
DOCTOR DWIGHT's
SERMONS
TO THE
CANDIDATES
FOR THE
BACCALAUREATE
IN
YALE-COLLEGE, A.D. 1797.

THE
N A T U R E,
A N D
D A N G E R,
O F
INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY,
EXHIBITED IN
TWO DISCOURSES,

ADDRESSED TO THE
C A N D I D A T E S
FOR THE
B A C C A L A U R E A T E,
I N
Y A L E C O L L E G E,

BY THE REV. TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE;

SEPTEMBER 9th, 1797.

NEW-HAVEN:
PRINTED BY GEORGE BUNCE.
M.DCC.XCVIII.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IN Yale College it is customary for the President, or the Professor of Divinity, to address a discourse to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate, on the Sabbath, preceding the public Commencement. The following Discourses were delivered, on this occasion, to the class which was graduated the last year, and are now published at their request. They were originally long, perhaps longer than the reader would have wished. I have, however, considerably enlarged them. For this I have no other apology, than, that the method, in which the subject is pursued, appeared to me the best, which presented itself at the time. If this apology should in the judgment of the Reader be insufficient, I submit cheerfully to his censure.

YALE-COLLEGE, March 4th, 1798.

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

**BEWARE, LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH
PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER
THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE
RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND
NOT AFTER CHRIST.**

WHEN the Gospel was published by the Apostles, it was, according to the prophetic declaration of its Author, vigorously opposed by the world. This opposition originated from various sources; but, whencesoever derived, wore one uniform character of industry, art, and bitterness. The bigotry of the Jews, and the sword of the Gentiles, the learning of the wise, the persuasion of the eloquent, and the force of the powerful, were alike exerted to crush the rising enemy.

Among the kinds of opposition, which they were called to encounter, not the least laborious, malignant, or dangerous, was the Philosophy of the age. A large number of their first converts lived in countries, where the language of the Greeks was spoken, and their Philosophy received. The things, which this Philosophy professed to teach, were substantially the same with those which were taught by the Apostles:

—
 tles; viz. the Character and Will of God, and the Duty and Supreme Interest of Men. Hence it naturally became an object of veneration, assumed the station of a rival to the Gospel, and exhibited an imposing aspect, especially to young and unsettled converts.

THE doctrines, and the spirit, of the Philosophers were, however, generally direct counterparts to those of the Apostles. Some truths, and truths of high importance, they undoubtedly taught; but they blended them with gross and numberless errors. Some moral and commendable practices they, at times, inculcated; but so interwoven with immoralities, that the parts of the web could never be separated by the common hand. Covetous, self-sufficient, and sensual, they looked down with supreme contempt on the poor, self-denying, and humble followers of Christ, and on their artless, direct, undisguised, and practical preaching. Notwithstanding this contempt, it, however, prevailed against all their specious logic, pompous eloquence, and arrogant pretensions. Their Philosophy, enveloped in fable and figures, perplexed with sophistry, and wandering with perpetual excursion round about moral subjects, satisfied, in no permanent degree the understanding, and affected in no useful degree the heart: while the Gospel simple, plain, and powerful, gained the full assent of common sense, and reduced all the affections under its controul. Of course, the contempt of Philosophers was changed into hatred, rivalry, and persecution; and their ridicule of Christianity was succeeded by the serious efforts of violence and malignity.

St. PAUL, who appears thoroughly to have comprehended the nature, and often to have experienced the effects, of the existing Philosophy, has with
 great

great force exposed its dangerous tendency. In the beginning of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he has given an ample account of its inefficiency and emptiness, and a full refutation of its insolent pretensions to be a rule of life and salvation. The arguments of its weakness and mischievous tendency, furnished, in various passages of Scripture by him and his companions, remain still unrefuted; and, as they were at first, so they are at this day, effectual means of preserving no small part of mankind from the destruction, of which it is the natural and certain parent.

In the text, this Philosophy is characterized in a most proper and forcible manner. It is termed Philosophy and vain deceit; a Hebraism, of the same import with vain and deceitful Philosophy; deceitful in its nature, doctrines, and arguments, and vain in its efficacy to accomplish the ends, which it proposes. It is asserted to be *after the tradition of men,* and *after the rudiments of the world*; but *not after Christ*; in whom, the Apostle subjoins, *dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: i. e. It is such a scheme of morals and religion, as is suited to the character of the Inventors; Men, weak and wicked, deceived and deceitful; unable to devise, to comprehend, or to teach, the character of God, or the duty of mankind. It is such a scheme of morals and religion, as accords with the principles and practices of the disciples, to whom it is taught; formed not with a design to amend the heart, and reform the life; but with a view to gain acceptance by flattering lust, and by justifying, soothing, and quieting guilt. The tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world, are phrases, which may be variously interpreted, but they admit, I apprehend, of no interpretation, which will not support the paraphrase here given.

To this Philology, and the teachers of it, the Apostle directs his followers to *beware lest they should become a prey*. The Greek word here used, denotes *gathering and carrying finally off the spoils of a vanquished enemy*; and therefore strongly expresses the complete ruin, to which St. Paul considered his converts as exposed.

THE Philosophy, which has opposed Christianity in every succeeding age, has uniformly worn the same character with that, described in the text. It has rested on the same foundations, proceeded from the same disposition, aimed at the same ends, and pursued them by the same means. Equally remote has it been from truth, equally unsupported by evidence, and equally fraught with danger and ruin.

SATISFIED of the justice of these assertions, I feel it, Young Gentlemen, to be my duty, on this occasion, to exhort you

To beware, lest you become a prey to the Philosophy, which opposes the Gospel.

To impress on your minds the propriety, and the importance, of this exhortation, I shall endeavour, in the

First place, To prove to you, that this Philosophy is vain and deceitful;

Secondly, To shew you, that you are in danger of becoming a prey to it; and

Thirdly, To dissuade you by several arguments from thus yielding yourselves a prey.

First. I shall endeavour to prove to you, that this Philosophy is vain and deceitful.

YOU

You will observe, that it is a particular kind of Philosophy, against which all my arguments are directed. Philosophy at large, or the Use and the Attainments of our Reason, in the candid and careful examination of every question, within the limits of our understanding, so far as it springs from a real desire of investigating truth, and proceeds on satisfactory evidence, is not only undeserving of censure, but deserving of the highest praise. It is the interest, and the duty, of all men, so far as their condition will allow; and, as you well know, has by me, in the office of an Instructor, been earnestly and unconditionally urged on you, as peculiarly your interest and duty. That Philosophy only, which is opposed to Christianity, is the subject of the following observations. There is indeed much other Philosophy, which busies itself with government, medicine, and various other subjects, which is equally vain and deceitful; but with this I have, at present, no concern.

THE great object, professedly aimed at by the Philosophy in question, and on the attainment of which all its value depends, is to determine what is the Duty, and the supreme Interest, of man. This it is plain, must depend entirely on the Will of God. To do whatever God chooses must be man's supreme interest, and duty alike. It is his duty, both because God wills it, and because it is right. As his whole well-being depends on God only, his supreme interest must consist entirely in pleasing God. He can receive no good, when God will not give it, and God will not give, unless he be pleased. In order, therefore, to the discovery of man's supreme interest and duty, it is absolutely necessary to discover, first, what is the preceptive will of God, or what God requires man to do.

THIS, Philosophy can never accomplish ; and hence I assert it to be vain and deceitful in its Nature ; vain with respect to the end, at which it aims, and deceitful with respect to the means, which it employs, and the conclusions, which it labours to establish.

THERE are three methods, in which, it has been supposed, mankind may obtain the knowledge of the Preceptive Will of God, and, of course, of their own interest and duty.

I. BY Immediate Revelation ;

II. BY Arguing analogically from his Providential dispensations ;

III. BY arguing from a supposed Character of God, either derived from his works, or determined *a priori*.

THE first of these methods lies out of the present question. The two remaining ones I propose now to examine ; and assert

I. THAT Analogical Argumentation from the Providence of God can never teach us his Preceptive Will, except in a manner greatly imperfect and unsatisfactory.

IN Philosophy, thus directed, we always argue from what God has done to what he will do : i. e. from the past and present state of his Providence we undertake to determine what his designs are, and how they will terminate ; and hence derive our conclusions concerning the Will of God, or that Law, by which our conduct ought to be regulated. This method of Philosophizing is attended with insuperable difficulties.

In the 1st. place, we know but a very small number of the beings and events, which have existed ; but, to form just views of the real scope of Providence, we ought to know every being and every event. To understand the true character of a complicated machine, we must understand the nature, and the operations, of every part. He who knows but one in a thousand of such parts, and has seen the operations of that one part only, would be thought wholly destitute of common sense, were he to boast of a thorough knowledge of the whole. The great machine of Providence is infinitely more complex, the proportion of the parts unknown to those which are known is infinitely greater, and the approximation to the knowledge of the whole infinitely less, than in the machine supposed. What then must be the character of him, who boasts of a thorough knowledge of Providence ?

2. We know not thoroughly the nature of those beings and events, with which we are best acquainted. The nature of every being, and of every event, so far as the present question is concerned, depends chiefly, or perhaps with more propriety wholly, on its connections with others ? What are the uses of this being, or this event ? What are the purposes, which it is designed to accomplish ? are the questions, which are ever intended to be solved, in our enquiries of this nature. But these questions Philosophy can never satisfactorily solve. The immediate uses and purposes are, indeed, frequently obvious ; but those, which lie at a very little distance, are, for the most part, unknown. Bread, we know, will nourish man ; and safely determine, that bread was formed for this end ; But why man exists at all, why he thus exists, and why he is thus to be nourished, we know not. That, which we know, avails not, therefore, to the purpose in view.

ALL intermediate and subordinate ends in Creation and Providence are capable of being understood only by the knowledge of the ultimate end : i. e. the purpose, in which all earthly things terminate. To this end all things directly tend ; with it all are indissolubly connected ; and for it all are designed, and brought into being. But this end is wholly unknown. If it exist on this side of the grave, it has never been conjectured. If it exists beyond the grave it can only be conjectured ; for we can only conjecture whether man will exist beyond the grave. The ultimate end of all earthly things being, therefore, wholly unknown, the true nature of all preceding subordinate ends is also unknown, and of course the real scope of Providence.

In such a state of things Analogies must plainly be of little use. The arguments, which they actually furnish, are all direct corroboratives of the Scriptural system of Theology, and Morality. Without the Scriptures, they are a labyrinth without a clue. No higher proof need be given of this, than the discordant and contradictory explanations of them, adopted by Philosophers ; no two of whom, either ancient or modern, agree in their constructions of Providence.

How ridiculous an employment would it be thought in a Clown, should he undertake to interpret the designs of a Statesman, in the management of a great empire ; to determine from what he had done what he would hereafter do ; and to decide on his own duty, and that of his fellow subjects, from a construction of the analogies, which he supposed himself to observe in the conduct of the Ruler ? Yet the Clown is infinitely nearer to the Statesman, in understanding, than the Philosopher to the Supreme Ruler ; and infinitely more able to comprehend the analogies, visible in the government of an empire, than

than the Philosopher those, which appear in the government of the Universe.

