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*The necessity and truth of the* THREE PRINCIPAL RE-  
VELATIONS *demonstrated from the gradations of*  
*science, and the progress of the mental faculties,*

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694.2.11.  
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S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,  
ON  
COMMENCEMENT SUNDAY,

JUNE XXIX, M. DCC. LXXVII.

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NOW RECTOR OF MORLEY AND YELVERTON IN NORFOLK,  
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE KING'S OWN REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS.

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C A M B R I D G E,

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M. DCC. LXXVII.

## DEDICATION.

**W**ITH an heart warmly solicitous for the progress of religion and science, and truly zealous for the honour and prosperity of the University, the following Discourse is humbly inscribed, to the VICE-CHANCELLOR, the HEADS of COLLEGES, and the PROFESSORS,

By their most obedient

humble Servant,

Brook-Hall, near Norwich,  
*August 6, 1777.*

SAMUEL COOPER.

## P R E F A C E.

**W**HATEVER approbation the following discourse might receive, when it was delivered from the pulpit; the author is too well acquainted with the present state of literary opinions, to expect, that it will obtain general approbation when it issues from the press. Though the importance of its conclusions, he hopes, will at least secure a candid examination of the truth of its principles. But as the acquisition of popular fame has never been the object of his publications, the non-attainment of it can never prove a disappointment to his wishes.

As the nature of the following discourse would allow but a small portion of time to an investigation of the PROGRESSIONS of SCIENCE, and the DEVELOPEMENT OF THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND; the author was under some difficulty to comprehend that discussion within such bounds, as should render it full without prolixity, and brief without obscurity. But as he has many other observations to offer to the public upon that head, which have a less intimate connection  
with

## P R E F A C E.

with the immediate subject of this discourse, he means speedily to publish an APPENDIX, which will contain further remarks upon the LIBERAL ARTS, the faculty of INTELLECT, the art of LOGIC, and the science of MATHEMATICS and of METAPHYSICS.

Conscious that many of those opinions strongly militate against the learned prejudices of the age, he does not flatter himself with the hopes of making many converts. But at the same time, as conscious from repeated investigations, that they are firmly founded upon truth; he trusts, that what the fond prepossessions of the present age may oppose, the unbiassed judgement of future times will confirm. And if in a situation distant from many of the advantages of a learned retreat, and amidst avocations remote for the most part from literary pursuits, he may hope to be remembered, as one, who in some measure contributed to the advancement of science in general, and of religion in particular; — this hope opens a prospect, to which he may now look forward with pleasure, and upon which he may hereafter look back with satisfaction.



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I T H E S. v. 21.

PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

**A** Metaphor and an allusion seem to be contained in the words of the original, which are not implied in this translation. They may therefore perhaps be more elegantly, and at the same time more forcibly rendered, thus : *ASSAY all things, hold fast the το καλον, the BEAUTIFUL.* The very epithet, by which some of the antient philosophers characterized virtue. Assent not, says the apostle, without examination, weigh,—ponder,—and consider,—call reason to your aid—that will separate the precious metal from the mere glittering ore,—eternal truth from specious error,—and preserve the defecated mass, as a treasure of the greatest beauty, and of the highest value.

This exhortation of the apostle, was certainly very necessary in the *INFANCY* of christianity; when many attempted, fallaciously to obtrude on mankind their own devices, for doctrines stamped with the authority of a divine commission. But perhaps it will not be found less useful, even in its *MATURITY*. For as it is impossible, but that the works even of inspired  
writers

writers should be liable to human misconstruction, it will certainly be the lot of some christians in every age, to read without knowledge, and to believe without proof\*.

We are in danger of *making shipwreck of our faith* from opposite rocks, equally fatal. IGNORANCE and INDOLENCE may carry us supinely into the eddy formed by the one; BIGOTRY and SELF-CONCEIT may drive us precipitately upon the other. The former ensures the ruin of our faith, whether as to the doctrines or evidence of religion, by too easy and credulous assent to whatever pretends to the authority of a divine sanction. The latter, by a careless and obstinate rejection of all evidence and every doctrine, which does not at first glance convey an intuitive evidence of its truth. As a NEGLECT of REASON, is the only certain cause of these dangers, so the EXERCISE of that faculty, is, the only human mean of safety.

