affections of the *one*, and those of the *other*: between the *external* tempters of the one, and the *external* seducer of the other: and not between things of so different a nature; between *external* tempters, and *internal* passions.

But further, in ^a another epistle, the same apostle gives a reason for the authority of the man over the woman, plainly founded on the Mosaick account of the particular manner, and immediate occasion of the fall. Namely the imposition past by the serpent upon Eve: that *she* only was *personally* deceived by the serpent, and was *first* in the transgression. *And Adam*, saith he, *was not deceived*, i. e. *personally* tempted and deluded by the serpent: *but the woman being deceived by him, was in the transgression*; i. e. was *first* in the transgression. The apostle here founds his right of superiority either upon something, or nothing. His first principle is plainly built upon something *real*, namely the priority of creation, according

^a 1 Tim. 2. 14.

to the Mosaick order of creation. *For Adam, saith the apostle, was first formed, then Eve.* Here the allusion is to a real fact, acknowledged, and assigned as a reason, by our author. Why should his second principle, immediately subjoined, be meerly imaginary, founded only on an apologue, or moral fable; and the verity of the Mosaick history be diminished? Can a fable be any just principle or foundation of authority? Though it may perhaps be as reasonable, as one which our author has assign'd; which he in a kind of magisterial manner prefers to any ^a "title, that either "Moses or the apostles could give;" which yet would be as dangerous, if admitted in politicks, as it would be destructive to society; which would equally give a right of dominion to lions and tygers over man, namely a "superiority of force "and bodily strength." For he contends, "that superiority of force, and bodily strength necessarily conveys a superiority of power to the stronger over the weaker." Where, if by superiority of power, he means a superior ability to *compel*, in which sense alone his proposition is true; then all that it implies, reverts to this, that superiority of force conveys a superiority of force. But if by conveying power, he means a right to authority and dominion, then his proposition will

^a Pag. 188.

be denied by every serious master of ethicks, politicks, or sound reasoning, as well as by every true friend to the peace, and establishment of human society.

To the authority of St. Paul we may now add that of St. John, who speaking of satan, in the twelfth chapter of his revelation, saith, *and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and satan, which deceiveth the whole earth.* Where it is probable, from the name given to satan of *that old serpent, that deceiveth the whole earth*, (though we need not rest upon this) that the inspired writer had in his view the primary deception of the first parent of mankind by the agency of the serpent. However, after these several remarks, a question may be here asked, not immaterial to our purpose in this place, namely, why all these allusions were made by the spirit of truth, to this history, as a real fact, and no intimation given, that it was fabulous, in an age when the history was received as a fact, and when some such suggestion might have been expected? If the history had been fabulous, it is reasonable to suppose, that some one of the inspired writers, would have intimated thus much, in order to prevent any evil consequences, that might arise from a mistake in the interpretation. At least, it is not reasonable to imagine, that
they

they would thus have unanimously argued from it, as a fact, if it had been no more than a moral apologue. But an history so universally received, and for the most part similarly understood, through so many hundred, nay I may say thousand years, has surely a fair right to withstand any private expositions, or objections made to it by a modern interpreter. This would lead me, in the

Third place, to answer some objections, made by our author, against the literal interpretation of the Mosaick history of the fall.

But fully to discharge this, would, I fear, exceed the usual limits of one discourse. I shall therefore at present only beg your patience whilst I make a remark, or two, preparatory to the introduction of those objections, and so conclude.

It has usually been supposed then, that the devil made use of the serpent, as his instrument, to tempt, and delude Eve. There can be no doubt therefore, but that, as far as he was permitted, he would furnish this minister with such powers, as were requisite, for the accomplishment of his design. That invifible beings have a power of agency in this lower world, cannot be denied by any one, who acknowledges the scriptures to be the inspired word of God. If it should be asked, “ why satan *was* permitted to tempt Eve at

“all?” We may reply to this, by another question, why is one wicked man permitted to tempt his neighbour, and draw him into sin? Why is the most vicious and designing part of mankind permitted to impose on the simplicity of the most virtuous? There are but too many tempters every day in the world, whether by their conversation, by their examples, or by their writings: and the most innocent, and unexperienced in the wiles of the tempter, are oftentimes the most liable to be seduced. Yet the permission of these trials in the moral world, are made no just objection to the attributes of God, or the dispensations of his providence.