3. THE Character of God cannot be perfectly known from Creation and Providence.

OF the truth of this assertion I am entirely convinced; yet I shall decline attempting a discussion of it, at this time; because the occasion will not allow me to enter into so wide a field; and because you have, not long since, heard my opinions and arguments at large, in discourses professedly formed on this subject. Such a discussion, it ought further to be observed, is wholly unnecessary for the present purpose; as Philosophers have totally disagreed concerning that Character of God, which is supposed to be visible in his works; and as the prevailing Philosophy wholly denies the existence of such a Being.

THE only possible means of discovering the Will, or Law, of God which can be furnished by his works, are either his Designs, or his Character. I flatter myself, that it has been proved, that his designs can never be learned from his works. If his character be also undiscoverable from this source, the conclusion is certain, that his Law must also be undiscoverable. If his Character can be learned imperfectly only, his Law must, at the utmost, be known in a degree equally imperfect. If his character be uncertain, his law must be at least equally uncertain: and that his character is uncertain, so far as his works disclose it, and Philosophy has discovered it, cannot be denied by any one, acquainted at all with the discordant opinions of Philosophers. Of course, the conclusion must be admitted, that to Philosophy the Law of God, and the Duty, and supreme Interest, of man, must, so far as this method of investigation is relied on, be undiscoverable. Thus Man, as a subject of the divine government, can not, by Phi-
losophy

lophyl, ever thoroughly know, from this lource of proof, what is that conduct, which he is bound to observe, in order to please God, and obtain his favour.

THE view of this subject, here given, does, however, by no means exhibit the greatest difficulty, under which Philosophy labours. Man is not only a subject of the divine government, and, therefore, in the highest degree concerned to know the divine Law, that he may obey it; but he is also a rebel subject, and, therefore, in the highest degree concerned to discover the means of restoration to the favour of God. Man has violated such precepts of the divine Law, as, either by Revelation, or Common sense, are discovered and acknowledged: such precepts, for instance, as require him to be thankful to his Maker, and sincere, just, and kind, to his fellow men. These things may be considered, here, as certainly known to be parts of the Law of God; because those Philosophers, who acknowledge a God, generally agree, that these are plainly duties of man. But all men have violated the precepts, which require these things. The first interest of all men is, therefore, to obtain a knowlege of the means, if there be any, of reconciliation to God, and reinstatement in the character and privileges of faithful subjects. To be thus reconciled, and reinstated, men must be pardoned; and pardon is an act of mere Mercy. But of the Mercy of God there are no proofs in his providence. Could we then discover the Law of God, by examining his works, the knowledge of it would avail nothing to our future well being. That we are sinners cannot be disputed; and, so far as Philosophy can discover, sinners must be condemned, and punished.

II. Arguments, drawn from a supposed character of God whether derived from his works, or determined *a priori*, labour under difficulties equally great.

1. It is impossible to determine the character of God by arguments a priori.

THE celebrated Doctor Clarke has indeed attempted thus to prove the divine character; and his attempt is a specimen of very respectable talents, and of the most laudable designs. Yet I cannot but think it has failed. The very words, *necessary* and *necessity*, which are so important to his scheme, are not, I apprehend, used by him with any clear, precise meaning. Perhaps I ought rather to say, that I cannot perceive any such meaning, in his manner of using them. From his illustrations I should believe, that he means nothing more by necessary existence, than existence merely. He does not appear to me to have proved even the Unity of God; and unless this can be evinced, I am doubtful whether it will be possible to prove the perfect character of the Godhead. As his is the only respectable effort of this kind, which I have seen, it is unnecessary for me to take notice of any other.

2. SHOULD the character of God be supposed completely ascertained from what he has done, or fully determined a priori; still insurmountable difficulties would attend every attempt to gain, from this source, the object aimed at by Philosophy.

THE only character of God which can be here admitted is that of Infinite Perfection. The designs of a Being infinitely perfect, must be formed to extend through eternity and immensity; and must embrace all beings and all events, together with all their relations and operations. That therefore, which, by itself, would be a wholly improper part of Creation, or Providence, might, from its relation to the whole great work, be entirely proper. In the sight of him, who perfectly knows all things, that may be beautiful, excellent, and necessary, as a part of the system.

system, which to every one, who knows a part, and a very small part only, of the whole number of things, would appear deformed and useless. How many measures in Government, how many even in the private affairs of an individual, appear to us to be necessary and useful, when we are thoroughly informed of their necessity and use; which, when we are uninformed, appear to be unnecessary and injurious? How much more must this fact exist in the system of the universe? He, who sees all things perfectly, must decide concerning all, according to their whole influence and tendency; we, according to their insulated character, or their immediate consequences.

THESE observations are abundantly supported by the real state of Creation and Providence. The existence of Moral and Natural evil; the death of half mankind under the age of five years; the uselessness, to the human eye, of most animals and vegetables; the redundancy of water on the globe; and the frozen, burnt, or otherwise barren, state of the land; are all things wholly proper in the Creation and Providence of God, because they exist; and his Agency in their existence, in whatever degree exerted, is wholly worthy of his character. Yet, so far as we are able to judge, few things could be more improper parts of a work, formed by Infinite Perfection.

THUS in its Nature must this Philosophy be vain and deceitful. I shall now attempt to shew, that, in fact, it has, from the beginning, been of this unhappy character. This will appear in the

I. Place in the discordance and contradictoriness of its doctrines.

ACCORDING

ACCORDING to Themistius, there were more than three hundred sects of the western Philosophers, differing greatly, on subjects of high importance. According to Varro, there were two hundred and eighty eight different opinions, entertained by them, concerning the summum bonum, or chief good; and three hundred opinions concerning God; or, as Varro himself declares, three hundred Jupiters, or supreme deities. Critias, Theodotus, Diageras, the Pyrrhonists, New Academics, and Epicureans, were generally either Sceptics, or Atheists.

Aristotle denied the Creation of the Universe, and the Providence of God, so far as this world is concerned.

The Stoics, and various others, taught, that God was fire.

Parmenides held, that God was partly fire, and partly water.

Xenophanes, that Matter, generally considered, was God.

Others held, that God was the Anima mundi, the Soul of the world.

Socrates and Plato taught the existence of one God, and taught, and practised, the worship of the numerous Gods of their country.

Cicero and Plutarch held, that there were two supreme Gods, one good, the other evil.

THESE instances are sufficient to shew how the greatest and most accurate Philosophers of Antiquity thought concerning this most important subject; and to prove, that not the least reliance can be safely placed in our religious concerns, on the conclusions of Philosophy.

THIS variety and discordance of doctrines, among Philosophers, exceedingly perplexed and distressed, in many instances, the Philosophers themselves; while

while it wholly destroyed their authority, as instructors, among the people at large.

PLATO, in his *Epinomis*, says, under a strong conviction, as it would seem, of the imperfection of his own Philosophy, "Let no man presume to teach, if God do not lead the way."

CICERO, *de nat. deor.* makes Cotta find fault with those, who labour to prove the existence of the Gods, by arguments; declaring, that they thus make the doctrine doubtful; whereas the traditions of their ancestors had rendered it certain.

PLUTARCH declares, that no argument, respecting religious belief, is more to be depended on, than the tradition of ancestors.

PLATO declares, that there are, by nature, no such things, as just things; since men always differ about them, and contrive, continually, new standards of right and wrong; and that, therefore, there can be no law, unless God should give it to us.

PORPHYRY confesses his conviction, that some universal method of delivering men's souls was needed, which no sect of Philosophers had yet found out.

MODERN Philosophers, notwithstanding they have enjoyed the light of Revelation, and have derived from the Scriptures all their defensible moral tenets, are yet, when they leave the doctrines of Revelation, very little better united.

LORD HERBERT of Cherbury, the first considerable English, Deistical Philosopher, and clearly one of the greatest and best, declares the following things: viz.

That Christianity is the best religion:

That his own Universal Religion of Nature agrees wholly with Christianity, and contributes to its establishment:

That

That all Revealed Religion (viz. Christianity) is absolutely uncertain, and of little or no use :

That Men are not hastily, or on small grounds, to be condemned, who are led to sin by bodily constitution :

That the indulgence of lust, and of anger, is no more to be blamed, than the thirst, occasioned by the Dropsy ; or the sleepiness, produced by the Lethargy.

That it is our duty to worship God by prayer and praise, by repentance and holiness, by reformation of heart and of life ; and that this is indispensably necessary to our acceptance with God :

That the soul is immortal ; that there will be a future retribution, which will be according to the works, and thoughts, of mankind ; and that he, who denies these truths, is scarcely to be accounted a reasonable creature :

That his own Universal Religion is, and ever has been, clearly known to all men :

That to the Gentiles (i.e. to almost all men) it was principally unknown :

And, notwithstanding the declarations, already mentioned, in favour of Christianity, he accuses all pretences to Revelation of folly and unreasonableness, and rejects with contempt its capital doctrines.

MR. HOBBS declares,

That the Scriptures are the Voice of God ; and yet

That they are of no authority, except as enjoined by the Civil Magistrate :

That inspiration is a supernatural gift, and the immediate hand of God ; and yet

That it is madness :

That the Scriptures are the foundation of all obligation ; and yet

That they are of no obligatory force, except as enjoined by the Civil Magistrate :

That

That a subject may believe Christ in his heart ; and yet

May lawfully deny him before the Magistrate :

That God exists ; and yet

That that, which is not Matter, is nothing :

That worship, prayers, and praise, are due to God ; and yet

That all religion is ridiculous :

That the civil or municipal Law is the only foundation of right and wrong :

That, where there is no civil law, every man's judgment is the only standard of right and wrong :

That the Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice ; and can do no wrong to his subjects :

That every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them, if he can :

That Man is a mere machine : and

That the Soul is material and mortal.

Mr. BLOUNT declares,

That there is one infinite and eternal God ; and yet insinuates,

That there are two eternal, independent Beings :

That the one God is the Creator of all things ; and yet insinuates,

That the world was not created, but eternal :

That God ought to be worshipped, with prayer and praise ; yet,

He objects to prayer as a duty :

That Christianity is safer than Deism ; and yet

That Revelation is not sufficiently supported, because men differ about it : (Of course, no moral doctrine is sufficiently supported ; for men differ about every such doctrine.)

That the Soul is immortal, and will be rewarded hereafter, according to its works done here ; and yet,

That

That the Soul is probably material, and of course mortal :

Still he says, that we ought to obey God in the practice of virtue ;

And that we ought to repent, and trust in the mercy of God for pardon.