I shall therefore take the occasion, the text affords, of enquiring, how far it appears from the PRINCIPLES and PROGRESS of SCIENSE, that DIVINE REVELATIONS WERE NECESSARY TO ASSIST the ENERGIES, and SUPPLY the DEFICIENCIES of HUMAN REASON. And I shall further endeavour to deduce from the same source, the RIGHT EXERCISE of THAT TALENT UPON the DOCTRINES of REVELATION.

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\* See the Author's former discourse preached before the University of Cambridge, entitled, *The Power of Christianity over the malignant Passions asserted; the real Causes of Persecutions amongst Christians, and the true grounds of mutual Forbearance in religious Opinions explained.*



An enquiry, which may perhaps eventually diffuse brighter rays of glory around the memories of the FOUNDERS, and PATRONS of this eminent seat of learning, than any with which the most rhetorical panegyric could encircle them. For, as the advancement of RELIGION was the END THEIR PIETY DESIGNED; so, the furnishing every aid for the cultivation of REASON, was the MEAN THEIR WISDOM SUGGESTED. And though this enquiry be pursued in a well worn path\*, there will perhaps be found fruit hanging within our reach, which the hand has not yet gathered; and probably new seeds of knowledge springing up within our view, which the eye has not hitherto explored.

Whoever carefully examines the history of knowledge, and traces the progressions of science, will find, that the progress of every nation, and even of the successive ages of the world, is analogous to the gradations of each individual person.

Of all the powers and faculties of the human mind, SENSATION and PERCEPTION first enter the avenue which leads to knowledge. IMAGINATION follows next, or rather walks hand in hand with MEMORY. Then comes REASON with slow and cautious tread. By viewing with attentive eye, arranging and distributing into their proper classes, and comparing together all the different objects of sense, their mutual relations to each other, and their various uses to man, it plants the sciences

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\* See in particular the learned Bishop of Carlisle's valuable Theory of Religion.

of NATURAL HISTORY and of PHYSICS. From them germinate MEDICINE, and all the USEFUL ARTS, even GEOMETRY and ALGEBRA, and from them various other sciences spread their thick and almost innumerable branches. By contemplating the different ideas which memory or imagination retains, by tracing our internal perceptions, or the various instincts, impulses, and passions which agitate the breast, by forming combinations of the ideas derived from both these sources, and DIRECTING THEM TO SOME CERTAIN END, REASON gives birth to the sister and liberal arts of MUSIC, POETRY and PAINTING. Next, by COMPUTING THE AMOUNT of the various pleasures and pains which impel men to action, by directing us to the attainment of the SUM of HUMAN HAPPINESS as social beings, the same faculty gives birth to the sciences of ETHICS, of LAW, and of POLITICS. At length, but with slowest step, and not 'till after a considerable interval of time, INTELLECT advances to perfection. He, like Newton with the prismatic glass on the rays of light, separates and unfolds the hitherto almost blended operations of the mind; analyses its various powers, as they tend either to speculation or to action; traces the acts of MEMORY, and IMAGINATION, of AFFECTION, and VOLITION, marks and even directs the operations of REASON itself; first, on the liberal arts by giving birth to CRITICISM; and next, upon the more important objects of science, by forming LOGIC, the most useful of all arts. That art, to which all the other arts as well as sciences must



ultimately be indebted for their perfection. But neither does the faculty of intellect (or the SCIENCE of MIND, or of METAPHYSICS) stop even here. It not only investigates, and gives laws to all the other powers and faculties of the mind, but even recognizes ITSELF. From this contemplation, it catches some glimpse of the DIVINE MIND or real cause of all things; (though effects themselves are commonly dignified with that name) from the CONSIDERATION of THAT CAUSE it deduces for man a NEW CLASS of DUTIES, and calls forth into existence the science of NATURAL THEOLOGY. Thus is the SCIENCE of MIND or METAPHYSICS placed on the highest summit of human knowledge. To this, all the other parts of science serve but as steps to help us to ascend. What then, can even CANDOUR think of those by whom it is so frequently and petulantly decried? But, that involved in the dense and gross vapours which constantly surround the lower objects of knowledge, they are incapable of breathing in the higher and more ethereal regions of this terrestrial atmosphere\*.