In short it appears from the very nature of man, and the constitution of things, that he was intended to undergo a probation. Angels also, a superior order of intellectual beings, underwent such a trial, before him; and *some* fell. Man was created a free-agent, capable of chusing good, or evil; and virtue was to be his choice, in order to his being intitled to the reward of virtue. As he was a probationary being, a positive test was set before him of his obedience to the will of his creator. This test was a prohibition to eat of a certain tree in the garden, called *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*.

As this prohibition was a law of his creator, the violation of it must necessarily incur his displeasure. A temptation therefore must be necessary to allure man from duty, and be an overbalance to the danger of forfeiting the divine favour. But by what being was this temptation to be offer'd? There were but two persons of the human species yet in the world, and they yet perfect, and uncorrupt, and sincerely affectionate towards each other. *They* would not therefore try to seduce each other: the tempter consequently could not be one of the human species: a superior good being would not undertake so malicious an office: a meer brute could not discharge it. What then could remain, but an invisible evil being, already corrupt, and willing to draw others into his own miserable society of corruption. God might permit this being to try his new created moral agents: and such a being, we may infer from the description given of him in scripture, would rejoice in the office.

But as man's rational powers were strong, the temptation must be proportionably great: an^a increase of knowledge resembling the divine,

^a The very learned and ingenious Dr. Rutherford would here interpret the meaning to be, a new discovery of their natural independency: but still the argument, concerning the force of the temptation, will revert to the same; as this new discovery would
be

would be a very tempting allurements. We read also that *the tree was pleasant to the eye*: or as the original Hebrew very emphatically expresses it, ^a *a desire to the eyes*. Here then would be a tempting allurements offer'd to the *sensual* appetite, as well as to the *intellectual*. An agreeable object to the sight, a flattering allurements to the understanding. The evil being, ever watchful for the destruction of man, perceived this, and immediately set himself to the work of temptation. He applies himself to that party, which by it's native tenderness and pliability, he saw most likely to be misled; and by it's native amiableness and persuasive talents, when once depraved, most likely to seduce the other. The temptation accordingly was but too effectual: the malicious tempter succeeded in his design: *the woman took of the fruit, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat*. They gratified at once both the sensual and intellectual desire. Thus man became *knowing* to his sorrow. He knew natural, and moral evil both together.

be a very agreeable point of additional knowledge. See Dr. Rutherforth's defence of the lord bishop of London's discourses. Pag. 139.

^a תאוה לעינים

What is there now in all this, that is inconsistent, either with the subtilty of the tempter; the nature of a rational free agent, who was to be tried; or the attributes of God, who created him probationary? ^a How do these “principles exclude or throw aside the natural law or reason of man, as of no use or service to him, from the beginning of the world to this day?” And what becomes of our author’s question, ^b “how can we imagine that God would expose their simplicity unarmed, and uninstructed, to the assaults of an insidious tempter, so greatly superior to them both in craft and power?” For who says, that it was thus entirely *unarm’d*, and *uninstructed*? Had not man the armour of reason, and the fence of a divine prohibition to guard him from the sin into which he fell? The answer to this question is plain and obvious: man was a moral agent, capable of trial; capable of adhering to the law of his creator: he had *rational* powers, at least, to instruct him in his duty; a *positive law*, to guard him in it: the consequence of breaking the law was denounced; a grievous sanction! No less than death! Where then was the injustice of permitting him to be tried, that a voluntary agent might prove to other intellectual beings of God’s crea-

^a Pag. 148.

^b Pag. 106.

tion,

tion, that he had made virtue his choice, and consequently demonstrate his title, through the conditional favour of his creator, to the rewards of virtue?

But however, we christians, of all others, have least reason to complain, if we consider, that what was forfeited by the effect of the temptation upon Adam, has been amply recover'd to *us*, by the obedience of Christ: that provided we attend to the voice of our creator, speaking in the suggestions of reason, and the express dictates of revelation, notwithstanding the present infirmities of our nature, and the allurements of the busy tempter, still permitted to be exercised upon us, yet we may in the end, be even *more than conquerors, through him*, who strengtheneth *us*. We have this comfort, (^a how much soever it may be ridiculed by our author) yet certainly a reasonable comfort, amidst the natural evils of life, introduced by moral evil, that through the free, undeserved favour, and grace of God, when our probation is over, and compleated in virtue, we shall one day be placed as much above the danger of any future fall, as we shall be above all possibility of any future infection from vice. Sufficient satisfaction have we to reflect, that we are still in the hands of a gracious God, that all