LORD SHAFTESBURY declares,

That the belief of future rewards and punishments is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it ;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, makes virtue mercenary ;

That to be influenced by rewards is disingenuous, and servile ; and

That the hope of reward cannot consist with virtue ; and yet,

That the hope of rewards is not derogatory to virtue, but a proof, that we love virtue ;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, however mercenary it may be accounted, is, in many instances, a great advantage, security, and support, of virtue ; and

That all obligation to be virtuous arises from the advantages (i. e. the rewards) of virtue, and from the disadvantages (i. e. the punishments) of vice :

That those are censurable, who represent the Gospel as a fraud (or imposition ;)

That he hopes the discourses of Doctor Whichcot will reconcile the enemies of Christianity to it, and make Christians prize it more highly than before ; and

That he hopes Christians will be secured against the temper of the irreconcilable enemies of the faith of the Gospel ; and yet

He represents salvation as a ridiculous thing, and insinuates,

That Christ was influenced, and directed, by deep design.

designs of ambition, and cherished a savage zeal and persecuting spirit; and

That the Scriptures were a mere artful invention to secure a profitable monopoly (i.e. of sinister advantages to the inventors:)

That Man is born to religion, piety, and adoration, as well as to honour and friendship;

That virtue is not compleat without piety; yet

He labours to make virtue wholly independent of piety:

That all the warrant for the authority of Religious symbols (i.e. the Institutions of Christianity) is the authority of the Magistrate:

That the Magistrate is the sole judge of Religious Truth, and of Revelation:

That miracles are ridiculous; and

That, if true, they would be no proof of the truth of Revelation:

That Ridicule is the test of truth; and yet

That Ridicule itself must be brought to the test of Reason:

That the Christian Religion ought to be received when established by the Magistrate; yet

He grossly ridicules it, where it was thus established:

That Religion and Virtue appear to be so nearly connected, that they are presumed to be inseparable companions; and yet

That Atheists often conduct so well, as to seem to force us to confess them virtuous:

That he, who denies a God, sets up an opinion against the very well-being of society; and yet

That Atheism has no direct natural tendency to take away a just sense of right and wrong:

That Atheism is greatly deficient in promoting virtue; and

That the natural tendency of it is to take away a just sense of right and wrong.

Mr. COLLINS, though chiefly a mere objector to Revelation, declares,

That Man is a mere machine:

That the Soul is material and mortal:

That Christ and his Apostles built on the predictions of fortune-tellers and divines;

That the Prophets were mere fortune-tellers and discoverers of lost goods;

That Christianity stands wholly on a false foundation; yet

He speaks respectfully of Christianity; and also of the Epicureans, whom he at the same time considers as Atheists.

Mr. WOOLSTON, also a mere objector, declares,

That he is the farthest of any man from being engaged in the cause of Infidelity;

That Infidelity has no place in his heart;

That he writes for the honour of Jesus, and in defence of Christianity; and

That his design in writing is to advance the Messiahship, and Truth, of the holy Jesus; "To whom," he says, "be glory for ever, amen." and yet,

That the Gospels are full of incredibilities, impossibilities, and absurdities;

That they resemble Gulliverian tales of persons and things, which out of romance never had a being;

That the miracles, recorded in the Gospels, taken literally, will not abide the Test of Reason and Commonsense; but must be rejected, and the authority of Jesus along with them;

At the same time, he casts the most scurrilous reflections on Christ;

Dr. TINDAL declares,

That Christianity, stripped of the additions, which
mistake,

mistake, policy, and circumstances, have made to it, is a most holy religion; and yet,

That the Scriptures are obscure, and fit only to perplex men, and that the two great parts of them are contradictory:

That all the Doctrines of Christianity plainly speak themselves to be the will of an infinitely wise and holy God; and yet,

That the Precepts of Christianity are loose, undetermined, incapable of being understood by mankind at large, give wrong and unworthy apprehensions of God, and are generally false and pernicious:

That Natural Religion is so plain to all, even the most ignorant, men, that God could not make it plainer; even if he were to convey, miraculously, the very same ideas to all men; and yet,

That almost all mankind have had very unworthy notions of God, and very wrong apprehensions of Natural Religion:

That the principles of Natural Religion are so clear, that men cannot possibly mistake them; and yet,

That almost all men have grossly mistaken them, and imbibed a superstition worse than Atheism.

That Natural Religion is unalterable; that nothing can be either added, or diminished; and that it is necessarily known to all men; and yet,

That the goodness, or wickedness, of all actions is wholly measured by their tendency; that this tendency is wholly to be judged of by every man, according to his circumstances; and that these circumstances are continually changing:

That one rule is formed by God for every man, and yet,

That every Man must form a rule for himself.

Mr. CHUBB declares,

That he hopes to share with his friends in the favour of God, in that peaceful and happy state, which
God

God hath prepared for the virtuous and faithful, in some other, future world ; and yet,

That God does not interpose in the affairs of this world, at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men here :

That Prayer may be useful, as a positive Institution, by introducing proper thoughts, affections, and actions ; and yet he intimates,

That it must be displeasing to God, and directly improper :

That a state of rewards and punishments, hereafter, is one of the truths, which are of the highest concern to men ; and yet,

That the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unsatisfactory ; and that the Soul is probably matter :

That men are accountable to God for all their conduct, and will certainly be judged and dealt with, according to the truth and reality of their respective cases ; and yet,

That men will not be judged for their impiety or ingratitude to God, nor for their injustice and unkindness to each other ; but only for voluntary injuries to the public ; and that even this is unnecessary and useless :

That God may kindly reveal to the world, when greatly vitiated by error and ignorance, truths necessary to be known, and precepts necessary to be obeyed ; and yet,

That such a Revelation would be, of course, uncertain and useless ;

That Christ's Mission is, at least in his view, probably divine ; and yet,

That Christ, in his opinion, was of no higher character, than the Founder of the Christian sect (i.e. another Sadoc, Cerinthus, or Herbert :)

That Christ was sent into the world, to acquaint mankind with the Revelation of the will of God ; and yet,

That

That his birth and resurrection were ridiculous, and incredible ; and that his institutions and precepts were less excellent, than those of other teachers and lawgivers :

That the New Testament, Particularly the Writings of the Apostles, contain excellent cautions and instructions for our right conduct ; and

That the New-Testament yields much clearer light than any other traditionary Revelation ; and yet,

That the New Testament has contributed to the perplexity and confusion of mankind, and exhibits doctrines heretical, dishonourary to God, and injurious to men ; and

That the Apostles were impostors ; and that the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles resemble Jewish fables, and Popish legends, rather than accounts of facts :

That, as, on the Christian scheme, Christ will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, he has not on this account (i.e. admitting this to be true) any disagreeable apprehensions on account of what he has written ; and yet,

He ridicules the birth and resurrection of Christ, postpones his instructions to those of the Heathen Philosophers and Lawgivers, asserts his doctrines to be dishonourary to God and injurious to mankind, and allows him not to be sinless ; but merely not a gross sinner.

He further declares,

That the Resurrection of Christ, if true, proves not the immortality of the Soul :

That the belief of a future state is of no advantage to society :

That all Religions are alike :

That it is of no consequence what Religion a man embraces :

AND

AND he allows not any room for dependence on God's Providence, trust in him, and resignation to his will, as parts of duty, or religion.

Mr. HUME declares,

That there is no perceptible connection between cause and effect ;

That the belief of such connection is merely a matter of custom ;

That experience can shew us no such connection ;

That we cannot with any reason conclude, that, because an effect has taken place once, it will take place again ;

That it is uncertain and useless to argue from the course of nature, and infer an Intelligent Cause ;

That we cannot, from any analogy of nature, argue the existence of an Intelligent Cause of all things ;

That there is no reason to believe that the Universe proceeded from a Cause ;

That there are no solid arguments to prove the existence of a God ;

- That experience can furnish no argument concerning matters of fact, is in this case useless, and can give rise to no inference ; and

That there is no relation between cause and effect ; and yet,

That Experience is our only guide in matters of fact and the existence of objects ;

That it is universally allowed, that nothing exists without a cause ;

- That every effect is so precisely determined, that no other effect could, in such circumstances, have possibly resulted from the operation of its cause ;

That the relation of cause is absolutely necessary to the propagation of our species, and the regulation of our conduct ;

That voluntary actions are necessary, and determined

mined by a fixed connection between cause and effect ;

That motives are causes, operating necessarily on the will ;

That Man is a mere machine (i.e. an object operated on necessarily by external causes ;)

That there is no contingency (i.e. nothing happening without a settled cause) in the universe ; and

That Matter and Motion may be regarded as the cause of thought (i.e. The Soul is a Material Cause, and thought its effect :))

That God discovers to us only faint traces of his character, and that it would be flattery, or presumption to ascribe to him any perfection, which is not discovered to the full in his works (and of course, that it would be flattery or presumption to ascribe any perfection to God :))

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be wise and good ;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect. (i. e. Holiness, Justice, Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, and Truth, may be defects in God ;) Of consequence, Injustice, Folly, Malice, and Falshood, may be excellencies in his character ;

That no reward, or punishment, can be rationally expected, beyond what is already known by experience and observation :

That self-denial, self-mortification, and humility, are not virtues, but are useless and mischievous ; that they stupify the understanding, sour the temper, and harden the heart (and of course are gross crimes :))

That pride and self-valuation, ingenuity, eloquence, quickness of thought, easiness of expression, delicacy of taste, strength of body, health, cleanliness, taper legs, and broad shoulders, are virtues :

That Suicide, or self-murder, is lawful and commendable (and of course virtuous :))

That

That Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life :

That Female Infidelity (or Adultery) when known, is a small thing ; when unknown, nothing : and

That Scepticism is the true and only wisdom of man. *

Lord

* The following summary of Mr. Hume's doctrines, published some years before his death, Bishop Horne says, was never, so far as he could find, questioned, as to its fidelity or accuracy, either by Mr. Hume, or his friends.

A Summary of Mr. Hume's Doctrines, Metaphysical and Moral.

Of the Soul.

That the soul of man is not the same this moment, that it was the last : that we know not what it is ; that it is not one, but many things, and that it is nothing at all.

That in this soul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation ; and yet that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cause of thought.

Of the Universe.

That the external world does not exist, or at least, that its existence may reasonably be doubted.

That the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist.

That the universe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a substance.

That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause ; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause.

Of Human Knowledge.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themselves, and therefore, the utmost that Philosophy can do, is to give us a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts.

That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument that by argument, nothing can be proved.

That man, in all his perceptions, actions and volitions, is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the existence of which he is by no means certain ; and yet, that the nature of all things depends so much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the sun light, without an act of the human understanding.

Lord BOLINGBROKE declares,

That Power and Wisdom are the only attributes of God, which can be discovered by mankind; and yet,

That he is as far from denying the Justice, as the Power, of God; that his Goodness is manifest: At the same time, he ascribes every other Perfection to God, as well as Wisdom and Power, and says, this is rational:

That the Wisdom of God is merely a natural attribute, and in no sense moral; and yet,

That the Wisdom of God operates in choosing what is fittest to be done; (Of course, it is a moral attribute; involving perfect moral rectitude, as well as perfect knowledge;). That

Of God.

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good, while there is any evil or disorder in the universe.

That we have no good reason to think the universe proceeds from a cause.

That as the existence of the external world is questionable, we are at a loss to find arguments by which we may prove the existence of the Supreme Being, or any of his attributes.

That when we speak of Power, as an attribute of any being, God himself not excepted, we use words without meaning.