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\* However pleasing the employment might be to the writer, yet it would perhaps appear to some readers an invidious task, to point out, how much of the various knowledge in the different sciences, the world owes to the luminaries, who from time to time have shed their rays within the confines of this university. But it would likewise be an unnecessary employment. Our BACON's, NEWTON's, and WARING's, our SPENCER's, MILTON's, DRYDEN's, PRIOR's, GRAY's, and MASON's, and our BENTLEY's, HURD's, and BRYANT's, are too well known to need enumeration. But it would be want of candour, not to take this opportunity of acknowledging, how much we are at this time obliged for the advancement of knowledge to the UNIVERSITIES of SCOTLAND; for the instruction and entertainment derived from a ROBERTSON and a HUME, a FERGUSON and a SMITH; but, above all, for the cultivation of that branch of METAPHYSICS or of MIND which gives laws to the liberal arts, by a KAIMS, a GERARD, and a CAMPBELL.

If now, we turn our eyes from the observation of the PROGRESS of the HUMAN FACULTIES, to the SUCCESSIVE PERIODS of DIVINE REVELATIONS, we shall see perhaps, that the INFINITE WISDOM and GOODNESS has graciously vouchsafed to suit the PROGRESSIVE DISCOVERIES of the ONE, to the GRADUAL DEVELOPEMENT of the OTHER, And by these means establish the certainty, that both the stronger and weaker irradiations, are equally the FIAT of that will, which gave *the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.*

That the first revelation, which was granted to our primæval parents MUST have been such an one as Moses relates it to have been in FACT, is, to one well versed in the operations of the human mind, even demonstrably evident from THEORY. In our passage through the stages of infancy and of youth, we so insensibly receive sensations, and by repeated trials learn the connection between the objects of sight and touch, acquire ideas of distance and of magnitude, and perceive the relations of the different objects of sense, that in manhood only some few are capable of the labour, and endued with sufficient acuteness for tracing the progress of their acquisitions; whilst the generality confound the objects of different senses, and mistake HABIT for SENSATION\*. What however would become

\* See Bishop Berkeley's incomparable *Theory of Vision*, from which even his adversaries have borrowed some truths without acknowledgment: The theoretical discoveries in which, received the most irrefragable confirmation, by the facts recorded of the young man coached by Cheselden; so well known by the account of him in the OPTRICS of that late great ornament of this University, Doctor Smith:

come of us, how many accidents would befall us, were we not under the direction of others, 'till our own experience could become our guide? Their care relieving our ignorance of danger, and their wisdom rectifying our mistakes. But as our FIRST PARENTS, were destitute of all human assistance, whether they be supposed to have been produced into being in a state of infancy or maturity, the world had been to their senses only a chaos, and to their bodies only a grave; had not some heavenly instructor supplied the want of an earthly one, and warned them of danger, 'till their own experience could protect them. And consequently *they* must ever have remained in utter ignorance of a creator, and the obedience due to him; had HE not been graciously pleased under VISIBLE APPEARANCES, the sole objects of *their* faculties, to shadow forth to them HIMSELF, who is PURE INTELLECT; and only to be rightly discerned by us, through the exercise of that faculty in ourselves. For to suppose, that our first parents could in the state in which THEY were placed, have attained the knowledge even of the qualities and powers of sensible objects, without a super-

Smith: who recommends (if I remember right) Berkeley's *Theory of Vision* as an excellent work to those who *are capable of understanding it*. Had Doctor Jurin been one of those who understood that, and some other of Berkeley's works, he might indeed have lost some of the triumphant acclamations of the multitude in his own time; but whatever laurels he had reaped, might then to the latest posterity have adorned his memory with perennial verdure. Jurin however is in this respect by no means singular. For such was the superiority of Berkeley's genius to those of other modern writers, that not one who has undertaken to refute his works have understood them, from the laborious *Baxter*, down to the animated *Beattie*, who must be borne upon stronger Pinions than those of *common sense* would he ever reach Berkeley's ethereal Flights.



supernatural communication ; and that without heavenly assistance they could have made advances towards the notion of a creator and supreme governor of the universe ; would be as incongruous with reason, as to believe, that were the principle of attraction removed, the parts of bodies would still NATURALLY cohere ; and that if the power of gravitation were suspended, the earth itself would still TEND towards the sun.