That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with power, *much less* of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reason to believe, that any object or quality of any object exists, of which we cannot form an idea.

Of the Morality of Human Actions

That every human action is necessary, and could not have been different from what it is.

That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues are nearly of the same kind—In other words, that to want honesty, and to want understanding, and to want a leg, are equally the objects of moral disapprobation.

That adultery must be practised, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practised, it would in time cease to be scandalous; and, that, if practised secretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all.

Lastly, as the soul of man, according to Mr. Hume, becomes every moment a different being, the consequence must be, that the crimes committed by him at one time cannot be imputable to him at another.

That God is gracious and beneficent ;

That whatever God has done is just and good ;

That such moral perfections are in God, as Christians ascribe to him ; yet

He censures divines for ascribing these perfections to God :

That we learn from our own Power and Wisdom, the Power and Wisdom of God ; and yet,

That it is profane, to ascribe the excellencies of our nature to God, although without limit or imperfection :

He undertakes to defend the Righteousness of God against divines ; and yet asserts,

That Holiness and Righteousness in God are like nothing in men ; that they cannot be conceived of by men, nor argued about with any certainty ; and that to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes is blasphemy :

That God made all things ; and yet,

That he did not determine the existence of particular men : (Of course, he did not determine the existence of any man ; all men being particular men.)

That he will not presume to deny, that there have been Particular Providences ; and yet,

That there is no foundation for the belief of any such providences ; and that it is absurd and profane to assert, or believe, them :

That God is just ; and that justice requires, that rewards and punishment, be measured to particular cases, according to their circumstances, in proportion to the merit, or demerit, of every individual ; and yet,

That God doth not so measure out rewards, or punishments ; and that, if he did, he would subvert human affairs ; that he concerns not himself with the affairs of men at all ; or, if he does, that he regards only collective bodies of men, not individuals ; that he punishes none except through the Magistrate :

gistrate; and that there will be no state of future rewards, or punishments:

That divines are deserving of censure for saying, that God made Man to be happy; and yet he asserts,

That God made Man to be happy here; and that the end of the human state is happiness:

That the Religion of Nature is clear and obvious to all mankind; and yet,

That it has been unknown to the greatest part of mankind:

That we know Material substance, and are assured of it; and yet,

That we know nothing of either Matter, or Spirit:

That there is, undeniably, something in our constitution, beyond the known properties of matter; and yet,

That the Soul is material and mortal; and that to say, the Soul is immaterial is the same thing as to say, that two and two are five:

That Self-love is the great Law of our nature; and yet,

That Universal Benevolence is the great Law of our nature:

That Christianity is a republication of the Religion of Nature, and a benevolent system; that its morals are pure; and that he is determined to seek for genuine Christianity with the simplicity of spirit, with which Christ himself taught it in the Gospel; and yet

A great part of his Works, particularly of his Philosophical Works, was written for no other end, but to destroy Christianity.

He also declares,

That there is no conscience in Man; except artificially:

That it is more natural to believe many Gods than to believe One:

He teaches, that Ambition, the Lust of Power, Avarice, and Sensuality, may be lawfully gratified, if they can be safely gratified.

That the sole foundation of Modesty is vanity, or a wish to show ourselves superiour to mere animals.

That Man lives only in the present world ;

That Man is only a superiour animal :

That Man's chief End is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh :

That Modesty is inspired by mere prejudice :

That Polygamy is a part of the Law, or Religion, of Nature. He intimates also,

That Adultery is no violation of the Law, or Religion of Nature :

That there is no wrong in Lewdness, except in the highest Incest :

That the Law or Religion of Nature forbids no Incest, except between the nearest Relations : and plainly supposes,

That all Men and Women are unchaste, and that there is no such thing, as Conjugal Fidelity :

These doctrines will serve as a specimen of the Philosophy, which actually exists. Volumes would be necessary for even a summary account of all its diversities. I need only observe further, that, with respect to the Existence, Character, and Providence, of God, Philosophers differ wholly. Most of the Infidels, of the present age, entirely deny his existence, and treat the belief of it as a contemptible absurdity. Voltaire, at first, believed in a finite God ; but, in his old age, doubted of the existence of any God. Toland believed the world to be God. Many of them suppose him to resemble the Gods of Epicureans, to be totally absorbed in pleasure and quietude, and to be utterly unconcerned with the creatures, which, nevertheless, he has thought proper to make. Amid such a diversity, and discordance, whom are you to follow ; and what are you to believe ?

2dly. In the gross and monstrous Nature of its Doctrines.

Of this character were very many doctrines of the Ancient Philosophers.

ZENO taught, that all crimes were equal; that we ought never to forgive injuries; and that the most abominable lewdness is lawful.

BOTH ZENO and Cleanthes taught, that Children may as lawfully roast and eat their parents, as any other food.

DIOGENES, and the Cynics generally, taught, that Parents may lawfully sacrifice and eat their Children; and that there is neither sin, nor shame, in the grossest and most public acts of lewdness.

PLATO taught, that lewdness is justifiable; and

CICERO, that it is a crime of small magnitude.

LYCURGUS encouraged stealing by an express Law.

ARISTIPPUS taught, that both theft and adultery are lawful.

CICERO, that it is lawful to make war, for the sake of fame, provided it be conducted without unnecessary cruelty.

CICERO also taught, that Virtue consists in the desire of fame. Of course Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charles the twelfth of Sweden, and Nadir Kouli Khan, were among the most virtuous of mankind.*

THE occasion will not allow me to swell the number of these specimens of the ancient Philosophy. I proceed therefore to observe, that the moderns have uttered numerous doctrines, of a similar character. Such is the Atheism, which they now consider as the only rational and enlightened Philosophy. Such is the Scepticism of Hume; the mortality and materiality

* For several of these doctrines see Deism Revealed.

ality of the Soul; the doctrine, that Man is a mere animal; that animal gratification is the chief of end our being; that right and wrong depend solely on the decisions of the magistrate; that ridicule is the test of truth; that we may lawfully get all things, if we can get them safely; that modesty is inspired only by prejudice, and has its foundation in the mere desire of appearing to be superiour to animals; that Adultery is lawful according to the Religion of Nature; that there is no wrong in lewdness, except in the highest Incest; That God exercises no Providence over mankind; and that holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, may be defects in the Divine character. All these, and many others already recited, are doctrines as repugnant to Common sense, and Common good, and fraught with as much impiety and irreverence to God, and as much evil to mankind, as any doctrines, which can be proposed. When we view the pernicious tendency of these Doctrines (and these are the substance of the modern Philosophy) we may safely say, that, thoroughly practised, they would overwhelm this world with that misery, which the Scriptures exhibit as experienced only in hell. When we contemplate the folly of these doctrines, we may with the utmost propriety apply to the modern Philosophers what Cicero says of their predecessors; viz. that he knows not how it comes to pass, that, when any man utters an absurdity ever so gross, he presently finds the same absurdity to have been delivered by some one of the Philosophers.

3. In its total inefficacy to reform either themselves, or their Disciples.

CICERO declares, that the ancient Philosopher's never reformed either themselves or their disciples; and that he knew not a single instance, in which either the teacher, or the Disciple, was made virtuous
by

by their principles. * Lucian declares them, as a body, to have been tyrants, adulterers, and corrupters of youth. Plutarch declares Socrates and Plato to have been as incontinent, and intemperate, as any slave; and Aristotle to have been a fop, a debaucher, and a traitor. Dion Cassius gives no better character of Seneca. Diogenes and Crates committed lewdness, without a blush, in the streets; doubtless believing, with Lord Bolingbroke, that modesty was inspired by mere prejudice. Speusippus, who appears to have believed, with Mr. Hume, that adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life, was caught, and slain, in the act of adultery. Aristippus kept a seraglio of strumpets and catamites, and perjured himself, to cheat a friend of a sum of money, which that friend had left in his hands; and refused also to educate his own children; styling them mere vermin. Menippus, because he had lost a sum of money, murdered himself; as did also Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus Gleombrotus, Cato the younger, and Brutus. Cato the elder parted with his wife to Hortensius, and was accused of drunkenness. Xenophon was a notorious sodomite, and said in the absence of a boy, whom he kept, "I would be blind to all things else, so that I might see Clinias:" and again, "thanks to the sun, which discloses to me the face of Clinias." The ancient Philosophers, indeed, were generally noted for sodomy. Plutarch, acknowledging the fact, makes for them this apology, that, though they corrupted their bodies, they made amends for it by improving their souls. In truth, nothing better was to be expected from them, than what is here recounted; for their doctrines warranted these, and most other crimes.

THESE are among the most respectable of those men, whose theological and moral systems modern Philo-

* See *Deism Revealed*.

Philosophers prefer to that of Christ and his Apostles. The morals of the Moderns have, in some instances, been more decent; in others, very little different.

THE true character of all men may be certainly known by their opinions. No man is better than the moral opinions, which he holds, will make him, if drawn out into life and practice. Few are in any measure so good. I do not deny, that men may be more decent, before their fellow-men, than the tendency of their doctrines would lead us to believe; but in this there is no principle, no virtue. All is the result of wishing to live agreeably, and to possess reputation. The worst of all men have this desire as really, and often as strongly, as any others, even the most virtuous.

THE doctrines of these Philosophers, it will easily be seen, by even a slight recourse to the account already given of them, forbids the belief, and the existence, of virtue in those who embrace them.

LORD HERBERT declares, that the indulgence of *lust* and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirst of a fever, or the drowsiness of the Lethargy. In this single sentence, by a sweeping stroke, the guilt of gluttony, sloth, drunkenness, lewdness, wrath, contention, and revenge, is entirely blotted out.

Mr. HOBBS declares, that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them, if he can;

Again, "A subject may lawfully deny Christ before the Magistrate, although he believes Christ in his heart;"

Again, "A Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice, and can do no wrong to his subjects;" and

Again

Again, the Civil Law is the sole foundation of good and evil, of right and wrong.

IN the first of these declarations, mankind are let loose upon each other, in all the hideous ways of fraud, theft, plunder, robbery, speculation, oppressive taxation, and piracy; in the second, lying and perjury are completely authorized, as all such denials were customarily made under oath; the third is an universal sanction of all the horrid evils of despotism; and the fourth an entire annihilation of right and wrong, and of course of all morality.

TINDAL has, also, set morality wholly afloat, in declaring, that every man must form a rule for himself, a rule to be changed as circumstances, always varying, shall change. Nor has Chubb left the subject at all more settled, or safe. He declares, that all religions are alike; that it is of no consequence, what religion a man embraces; that the belief of a future state is of no use to society; and that God does not interpose in the affairs of this world at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men, here. The well-being of society cannot be overthrown, nor morality destroyed, more effectually, than by these opinions, should they be made rules of human conduct. If all Religions, i. e. all systems of Moral and Theological doctrines, are alike it is clearly either because all are wholly true or wholly false, or because all are proportionably true and false, or because moral and theological truth is of no importance. The two first are plainly false suppositions, Mr. Chubb being the judge; for he has declared one system to be true, viz. his own; and another to be false, viz. That of the Gospel. Of course, the last is the true supposition as it stood in his mind. Of consequence no doctrines are of any importance: in other words, Truth is of no use to man. Moral and theological truth is plainly more important to

man, than any other; if this be of no significance, none else can be: an opinion fitter for the mouth of a fiend, than for that of a man.

NOR are the two last declarations of his less fatal. No bond has ever holden mankind, none ever will hold them, together, beside the belief of the presence, and providence of God. and of an approaching state of Rewards and punishments.

SHAFTESBURY, Hume, and Bolingbroke, have laboured, at least equally, to destroy the belief of these doctrines, and have thus aimed the axe at the root of human happiness.

SHAFTESBURY, also, when he asserts salvation to be ridiculous, the magistrate to be the sole judge of religious truth, Atheism not to take away a just sense of right and wrong, and to be no way deficient in promoting virtue, unhinges all serious thinking, and all moral impressions, silences rational enquiry, and obliterates every distinction, which can usefully regulate the conduct of intelligent beings.

THE same confusion is introduced by Hume, when he ranks bodily and intellectual endowments, and casual attainments, with virtues, denies the virtuous nature of humility and self-denial, and asserts that of pride, self-valuation, and suicide.

BUT what shall be said of this celebrated writer, when he gravely informs us, that Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life. Must not plunder, falsehood, assassination, piracy, war, and tyranny, be also practised on the same principle. Were these or any other crimes ever practised, but for the sake of advantages either obtained, or expected? What shall we say of him, when, from Rochefoucault, he repeats, and to shew

his fondness for it, often, the maxim, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a small thing, when unknown, nothing.

BOLINGBROKE has more openly and violently attacked every important truth and serious duty. Particularly he has licensed lewdness, and cut up chastity and decency by the roots :

WHAT idea must be entertained of the morals of men, who assert these things, not in careless conversation, not in grave conversation, not in sportive writings; but in solemn, didactic, Philosophical treatises, sitting in the chair of moral and religious instruction, speaking to a world, uttering oracular opinions, deciding the duty and happiness both temporal and eternal of the whole human race, and unfolding professedly the will of the infinite God? They either believed, or disbelieved, these doctrines. If they disbelieved them, what apology can be made for so gross and so mischievous falshood? If they believed them, the conclusion is irresistibly forced upon us, that they practised as they believed. They have also laboured to the utmost to persuade mankind both to believe and practise them. If their labours prove successful, if their wishes should be accomplished, the world will be converted into one theatre of falshood, perjury, fraud, theft, piracy, robbery, oppression, revenge, fornication, and adultery. What else is the hell of the Scriptures? Lewdness alone, extended as their doctrines extend it, would exterminate every moral feeling from the human breast, and every moral and virtuous action from the human conduct Sodom would cease to be a proverbial name; and Gommorha would be remembered, only to wonder at her unhappy lot, and to drop the tear of sympathy upon her ashes.

I know it is often said; it will probably be said in
the

the present case : and perhaps by no small number of persons ; that, provided a man is honest in his belief, he is to be considered as a virtuous man, unless his life disprove the opinion of his virtue. If by this declaration it be intended, that the man in question has faithfully sought for truth, and as faithfully collected, duly weighed, and candidly admitted, all the evidence within his reach, I readily acknowledge, that he has done his duty, and is therefore in this instance undoubtedly virtuous. But that men who believe falshood, and such gross and palpable falshood, have really thus done, is yet to be proved.

If it be intended, that, when a man really believes error, he is, by the reality of his belief, constituted virtuous, I deny the doctrine wholly ; and all those, who assert it, deny it also. The Arabians, who, under the standard of Mohammed, butchered half mankind, believed that they were doing what was right. Multitudes of Catholics, in the last century, unquestionably believed it to be the will of God, that they should perjure themselves, in their correspondence with Huguenots ; and that they should roast, dislocate, and assassinate, that unhappy class of men by thousands. Christians have, beyond controversy, really believed, in many instances, that the persecution of Infidels was agreeable to the will of God. Cicero believed it to be right to have a civil war kindled in Rome, that he might return from exile. Numbers of people in Copenhagen, at a certain time, believed it to be right to murder their neighbours, that, under the horror of an approaching death, themselves might be induced certainly to repent of sin, and to gain eternal life. Alexander, with full conviction of the rectitude of his designs, wasted the Persian empire, and demanded divine homage to himself.

None of those with whom I am disputing, will
pre-

tend, that all these persons were justified in their designs and conduct by the reality of their belief of its rectitude.

It will be further said, as it often has been by others beside Mr. Chubb, that what a man believes is of no importance. Infidel writers ought never to advance this doctrine: for their conduct in labouring so earnestly to destroy the faith of Christians, and to establish that of Infidels, gives the lie to the declaration. If the assertion be true, a man may, according to the opinion of the assertors themselves, as well be a Christian in his belief, as an Infidel. But the assertion is not true; and they prove, by every page of their writings, and by every sentence of their conversation, that they feel it to be false; for they labour with the greatest industry, and ardour, to change the tenets of their fellow-men.

ALL the volitions of the mind are of course accordant with the prevailing dictates of the understanding; and all the actions of men spring from their volitions. Such, then, as is the moral nature of the opinions of a man, will be the nature of his moral conduct. Obedience to error is vice; obedience to truth is virtue. All men hold errors; and all men hold probably some moral truths. Good men obey, mainly, the truths which they receive, and not the errors. Wicked men wholly obey, in their moral conduct, the errors which they adopt, and reject truth as a rule of conduct.

COMPLETE virtue is formed by the reception and obedience of truth only. Such is the virtue of the heavenly inhabitants. In the present world such virtue does not exist; for truth is not received by any man unmixed with error; nor is the truth, which is received, alone and perfectly obeyed. The most perfect earthly orthodoxy is, therefore, mingled with

with error, and the most perfect earthly virtue with vice. Hence extensive room is furnished for the exercise of charitable regards to such, as differ from us in many moral doctrines.

BUT this charity has its limits. The truths holden must, in this case, be fundamental truths; or those on which virtue can rest; and the errors must not be fundamental errors; or opinions subversive of all virtue. The man, who seriously believes in the rectitude of lying, cruelty, fraud, lewdness, and impiety, cannot be virtuous.

THE man, who is pleased with error, is, in the exercise of that emotion, guilty. To love the means of vice, or sin, is the same thing in a moral view as to love sin. Error is the certain means of sin in every sense. As a rule of conduct, it leads to nothing but sin; as a temptation to sin, it is of incalculable power; as a justification of sin, it is of all opiates to the conscience, and of all supports to the heart, beyond measure the greatest. The man, who loves it, is therefore a guilty enemy to himself, a dishonourer of the God of truth, and a destroyer of his own well-being. The man who devises, publishes, and with ingenuity defends it, is the common enemy of God and mankind. To the evil, which he does to the universe, no bounds can be fixed; and with all this evil he is chargeable. The ravages of Alexander were probably less injurious to the human race, and less guilty before God, than the ravages of the moral world by Hume, or Voltaire.

Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftsbury, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, and Bolingbroke, are all guilty of the vile hypocrisy of professing to love and reverence Christianity, while they are employed in no other design than to destroy it. Such faithless professions, such gross violations of truth, in Christians, would have been proclaimed to the universe by these very

writers,

writers as infamous desertions of principle and decency. Is it less infamous in themselves? All hypocrisy is detestable; but I know of none so detestable as that, which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man of talents, assuming the character of a moral and religious instructor, a minister, a prophet, of the truth of the Infinite God. Truth is a virtue perfectly defined, mathematically clear, and completely understood by all men of common sense. There can be no haltings between uttering truth and falsehood, no doubts, no mistakes; as between piety and enthusiasm, frugality and parsimony, generosity, and profusion. Transgression, therefore, is always a known, definite, deliberate villainy. In the sudden moment of strong temptation, in the hour of unguarded attack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected alarm, the best man may, perhaps, be surprised into any sin; but he, who can coolly, of steady design, and with no unusual impulse, utter falsehood, and vend hypocrisy, is not far from finished depravity.

THE morals of Rochester and Wharton need no comment. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. Blount solicited his sister in law to marry him, and, being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant again, merely to suit the times; and was at the same time infamous for vice in general, and the total want of principle. He is said to have died with this prayer in his mouth. "If there is a God, I desire that he may have mercy on me." Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan*, to serve the cause of Charles I.; but, finding him fail of success, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the Usurper: as Hobbes himself unblushingly declared to Lord Clarendon.* Morgan had no regard to truth; as is evident

* See *Deism Revealed*.

evident from his numerous falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those very writings, in which he labours to destroy Christianity. Voltaire, in a letter now remaining, requested his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie, by denying, that he was the author of the Philosophical Dictionary. D'Alembert in his answer informed him, that he had told the lie.* Voltaire has, indeed, expressed his own moral character perfectly in the following words " Monsieur Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed, or not." He also solemnly professed to believe the Catholic Religion, although at the same time he doubted the existence of a God. Hume died, as a fool dieth. The day before his death he spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this tremendous subject, playing at whist, reading Lucian's dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit, concerning his interview with Charon, the heathen ferry-man of Hades.†

It will easily be supposed that my information concerning the private lives of these men must be distant and imperfect: What has been said will, however, furnish any one at all acquainted with the human character, with just ideas of their morality. I shall only add that Rousseau (Jean Jacques) is asserted to have been guilty of gross theft, perjury, fornication, and adultery, and of abjuring and assuming, alternately, the Catholic, and the Protestant, religion; neither of which he believed.

Thus have I summarily exhibited to you the nature, and the actual state, of this Philosophy. From this view of it, I think you will unite with me in a full conviction, that, if the Gospel had been liable to so many and so serious objections, it would, instead

* See Priestly On the Causes of the Increase of Infidelity.

† Smith's life of Hume.

of exciting and sustaining a controversy through eighteen centuries, have solicited the faith and obedience of mankind in vain, would have been smothered in its birth, and only added one to the numerous moral systems, which have, for ages, slept the sleep of death in the regions of oblivion.

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY.

SERMON SECOND.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

BEWARE, LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH
PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER
THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE
RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND
NOT AFTER CHRIST.

Secondly. **I** SHALL now endeavour to shew you,
that, vain and deceitful as this Philo-
sophy is, both in its nature and in fact, you are still
in danger of becoming a prey to it.

THIS danger will arise from several sources, I
shall specify those which appear to me to be of chief
importance.

I. You will be exposed to this danger from the
arguments, brought by Philosophers against the
Scriptures.

INFIDELS will probably triumph, and you may
be surpris'd, to find Arguments mentioned as a
source of danger. But your surprise and their tri-
umph are both without foundation.

WHEREVER arguments are fairly adduced, and
questions thoroughly explored by reasoning, there
can be no danger to truth, or to the friends of truth;
for in every such investigation, truth must have de-
cisive advantages over falshood. But questions are

not always so explored, nor arguments always so adduced. Ingenious and able men are not always candid men, nor always desirous of investigating or establishing truth. Their ingenuity is not unfrequently employed in obscuring, where it should illumine, and in perplexing, where it should clear. Ignorant persons may always be embarrassed by the reasonings of the learned and skilful, and those who are not versed in any subject of controversy, by studied champions.