If then, there ever was a time, when the belief of a FIRST CAUSE, which could be preserved only by oral tradition, was by frequent reverberations from one object to another become less and less distinct, 'till at length it reached the ear no more :—if at the same time, REASON though alive to the notices of SENSE, MEMORY, and IMAGINATION, yet unroused by INTELLECT, instead of rising to the contemplation of one SUPREME CAUSE, was lethargized in POLYTHEISM :—then surely we may reasonably expect, that the same Deity who would not leave man totally unacquainted with *his* existence even in infancy, would at this time make some fuller display of his attributes to mankind.—Look into the BOOKS of MOSES, and you see just such a revelation made to the Israelites, as the PROGRESS of SCIENCE might lead us to expect. You see the Deity adapting himself to their capacities, and by addressing himself to their SENSES, IMAGINATION, and MEMORY, makes known his OMNISCIENCE, OMNIPRESENCE, and OMNIPOTENCE. And that in that age, and long afterwards, POLYTHEISM was the NATURAL AND NECESSARY RELIGION of mankind, even a late ingenious

nious INFIDEL, has, with much reading, laboured to evince\*. Much thanks, not reproaches are due to him from the votaries of revelation. For admit the premises, which are evident beyond doubt; and the conclusion is as impregnable as demonstration can form it, that the MOSAIC REVELATION MUST BE TRUE: because the objects it displays, and the worship it enjoins, COULD BE DISCOVERED ONLY BY A SUPERNATURAL ILLUMINATION; like to that pillar of fire, which constantly went before the Israelites, to give them light by night in the wilderness.

But—when the Israelites had by their intercourse with the other nations disseminated through the world, the belief of a one SUPREME CREATOR and governor of the universe; when by the stability of larger empires, and the progress of civilization, men had found time to exercise their REASON on various objects; and even INTELLECT emerging from the vapours of sense, had formed some notion of a divine mind, of GOODNESS, of WISDOM, and of POWER,—when—by comparing the attributes of GOD with the nature of man, reason had enquired into his duty here, and into his destination hereafter;—then behold where the LIGHT of CHRISTIANITY first beamed upon the eye. Like the other lights of revelation dawning indeed in the east, but rising with rays far more resplendent and diffusive; almost in an instant darting them over the whole earth,  
and

\* See Mr. Hume's Natural History of Religion.



and at once enlightening both the eastern and the western hemisphere.

Welcome, thrice welcome, thou only sure director of the wandering steps of man! Thou unerring guide to everlasting happiness!

As the preceding revelations were given to supply the want, and to afford materials for the exercise of those natural faculties, which were destined afterwards to be exerted in the PRESENT STATE OF THINGS; so, the last was more peculiarly intended to give us some intimation of those objects, which in a FUTURE STATE OF EXISTENCE, we shall alone be able *fully* to comprehend. *They* principally offered earthly possessions as a reward. *This* commands all our affections to be directed to heavenly treasures. *They* represented the Deity to men's conceptions under SENSIBLE APPEARANCES; and the worship they appointed, abounded in RITES and CEREMONIES. *This* reveals the divinity to our minds as an INTELLECTUAL OBJECT, OR PURE SPIRIT; and the worship it enjoins is an adoration in SPIRIT and in TRUTH. The christian religion therefore, so far as it is distinguished from other revelations, may with the strictest propriety be called, the RELIGION OF INTELLECT. And as both its NATURE and GENIUS are peculiarly adapted to that faculty, it is evident, 'TILL REASON HAD BEEN EMPLOYED UPON THE OBJECTS OF INTELLECT, the appearance of this revelation would have been UNSUITABLE TO THE STATE OF MAN'S KNOWLEDGE, or the PROGRESS OF SCIENCE.