MANY readers of this Philosophy are ignorant; many impatient of thorough investigation, and accustomed to depend for their opinions on others; to be swayed by great and celebrated names, and implicitly to yield to high authority; and all are by nature inclined to their side of the question. Christianity is a system of restraint on every passion, and every appetite. Some it forbids entirely; and all it confines within limits, which by the mass of mankind, both learned and unlearned, will be esteemed narrow and severe. Philosophy, on the contrary, holds out, as you have already seen, a general license to every passion and appetite. Its doctrines therefore please of course; and find a ready welcome in the heart.

MANKIND being thus prepared, it cannot be thought strange, that Infidel Philosophy, although destitute of a basis in truth, and of support from evidence, should present danger, even from arguments. Its great object is to unsettle every thing moral and obligatory, and to settle nothing. Objection is, therefore, its chief employment, and its only employment, in which danger can be found. Had it been engaged merely in devising moral systems of its own, it would have provoked no other answer from Commonsense, than a stare, or a smile.

AN objector will always find some advantages from the character, which he assumes. He finds advantages with respect to labour. A sentence will often express an obligation, which must be answered by a volume. He will find advantages in the nature of his disputation. The plainest and most undoubted truths may be forcibly assailed by objections, and by such as are obvious to a very limited understanding.

THE objections against the Scriptures, which will be formidable, are chiefly derived from two sources

1. THE doctrines of the Scriptures are, and in the nature of the case must be, in several instances, mysterious. The doctrines of the Scriptures are chiefly employed about the nature of Man, and the existence, character, designs, and will, of God. The first of these subjects, notwithstanding the laborious and ardent investigation of three thousand years, is still far from being satisfactorily explained. The daily inquiries and voluminous treatises of these very Philosophers, and the new views, which they continually attempt to exhibit, of this subject, prove the assertion to be true, in their opinion at least; and, were there a doubt remaining, a child could easily remove it; for a child can ask questions concerning human nature, which no Philosopher can answer. The last of these subjects, the existence, character, designs, and will, of God, is more mysterious than any other. Of both these subjects Revelation is a professed account; and as the subjects are in their nature mysterious, so the Revelation must, to consist with truth, be, in many respects, mysterious also. In such subjects difficulties may be easily and always found. As it is impossible, that we should thoroughly understand them, the parts, which we do not understand, will furnish difficulties respecting those, which we do. Of the nature of existence, substances, causality, and the mode of operation, we know little or nothing,
even

even where creatures are the subjects of investigation. Of the Creator it may well be supposed, and must be acknowledged, that we know less than of creatures. Many particulars of these great subjects of the Scriptures must be unknown. Wherever we are ignorant, we cannot comprehend; and wherever we cannot comprehend, we can find many difficulties, much perplexity, and much doubt. A man of moderate talents will easily perceive, and forcibly represent, such difficulties; but no man can, in many cases, remove them. They can be removed only by the attainment of perfect knowledge of the subjects, and such knowledge can never be attained by man.

THE difficulties, objected to the Scriptures on this score, all arise from what we know not, and not from what we know. Infidels do not shew, that that, which is disclosed, is contrary to any thing, which we know, but merely that all is not disclosed, which we might wish to be disclosed, and which is necessary to a thorough comprehension of the subject. They do not shew, that what is disclosed, and believed, is untrue, or improbable; but that it is mysterious and incomprehensible: in other words, that it contains things, which lie beyond the human capacity. This, instead of being a solid objection against the Revelation of the Scriptures, is a mere exposition of human ignorance. In this part of their conclusions there is no controversy between them and us.

THE mysteriousness of the Scriptures, in several particulars, has been often directly as well as insidiously, objected against their divine origin. To me it appears to be a plain and powerful argument in favour of that origin. Were there nothing in Creation or Providence, which man could not comprehend, one important proof that they were works of
God

God would be taken away. Were there nothing in Revelation, which man could not perfectly understand, a similar proof of its reality would be destroyed. What man can thus understand, man might, for ought that appears, have also devised.

OBJECTIONS of this nature must, to possess any real force, arise from something which we know, and not from that of which we are ignorant. The things objected to ought to be inconsistent with something seen and understood; otherwise whatever perplexity they may occasion in those, who dwell upon them, they can never produce rational conviction.

2. ANOTHER class of objects, against which similar objections have been made, is composed of facts, manners, and other local circumstances. The Scriptures, being written in a distant age, and country, record facts, which must in a considerable measure be connected with facts and circumstances, necessarily unknown by us; and appeal to manners, customs, and other local circumstances, which must be equally unknown. The same difficulties may, therefore, be raised in this, as in the former case, and with the same success. In both cases our ignorance, and not the falsehood of the things declared, is the cause of the difficulties specified. By this I intend that a person perfectly acquainted with the things, stated in the Scriptures, and with all their appendages, would not only clearly discern the truth and propriety of the statement, but be able to explain its truth and propriety to our full satisfaction; while, at the same time, the same person, being supposed to be as ignorant as ourselves, would find all the difficulties in the statement, which are found by us. Still the statement is the same, and neither more nor less true, but is more or less explicable, as the person proposed is more or less informed.

HENCE

HENCE it is clear, that, although Christians should not be able to shew *how* many facts, recorded in the Scriptures, took place; by what acts they were preceded or followed, what were their causes, attendants, or consequences, this furnishes no solid objection to the Scriptures as a Revelation. Every objection of this nature must, to be solid, contradict some known fact, and be attended with difficulties of some other nature than mere inexplicableness. If this be admitted as a proof of falshood in writings, no ancient history can be believed.

A HAPPY illustration of these sentiments and a strong proof of what may even now be done to throw light on this class of objects in the Scriptures, may be found in the first Volume of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel history*. In this able and successful Work a system of facts impossible to be completely understood, unless developed in some such method, is unanswerably proved to be true.

THE very same difficulties are found, and to a greater degree, in the Works, than in the Word, of God. Under the impressions, made by the former, the same men become atheists, who, under those made by the latter, became deists. Those, on the contrary, who require proofs, and inconsistencies with something known, to support or destroy, their belief, will admit the world to be the work, and the Scriptures to be the word, of God. So true is the declaration of the Committee of Public Instruction to the National Convention of France, that a Nation of Theists must of course become Revelationists.

This method of objecting to the Scriptures will make little impression on men disposed impartially and thoroughly to examine, and possessed of the proper means of examination. Still there is danger from it to you. Think not this a censure, or a
proof

proof of disesteem. You are young ; you will find difficulties ; you may be perplexed ; you may doubt. Every difficulty you will not be able to remove. Such as you would be able to remove you will not always find the necessary time and means of removing. Inclination, industry, proper books, and able friends, may not be easily found. Study, therefore, and in season, so far as you can, the evidences, by which Revelation is supported, and suffer nothing to destroy their force, or to unsettle your faith, unless it clearly opposes something, which is really known.

II. ANOTHER source of danger to you is the Confidence, with which most Philosophers assert their doctrines, and advance their arguments.

It is an unjust, yet it is a common conclusion of the mind, that confidence in asserting is as an argument of knowledge in the assertor. You have, doubtless, often heard observations like this. "He must know ; or he would not assert so strongly and confidently." From the advantages of education, which you have enjoyed, I presume you have, however, adopted an opinion directly contrary to that above specified ; and are all ready to say, that bold assertions, and confident airs of knowledge and wisdom, are of course suspicious ; and that, instead of being influenced by them to believe the more readily, you should only be induced to doubt. Still let me inform you, there is danger to you from this source. Peremptory declarations, bold assurance, and that appearance of knowledge, which defies opposition, have ever had no small influence in gaining credit to the doctrines, which they were intended to support. Youths, unacquainted with the world, and with the arts and address which are used in it, and untaught, or taught only by books, that, usually, assertions are roundly made, because they are faintly believed by the assertor,

sertor, as lies are commonly backed by oaths and curses, will not rarely imagine, that what is so plumply said must be true, or at least highly probable. This will happen especially, when the assertor is a man of talents and reputation. In such a man vanity is not expected to rule, prejudice to decide, nor arrogance to dictate. On the contrary, he is presupposed to examine with care, to assent only to evidence, and to assert from rational conviction. It would be happy, were this preconceived opinion verified by experience; but most unhappily no opinion is more fallacious. All the prejudices, which are found in ordinary men are often found in those of superior minds, and not unfrequently in higher degrees. To these they superadd, in many instances, that pride of talents, which operates to a groundless, deceitful, and let me add contemptible, confidence in their own decisions, and a magisterial and oracular method of communicating them to mankind. Suspect these appearances, therefore, wherever you find them, and remember, that confidence of assertion, and airs of triumph, infer not any certainty in the opinion declared.

III. ANOTHER source of the danger specified is found in the various methods, used by Philosophers to persuade their readers, that their opinions are embraced by the great body of mankind, especially of the ingenious and learned.

It is a remarkable fact in the History of man, that vice has always claimed a superiority over virtue, irreligion and unbelief over faith. In common life, no sooner does a man enter boldly upon the practice of vice and licentiousness, than he arrogates to himself a character superiour to that of his sober companions, and to his own former character. A loose man rarely speaks concerning one, of more worth, without evident proofs of conscious superiority. Vir-
tue,

ture, itself, if you will take the pains to examine, will be found to be, in his view, the weak and inferior part of his neighbour's character, and vice the great and superiour ingredient in his own. According to this method of estimation, Satan, as described in the Scriptures, is the most respectable being in the universe.

THE superiority, claimed by Infidels over Believers, is not less unfounded ; even if we admit what few Christians would probably admit, viz. that its foundation is not exactly the same. Christians believe, that the Scriptures are, and Infidels that they are not, a divine Revelation. Neither they, nor we, know ; both classes merely believe ; for the case admits not of knowledge, nor can it be determined with certainty. The only question, to be decided between the contending parties, is-which believes on the best evidence. Infidels are believers equally with Christians, and merely believe the contrary position. That faith therefore, which is best supported, is the most rational, and ought to confer the superiority of character.

At the present time, a new engine is abundantly employed to establish this distinction in favour of Infidels. It is boldly asserted, that the world has hitherto lain in a state of ignorance and infancy; that it has been chained by authority, and influenced by superstition, but that it has, at the present time, broken at once its bonds, roused itself into manly exertion, and seized intuitively upon the whole system of truth, moral, political, and natural. Of this mighty and propitious change in the affairs of man Infidel Philosophers claim to be the sole authors. Hence the character of ingenious and learned is challenged as being in a sense their exclusive property.

I cheerfully admit, Young Gentlemen, that many
H Infidels

Infidels have been ingenious men ; that some of them have been learned men ; and that a few of them have been great men. Hume, Tindal, and a few others, have been distinguished for superior strength of mind, Bolingbroke for eloquence of the pen, Voltaire for brilliancy of imagination, and various others for respectable talents of different kinds. But I am wholly unable to form a list of Infidels, which can, without extreme disadvantage, be compared with the two Bacons, Erasmus, Cumberland, Stillingfleet, Grotius, Locke, Butler, Newton, Boyle, Berkeley, Milton, Johnson, &c. In no walk of genius, in no path of knowledge, can Infidels support a claim to superiority, or equality with Christians.