But

But some perhaps, still will ask, where was the NECESSITY for the christian revelation? Was not INTELLECT itself able to discover all the objects it reveals, and all the precepts it commands? Shall we send the enquirer to search for an answer in the Schools of antient Philosophy; — Shall he go to the Academy of Plato, the Lycæum of Aristotle, the Portico of Zeno, and the Gardens of Epicurus? Shall he mark, if he is able, all the varieties of human reason? Then — what though he must behold with the highest admiration and astonishment the discoveries of the antient philosophers; the sublimity of their speculations; the accuracy of their reasonings; and the brilliancy of their imaginations, — yet let him wonder, if he can, that mankind, at length tired with the tedious multiplicity of disputes, and the vain pursuit of certainty, had, before christianity appeared, almost universally involved all the various enquiries in the endless fluctuations of SCEPTICISM.

He will indeed find, that when philosophy had migrated from Greece to Rome, a soil less favourable to the cultivation of science, *not* SCEPTICISM so much as EPICUREANISM, attracted for some time, as was natural, the thickest croud of votaries. For this, was the revolt to SENSE in the many, from the empire of INTELLECT in the few. But when the EXCELLENCE of CHRISTIAN ETHICS became plainly visible in the conduct of its adherents, STOICISM had many patrons and followers. The proud and lofty philosophers seemed at length to become ashamed of not *teaching* as pure morals, as the humble and  
C despised

despised christians, *practised*. They adopted therefore the precepts of christianity; though they rejected its authority. And absurdly inculcated almost all the strictness of its morality, at the same time that they divested men of every motive to the practice of it \*. So that however it has been disputed, whether some of the first CHRISTIAN fathers did not sometimes in speculative opinions, PHILOSOPHIZE CHRISTIANITY; it is evident beyond controversy, that all the philosophic teachers have ever since in moral doctrines, CHRISTIANIZED PHILOSOPHY.

After the examination of HEATHEN SYSTEMS, let the Objector attentively trace the unparalleled system of ETHICS which may be deduced from the GOSPEL; its FOUNDATION, its TENDENCY, and its AUTHORITY. A system not only infinitely superior to, but altogether dissimilar from all PRIOR systems of ethics, both as to MOTIVES, and to OBJECTS. For those Systems had, and could only have for the FORMER, the affections and passions common to human nature. And for the LATTER, only the LIMITED OBJECTS of those very affections and passions. Whereas the *intellectual* system of morals (if I may be allowed the expression) revealed in the gospel, admits no habit or action into the roll of virtues, which has not for its object, the UNIVERSAL WELFARE of MANKIND, independent of, and even contrary to, all the partial attachments to indi-

\* See particularly, Epictetus's works, Marcus Antoninus's meditations, and Simplicius's comment.

individuals, which are formed from the ties of blood, neighbourhood, friendship, opinion, and country; and which is not likewise divested of all the averfions which flow from enmity, and every contrariety of sentiment, interest, and passion. So likewise, it refuses to dignify with the name of virtue, any action or habit however unlimited as to its object, which has not for its motive, the hope of that happiness which revelation promises us hereafter; in opposition to the gratification of all those desires, (though within certain Bounds innocent in themselves) which arise from the constitution of our nature; such as, interest, ambition, pleasure, or fame. Though some actions therefore, whatever their motives or their objects may be, are universally called moral, because they are useful to mankind; from heathen systems alone they can assert a right to that title. For CHRISTIAN ETHICS disclaim them, unless they are generated from the proper motive, FUTURE HAPPINESS; and directed to the proper end, UNIVERSAL GOOD.— A scheme of ethics which however even the multitude of the learned are not perhaps yet fitted to receive in its utmost purity\*. Because, no system so perfect, was ever before offered

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to

\* For a proof of this assertion, see Mr. Jenyns's admirable delineation of christian ethics, in his *view of the Internal Evidence of the Christian religion*; and then see the various attacks upon, and the various misapprehensions of that delineation, by other learned and ingenious writers. It is to be wished for the honour of the age, that some of these writers, had shewn greater liberality of sentiment, and more christian charity, with regard to the truly respectable author; as well as cool deliberation with respect to his ingenious opinions. For without the former qualities in the believers, all the PROFESSIONS of FAITH in the world,



to the human heart, nor could be conceived by the human intellect, amidst all the various suggestions, which floated upon the waves of doubtful disputation.