NOR am I less ready to acknowledge, that ingenious men have lately made, and are still making, many improvements in science and in arts. Unhappy would it indeed be, if, after all the advances of preceding ages, the present should be unable to advance at all ; if no additional truth should be discovered, and no erroneous opinion detected. But what, let me ask, would have been our situation, had these and many other able men, of past ages, never lived ? How much of all, which we know, is contained in their works, and derived solely from their talents and labours ? Can it be just, can it be decent, to forget the hand that feeds us, and to treat with contempt those, without whose assistance we should have been savages and blockheads.

THAT the world has materially changed, and is still changing, in many important particulars, cannot be questioned ; but whether these particulars are either profitable, or honourable, may well be questioned. That the knowledge, or the happiness, of mankind has been increased by the change is yet to be proved. We have not yet put off the harness, and our time for rational *boasting* is, therefore, not arrived

arrived. When some of the favourite dogmas of modern times have been better supported by arguments, and received a more auspicious sanction from experience, there will be evidence in their favour, which hitherto has not appeared.

You will easily see, from what has been said, that, when Infidel Philosophy is asserted to be embraced by the great body of the learned and ingenious, nothing more is intended, than to assert the superiour character of Infidels to Christians; not a superiority arising from native talents, or from attainments, but from Infidelity. It is not intended, that learned and ingenious Christians have been convinced and become Infidels, but that Christians are of course destitute of learning and ingenuity; and Infidels of course possessed of both. The real weight of this argument I leave to your decision.

ALLOWING, however, the whole of what is thus asserted, no argument will be furnished by it against Christianity. The most extensive prevalence of a system is no proof of its truth. Heathenism formerly overspread the world, and numbered, as its votaries, nearly all the learned and unlearned of the human race. Was it therefore, a system of truth? The Aristotelian Philosophy prevailed among all the learned men in Europe, for two thousand years. Would you, therefore, embrace it? When Galileo received the Copernican system, almost all the learned and unlearned disbelieved it. Was it therefore false?

WHEN Christianity first began its progress, it could boast of only twelve poor, uneducated men as its champions, with perhaps less than one thousand followers. By the labours of this little band it overturned, in less than three centuries, most of the superstition, power, policy, learning, and philosophy,
of

of the known world. By the labours of Luther, Melancthon, Zuingli, and Calvin, it rose again from extreme depression, in the face, and against the strength, of the most formidable power, which the world has ever seen. Should it again return to the same depression, it will again rise on the ruins of all its enemies. Every promise, made to Christians, has been hitherto exactly fulfilled. Those, which respect periods yet to come, will receive the same faithful completion.

YET such is the character of man, and especially in his youth, that you will feel the influence of this triumphant assertion. You will feel, at times, in danger of being left alone, and at least of being deserted and opposed by genius and knowledge; and will naturally shrink from a combat, in which skill, strength, and numbers are imagined to be enrolled on the side of the enemy. I have only to observe further, that your choice of Christianity will not be less wise, because numbers oppose it, nor your salvation less complete, because it is not obtained by Infidels.*

IV. ANOTHER source of this danger is the Contempt and Ridicule, with which Christianity is opposed.

CONTEMPT is the spirit, and ridicule the weapon, with which Christianity has long been principally opposed. In this Lord Shaftsbury led the way; or, perhaps more properly, he gave a peculiar countenance and support to this method of attacking Christianity, by advancing the remarkable opinion, that Ridicule is the test of Truth. In pursuing this doctrine

* To young men inclining to Infidelity I beg leave to recommend a careful, and serious consideration, of two passages of Scripture; one, Heb, vi. 4—8. the other, Heb, x, 26—31.

trine he himself is unwarily led to declare, that this very Ridicule must be brought to the test of Reason, or Argument. The whole train of Infidel Philosophers, whatever may have been their opinion, have harmonized with him in the practice. Voltaire, who regarded all means alike, provided they would aid the accomplishment of his own ends, writes thus to his friend, D'Alembert. "Render those pedants, (i.e. divines) as enormously ridiculous as you can. Ridicule will do every thing. It is the strongest of all weapons. A bon mot is as good a thing as a good book."

I DON'T deny, that ridicule may be properly used in certain cases; but I wholly deny the propriety of using it to decide any serious concern of mankind. A proud and vain man will always affect and express contempt for all, who differ from him, and especially for those, who oppose him; and for all the arguments, adduced against his opinions, especially for those, which he is unable to confront with arguments of superiour force. But pride and vanity are foolish passions, and uniformly lessen the ability of a man either to discover, or to receive, moral truth. Prejudice is proverbially acknowledged to be a potent hindrance to the discovery, and the reception, of truth; and pride begets the strongest of all perjuries. In itself it is gross misjudging, mistake, and folly; and in its effects it involves a host of follies and mistakes. Hence the Wisest of all men, from profound acquaintance with the nature of man, has declared, that "the Root of pride is in the mouth of the foolish."

THE cause, which needs these weapons, cannot be just; the doctrine, which cannot be supported without them, must be false. All men, when pressed with argument, and trembling through fear of being convicted of error, resort, of course, to such means

means of defence, or of attack, as are in their power. When reasons fail, ridicule is still left; and he who cannot disprove, can still inquire with arrogance and disdain "What will this Babbler say." Over the cool and modest opponent he will feel a superiority of spirit, if not of argument; and will quit the field with the stride of triumph, and the consciousness of that victory, for which he contended. His capital object is attained. He has not, it is true, repelled his adversary; but he has claimed a triumph over him; he has not defended his own ground; but he has not been forced to acknowledge himself defeated.

UNWORTHY and unsatisfying as this method of attacking Christianity appears, and in spite of the strong presumptions against a cause, which has ever needed and resorted to it, you will find no small danger from these very weapons. You will dread to become the objects of scorn, and to be wounded by the shafts of derision. You will be afraid to declare yourselves friends to a cause, which has been the standing jest of so many men of wit, and which has been so often and so publicly holden up to systematized contempt; to which insult is merit, and mockery a fashion.

YOUNG, novices in human affairs, doubtful of your own strength, partially acquainted with this great controversy, ardently coveting esteem, and trembling at the approach of disreputation, you will need no common share of fortitude, no frequent degree of self-command, to stand the shock, to examine the true character of the contending parties, and to discern the real nature of the conflicting causes. Could you assume this fortitude, and accomplish this examination, the danger would vanish; but you will be assailed so often, and so powerfully, that, perplexed before by the arguments, which I have mentioned, you will be in imminent hazard of yielding yourselves

yourself a prey, to avoid the fatigues of an arduous and unremitted contest, and to shun the assaults of an enemy, who, not only points his arrows with steel, but dips them in poison.

V. ANOTHER source of this danger is the actual Bias of the world towards Infidelity.

THE natural propensity of man, as exhibited by the Scriptures, and as proved by all experience, is a propensity to sin. The conviction of this truth has spread through mankind, in every age, and in every country. Their religions have all been steadily employed to expiate it, their laws and education to restrain it, their conversation and their histories to recount its effects. Sin and Infidelity are mutually causes and effects. Sin demands and prompts to Infidelity, as its justification; Infidelity warrants, encourages, and defends sin. Sin derives its peace and security from Infidelity; Infidelity its reception, support, and friends, from sin. Thus, in every age, there is a natural bias in man to infidelity.

THIS bias possesses, at different periods, different degrees of strength. Numbers, men in power, men of popular characters, men of great talents, contribute, by turns, to the general currency of vice, or virtue, of truth, or falsehood. From these and various other causes, it becomes fashionable, at times, to be grave, decent, moral, and even religious; and, at times, to be dissolute, licentious, and gross.

THE fashionable bias of the present time will be readily acknowledged to be unfavourable to Christianity. Beside the influence of a long progress in vice, since the Reformation, and the revival of Religion consequent upon it, a progress loudly proclaimed by Infidels, as well as by Christians; beside the influence of all the incessant attacks, made upon Religion

ligion and Virtue by Philosophers; the present singular convulsion of Europe has had a most malignant efficacy on this subject. At no period has the human mind discovered such impatience of moral restraint, broken with so bold a hand the bonds of duty, or defied in such haughty terms morals, religion, and the government of God. Were the present a proper occasion, it would be easy to shew the connection between such a convulsion and the general demoralization of the human race, the depression of virtue, and the subversion of human happiness. Suffice it to say, here, that, did not the evil furnish a cure, from its own bowels, did it not prove, by what it has already effected, that, within a little period of its progress, it will, if unrestrained, convert man into a savage, and the world into a desert, its final mischief to the cause of Christianity could not be calculated. Circumstanced as it is, it has filled every Christian, every friend of the human race, every sober man, with serious alarms, not for the permanence of Christianity, but for the continuance of peace, the safety of every right, and the existence of every valuable interest.

IN your own country the effects of this convulsion, and the strength of this bias, are less perceived. Here the friends of Revelation greatly outnumber its enemies. But even here the evil in a degree exists. Nor will its influence probably be small. The report will, in some measure, affect you from abroad. At home, you will see one decent or doubtful person, and another, sliding slowly down the declivity of irreligion, and many, more heedless, or more daring, leaping at once into the gulph beneath. Here, a companion will turn his back, and walk no more with Christ. There, a Parent, or Instructor, will forsake him, having loved the present world. Among these will frequently be found the gay, the pleasing, and the accomplished; and in some instances,

ees, the grave, the learned, and the honourable. On one side, the temptation will charm ; on the other it will sanction. Allured, awed, supported, perhaps without a friend at hand to pluck you by the arm, or to point to you either the danger or the means of escaping it, it can scarcely be hoped, that none of you will be destroyed. Most of the Infidels, whom I have known, have fallen a sacrifice to this cause, or to the fear of ridicule.

VI. A GREATER source of this danger, than any which has been mentioned, is a natural Bias in your own hearts against Christianity.

You, like the rest of men, are naturally attached to the pleasures of sin, to the unlawful gratifications of passion and appetite. Whatever indulges this attachment will be regarded by you with complacency ; whatever restrains it, however necessarily, or usefully, will be viewed with pain. The most powerful, the most universal, the most constantly felt, the most difficult to be escaped, of all such restraints, is the system of doctrines, contained in the Scriptures. Civil Government, in a different manner, is employed in promoting the same end, and, at times, operates with a superior efficacy. But its influence is felt only within certain limits, and on particular occasions ; whereas the Scriptures extend their influence to every place, time, and action, seek out the offender in solitude, as well as in crowds, sound the alarm at midnight, as well as in the open day, enter into the recesses of the bosom, watch the rising sin, and threaten the guilty purpose, while it is yet a shapeless embryo. Hence, more than Civil Government itself, it has been maligned, and combated, by licentious men.