But, though an appeal to the HISTORY of knowledge leads perhaps through the most pleasant path in this enquiry, yet it is neither the most direct, nor the most certain road. EXPERIENCE OF THE OBJECTS AND POWERS OF THE HUMAN MIND, leads us to an irrefragable demonstration of the NECESSITY; and consequently therefore from the attributes of GOD, of the TRUTH of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

For, the CHRISTIAN REVELATION contains an account, of what the DEITY HIMSELF HAS DONE,—WHAT HE WILL STILL DO,—AND WHAT HE REQUIRES OF MANKIND TO DO, FOR ARRIVING AT A STATE OF HAPPINESS HEREAFTER. NOW it is evident, that these are all MATTERS of FACT; which being dependent upon the VOLITION of the Deity, were never capable of DEMONSTRATION. And being all acts of the di-  
vine

world, are but as TINKLING CYMBALS. After the treatment *he* has received in a country, the inhabitants of which are so ready upon all occasions to call out for toleration and mutual forbearance, what lay-gentleman can be expected for the future to step forth to give his faith and conviction to the world? Mr. Jenyns has ingenuously given the result of his enquiry to the public. Must he implore his Fellow-Christians, *to forgive him this wrong*. If, for want of more leisure to examine the EXTERNAL evidences of religion, his faith is not so extensive as theirs who *have* examined them; shall christians endeavour to destroy the good effects of what he *does believe*, from a bigotted dislike to him (which religion abhors) for what he *does not believe*? Rather let him receive the best thanks of every sincere christian, to which he is so justly entitled; for no one work I believe ever made more converts. And I doubt not but the time will come, when the pure system of christian ethics he has so justly delineated, shall still be remembered to his honour and reward, after the compositions of the most ingenious of his adversaries shall have been long buried in oblivion.



vine mind; INTELLECT can have NO DIRECT OR IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE of them, as of the operations of the human soul. Neither for the same reason, did the discovery of them come within the province of PROBABILITY. For the PROBABILITY OF A FACT independent of testimony, it is well known, consists only in its CONFORMITY with our PAST EXPERIENCE. But, from past experience, we can derive only probable proofs of the existence of the *same* or *similar* facts in future. And at the same time our reasoning must always be founded upon *this* SUPPOSITION, that the DEITY WILL CONTINUE SIMILAR MODES OF ACTION IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. But it furnishes no clue, and indeed finite wisdom can be furnished with no one, to guide us in fixing on the most probable UNEXPERIENCED cause or effect, event or action amidst the INFINITE POSSIBILITIES OF UNLIMITED POWER, SELECTED FROM THE VARIOUS MEANS OF OMNISCIENT WISDOM, AND DIRECTED TO THE END OF UNIVERSAL GOODNESS\*. And it is evident, that the facts already enumerated, — THE APPOINTMENT of a MEDIATOR OR REDEEMER, — THE AIDS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, —  
and

\* Manifest as this principle, and the application of it, is to any one well acquainted with the different modes of evidence cognizable by the human mind; yet it is the ignorance of this principle, or the neglect of the application of it, which has occasioned most of the objections made both by Infidels and Believers to the evidence and doctrines of revelation. This may perhaps be more fully shewn hereafter by the author of this sermon, in another work. For numerous and excellent treatises as we already have upon the subjects of natural and revealed religion, *new investigations* will always produce *new proofs*; and it is only indolence willingly reposing on what is already known, which, in the present state of science, can be at a loss for *new* answers to *old* objections.

and the NEW HABITS, and AFFECTIONS, christianity requires of its followers, were all of them events discoverable only in that light which surrounds the throne of GOD, too bright to be beheld by mortal eyes. Revelation therefore apart, as all reasoning upon such facts can be the produce only of hypothesis, it is liable to be overthrown by every veering blast of conjecture.

But when once these Doctrines become the Doctrines of revelation, they may easily be sown and take firm root in almost every mind. For, they may be received by the MEANEST CAPACITY, through the easy conveyance of HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, and the unsuspecting faith which it reposes in human testimony. And at the same time, they find their fittest foil in the MOST ENLIGHTENED UNDERSTANDING; as they afford exercise to the most scrutinizing reason, assisted by the deepest learning, and directed to the highest and most important objects of science. For, though the most penetrating intellect cannot reach these objects without the aid of revelation, no more than the brightest eye can discern many objects in the heavens without the assistance of a glass; yet when discovered, we can point out the uses of both; and shew their congruity with the attributes of GOD. With as much propriety therefore might it be maintained *a priori*, that a telescope was not wanted, because GOD had given to Man, EYES; as that revelation was not necessary, because he has endowed him with REASON.

But

But this leads to my last enquiry, into THE RIGHT APPLICATION OF REASON TO THE DOCTRINES OF REVELATION. For, if it were the design of christianity, to give mankind CERTAINTY on those subjects, where by the light of reason alone they were before only bewildered in CONJECTURE; whence have so many various opinions and sects arisen both in antient and modern times; innumerable as the blades of grass in spring, or as the scattered leaves of the forest in autumn? If philosophers, tired with their errors, at length sunk into SCEPTICISM; so likewise, it will be retorted, have many christians, equally fatigued with their devious and vain enquiries, resolved at last indolently to repose in the bosom of CREDULITY.

That the subtilties of METAPHYSICS, are the fruitful source of these evils, is the common and constant answer to this objection. For, that science it is thought may be justly censured as the cause of all the blemishes which have disfigured the fair face of christianity. And therefore, all that acrimony of abuse is poured out against it, with which the petulance of ignorance never fails to condemn, what it does not understand.

The INNOCENCE however of that science wants not now to be proved; when the IMPORTANCE of it, in the former part of this discourse, has been so fully shewn. From which it follows, that to reject the application of ALL METAPHYSICS to the doctrines of revelation, is, to discard all USE OF REASON from religion. Since it is that very science, or as it may be otherwise called, the science of INTELLIGENCE, which furnishes  
reason

reason with the objects, by which it judges of the truths of revelation.

But, let the objector go for a solution of this difficulty to the natural philosophers, if he be not already one. Let him learn the cause, and cure of their errors ; and he will be taught likewise the origin, and learn the end of christian aberrations. Let him turn his eye to this illustrious feat of learning, and view the sagacious BACON, piercing through the mists of prejudice which obstructed the sight of his cotemporaries, and tracing the way, which leads through nature's path, to nature's GOD. Let him view the soaring, yet humble NEWTON, cautiously treading in the same track ; from a variety of particular observations forming general conclusions, and at length developing the laws, by which the whole compages of things in the universal system of the world, is regulated and adjusted. Then let him view the extravagant conceits of other philosophers, systems built upon the sandy foundations of FANCY and IMAGINATION instead of the solid basis of OBSERVATION and EXPERIMENT. And when he afterwards glances his eye over SYSTEMS of CHRISTIANITY, he can no more wonder at the harmony of Ammonius, than the analogies of Kepler ; at the principles of Manes, than the vortices of Des-Cartes.

Alike their errors, and alike the causes of those errors. For neither class would be contented, as they ought to have been, with the application of their reason to the volumes open before them, the one of nature, and the other of revelation ; and  
with



with the investigation of the discoveries GOD has been pleased to make of himself in each. But they presumptuously though piously inferred, from their own conceptions of the attributes of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, that certain operations MUST PREVAIL in the ONE, and certain doctrines MUST be DELIVERED in the OTHER. And as this abuse of reason peculiarly related to christianity ; it sometimes, by a far fetched refinement, added doctrines, which *that* disavows ; and at other times, by a short-sighted view, rejected truths, which religion authorizes.

What however had metaphysics to do with these errors ? And how does that science deserve the reproaches which has been so illiberally, and so frequently cast upon it ? The misapplication of *its* objects was the EFFECT, not the CAUSE of these mistakes. But on the contrary, they flowed from an IGNORANCE of the LIMITS of HUMAN SCIENCE ; which METAPHYSICS, and METAPHYSICS ONLY CAN RECTIFY. For, these errors, which gave men of latter ages a distaste to philosophy and revelation, as the waters of Marah caused the Israelites to murmur ; may equally be purified by the right application of metaphysics, as those bitter waters were made sweet by the tree cast into them by Moses.

But, let not an erroneous piety, reprobate with severity, the mistakes of any period. The wisdom of the Deity, is not less discernible in the errors and corruptions of christianity, which he has suffered to darken the minds of men in different ages,

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than in the first dawn and latter diffusion of its rays. Had it seemed more adverse to the discoveries of philosophers, when the world was filled with their speculations; its progress had been slower, and the multitude less enlightened by its moral doctrines. Had it again shone forth in its purest lustre, during the dark night of ignorance; it would perhaps only have dazzled the beholders, not guided their footsteps. And since the reformation has cheered the world with its returning beams, and reason has been employed to scrutinize its evidence; had not some of its advocates deemed doctrines as inadmissible, which are notwithstanding justly capable of defence, and conceded points to the weakness of infidelity, which are really contained in the wisdom of revelation; many converts had been lost to its cause. For the pride of imperfect, though improving reason, would have revolted from the conviction of revealed truth. But no longer let prejudice obstruct, difficulty deter, nor danger affright us in our endeavours to contemplate it in all its native brightness. Let us ever remember, that as TO CHRISTIANITY we owe the RESTORATION OF LETTERS; the IMPORTANCE OF ITS DOCTRINES FURNISHING the MOTIVE, the NATURE OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT SUPPLYING the PERSONS; so likewise, LEARNING and SCIENCE are the NATURAL MEANS employed by GOD, for the PROPAGATION and ADVANCEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

Let those therefore, who by the bounty of their founders enjoy in the delightful shades of this learned and religious retreat,

treat, all the leisure they can wish, and all the aids they can receive, evince their gratitude to their benefactors, by dedicating their time to the purposes for which it was allotted. At once promoting their own highest happiness, and the greatest public good. May merit, not interest, assign to each his station. And may those honours be never prostituted to wealth united with ignorance, which were instituted as the rewards of wisdom associated with learning. May this illustrious place ever remain the great public reservoir of letters and religion; from whence in future times as in the past, their salubrious streams shall be conveyed, and circulated throughout the world. May the sciences and the arts, be cultivated through all their DIFFERENT GRADATIONS, without vulgar prejudice, and without partial affection. And may none be ever taught to imagine, that they have mounted to the summit of science, when they have reached only some inferior eminence.

Many of the mental faculties have been properly exercised, and many regions of knowledge have been carefully explored. But INTELLECT, that HIGHEST FACULTY in MAN, wants still to be exerted; and METAPHYSICS that MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL SCIENCES wants much to be cultivated. Without borrowing its principles to cement all the super-structures raised by learning and genius, they can remain only weak and tottering edifices. But without the aid of those principles every fabric of theology must instantly tumble into ruins. For natural religion, must then want its foundation of intellectual ideas;

ideas ; and revealed, its basis of rational evidence.

*Let not those therefore who ought to be teachers, have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of GOD\*. But, as the day is far spent, and the night is at hand, it is now high time that we all come (as far as the differences of human ability will permit) in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of GOD unto a perfect MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ †.*

As the christian revelation was designed to qualify us by education in this world, for the attainment of happiness in the next ; the qualities acquired here, must be analogous to those which will constitute our perfection hereafter. And as we shall be altogether intellectual beings in a future state of eternal existence, it is consequently our duty to improve the intellectual part of our imperfect nature, amidst the present fleeting scenes of this transitory life.

May Heaven therefore grant, that as the HUMAN INTELLECT becomes more and more ENLIGHTENED in the CONTEMPLATION,—that the HUMAN HEART may become more and more ENRAPTURED in the ADORATION,—of that INFINITE GOODNESS, WISDOM, and POWER, by which we were CREATED,—REDEEMED,—and SANCTIFIED.—To WHOM be all honour, and glory, praise and thanksgiving, both now, and, for ever.

\* Hebr. v. 12.

† Ephes. iv. 13.