THE restraints of Christianity you, like others, will, at times, feel with impatience and pain. From
I this

this impatience will naturally spring wishes to free yourselves from companions so intrusive and troublesome; and such wishes will naturally terminate in attempts to accomplish this freedom. Of all means to this end the most obvious, the most easy, the most effectual, is disbelief. To disbelief, therefore, you will be strongly inclined; and much care, resolution, and fidelity to yourselves, will be necessary to resist the influence, and avert the danger, of this inclination.

IN this and in every case, in which man is placed, assistance may be given, the mind may be strengthened, and safety may be obtained, by the proper use of such means, as are furnished by the Providence of God. From me, with more propriety than from most others, you may justly expect such assistance. To you I stand in a near, important, and parental relation. I have gone before you through the same course, have felt the same danger, and have been strongly tempted by means of them to yield myself a prey to this unhappy Philosophy. I cannot, therefore, be indifferent to the dangers of others, especially of you, my pupils, my children. Nor can I be more properly employed, on this the last opportunity allowed me of rendering to you my official duty, than in endeavouring in so interesting a case to communicate to you the means of strength and safety. This, you will remember, was the

THIRD thing, proposed in this discourse, viz. to attempt to dissuade you from yielding yourselves a prey to this Philosophy.

MANY dissuatives from this conduct are, I trust, already suggested to you in the account, already given of this Philosophy. A reception of such doctrines, and an union with such men, cannot be supposed as rational, or expedient. No one of you
would

would, in a cool moment of deliberation, consent either to such belief, or to such conduct. It will be yours to decide, that your judgment shall not bow to inclination and prejudice.

In addition to the dissuatives already suggested let me urge, in the

I. PLACE, as a strong reason to prevent you from embracing Infidel Philosophy, its continually changing character.

TRUTH is, at all times, and with respect to all things, of an unchangeable nature. Every change of doctrines furnishes intuitive certainty, that either the doctrine which is renounced, or the doctrine which is assumed, is false. This changeable character is eminently the character of this Philosophy. Among the ancients it was a mere wind of doctrine, varying through all the points of the compass. Among the moderns, also, it has,ameleon like, appeared of many colours. Lord Herbert published it under the form of Natural Religion. This he insisted on, in strong and solemn terms, as a sum of duties indispensable; and declared, that men were wholly accountable for the discharge of them, and that according to their fulfilment, or neglect, of them they would be judged and rewarded. Yet even he sapped the foundation of his whole system, by undermining moral obligation, and removing guilt from sin. Him several succeeding writers appeared, in a degree, and at times, disposed to follow; but even they, with most others, fell speedily into mere Infidelity: i.e. They believed neither Natural nor Revealed Religion. Of course, they left themselves without law, obligation, or duty. The system, now became a system of mere objection. According to it, Christianity was false, and nothing else was true: i.e. they substituted nothing, as a rule of duty, in its place.

In

In the mean time, they in a degree, and their followers in a greater degree, by insinuation, assertion, and argument, justified the indulgencies of passion and appetite, and exhibited them as the true, the chief, and even the only, good of man. From this, which may be called the Animal system of Morals, the next gradation was the doctrine of the Pyrrhonists and New Academics, usually termed Scepticism. This was the favourite doctrine of Mr. Hume, and is exhibited by him as the summit of human attainments. Nor did the contradiction, which attends the very reception of this doctrine, at all startle his sagacious mind, shocked as it was by the bare idea of a miracle. From this step but one advancement remained, viz. downright Atheism. This is now the most general, and the most approved, Infidel Philosophy. "Deism," says a modern Infidel writer, "is but the first step of Reason out of Superstition (i.e. out of Revealed Religion.) No person remains a Deist, but through want of Reflection, timidity, passion, or obstinacy. Time, experience, and an impartial examination of our ideas, will undeceive us," (i.e. make us Atheists.) "The Supreme Being" says Anacharsis Cloots (the Reporter of the Committee of Public Instruction to the French National Convention) in an official Report of that Committee, "the Eternal Being, is no other than Nature uncreated and uncreatable; and the only Providence is the Association of mankind in freedom and equality. Man, when free, wants no other Divinity than himself. Reason dethrones both the Kings of the earth, and the Kings of heaven. No Monarchy above, if we wish to preserve our republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether a republic of Atheists could exist. I maintain, that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls! What ; adore by day will be your destruction at night. A
people

people of Theists will necessarily become Revelationists." Thus the great body of Lord Herbert's followers espouse and maintain doctrines, which he declared to be incapable of being received by any man, who deserved the name of a rational being.

BUT all these things cannot be true. If Natural Religion be truth, then Scepticism cannot be truth; the Animal system cannot be truth; mere Infidelity cannot be truth; Atheism cannot be truth. The very face of this Philosophy is, therefore, suspicious. The features are not parts of the same countenance, and, when seen together, present even to the glancing eye, instead of beauty and loveliness, an incongruous and forbidding deformity.

THE variance of this Philosophy is by no means confined to the account, already given. Each of these forms furnishes many diversities and changes. Atheism itself is exhibited under many appearances. As a total denial of God, it is now the atomic, or Epicurean system of things brought together by an eternal conatus, or endeavour, towards exertion, casually acting at a particular unknown period. It is the eternal existence of the world in its present form, and an eternal succession of human generations. It is a system of chemical and mechanical operations of matter on such an eternal world, which by a happy and mysterious energy, at some lucky moment, gave birth to thought and volition, which, by a concurrence of circumstances equally lucky, have since continued themselves. It is the volcanic system, by which suns were emitted from a distant unknown mass, the matrix of the Universe; worlds from suns, and continents and their furniture from worlds. As partial Atheism, it is Scepticism. It is an admission of the being of God, and a denial of his Attributes. It is an admission of his being, and a denial of his Providence.

Providence. It is a denial of a future state to Man. It is an acknowledgement of the world, or of fire, or of all the elements, or of an unknown Anima mundi, or soul of the Universe, as God. In a word, it is any thing, and every thing, rather than an acknowledgement of the One, Infinite, and All-perfect JEHOVAH.

IN all these, and in all other, systems of Infidel Philosophy, the difficulties and embarrassments to faith are lessened neither in number, nor in degree. On the contrary, they are multiplied, and enhanced, beyond calculation. The usual course of the controversy has been this. Infidels have uniformly attacked, and Christians merely defended; Infidels have found difficulties, and Christians have employed themselves merely, or chiefly, in removing them. Hence Infidels have naturally felt, and written, as if the difficulties lay solely on the Christian side of the debate. Had Christians, with more worldly wisdom, carried their arms into the fortresses of their antagonists, they would long since, and very easily, have proved them to be every where weak and untenable, the sheds only, and pens, of occasional marauders.

IN embracing such a Philosophy what satisfaction can be found, what resting place for the mind? To Philosophers it has plainly furnished none; for they have retreated, and wandered, from one residence to another; and have thus proved, that they have discovered no place, where they could permanently and comfortably abide. You will feel even more unsettled. You feel that you are rational and immortal, that your interests are therefore immense and inestimable, and that an effectual provision for them demands, and will repay, every care, and every exertion. To a mind, thus circumstanced, uncertainty is corroding and intolerable; and from a system thus fluctuating

erating nothing but uncertainty can be gained, or hoped. Wretched must be the condition of that mind, which, labouring with intense anxiety to discover a peaceful rest for an unsatisfied conscience, and a final home at the close of a weary pilgrimage, finds within the horizon of its view nothing but a structure built of clouds, variable in its form, and shadowy in its substance, gay indeed with a thousand brilliant colours, and romantic with all the fantastical diversities of shape, but bleak, desolate, and incapable of being inhabited.

II. THIS Philosophy presents no efficacious means of restraining Vice, or promoting Virtue; but on the contrary encourages Vice and discourages Virtue.

I HAVE already considered this subject at some length, as the Philosophers themselves and their disciples were concerned. As every person may not transfer the argument from them to himself, or to others, it may be useful to see this application made, and with a degree of particularity.

ALL Virtue is summed up in Piety to God, Justice, truth, and kindness to our fellow-men, and the government of our own passions and appetites, commonly called self-government, or self-denial. All Vice is comprised in the dispositions and conduct, opposite to these. The only possible encouragements to Virtue are either the pleasure which Virtue gives, or the rewards which it promises. The only restraints upon Vice are the pain which it produces, or the punishment with which it is threatened.

THAT Piety is not encouraged by this Philosophy will scarcely need to be proved. A great proportion of Infidel Philosophers deny the existence of God, and thus expunge not only the obligation, but the possibility, of being pious.

Mr.

Mr. HOBBS says that all Religion is ridiculous.

Mr. BLOUNT objects to prayer as a duty.

LORD SHAFTSBURY asserts that Salvation is a ridiculous thing.

DOCTOR TINDAL, that every Man must form rules of duty for himself, and that these must vary as circumstances vary.

Mr. CHURCH, that all Religions are alike, and that it is of no consequence what Religion a man embraces; and he allows not the least room to believe,

That dependence on God's Providence, trust in him, and resignation to him, are any parts of duty, or Religion.

Mr. HOBBS asserts, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. BLOUNT insinuates, that there are two independent and eternal Beings; one good, the other evil.

Mr. HUME, that there is no reason to believe that the Universe proceeded from a Cause;

That it is unreasonable to believe God infinitely wise and good;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect.

LORD BOLINGBROKE, that God is possessed of no moral Attribute discoverable by us;

That God did not determine the existence of particular men; and

That God concerns not himself with the affairs of men; or, if he does, he only regards collective bodies of men, and not individuals.

HERE we see it directly taught, that if there be a God, matter is the only God; that there is no evidence, that the Universe proceeded from a Cause; and that it is unreasonable to believe it; that God has no discoverable moral perfection; that what we call moral perfections, such as holiness, truth, justice, and goodness, may be mere defects; that God con-

cerns not himself with the affairs or conduct of individual men, and of course not with the affairs of communities; that he does not even determine their existence; and of course as we came into existence without him, we have nothing to do with him. We are also taught, that Salvation is ridiculous, that prayer is a fault, or sin, that dependence, trust, and resignation, are no parts of Religion, and that all Religions are alike. Of course we are taught, that there is rationally no such thing as piety; no such thing as a God, the object of piety; or if there is, that there is no evidence to prove his existence; and, if this be given up, that he is not a moral being; neither just, sincere, good, or holy; of course that he is destitute of all amiableness, all desert of love, or veneration. To close the scheme, we are informed that all religions are alike, equally estimable, equally rational, equally useful: that the Religion of Carthage, and of all other Heathen countries, which demanded and sanctioned the butchery of human hecatombs; the Religion of Egypt, which prostrated millions of reasonable beings before a calf, a cat, a crocodile, a duck, a frog, a rat, a leek, or an onion; the Religion of Babylon, of Paphos, and of Hindostan, which prostituted annually, as an act of solemn public worship, virgins and matrons innumerable to the casual lust of every traveller, or to the stated brutism of a herd of leachers, selected for the pollution; that the worship of an adulterer, a strumpet, a butcher, or a thief; is the same with the pure and spiritual worship of the Infinite and Eternal Jehovah, the only Great, the only Wise, the only Good, and with the Religion, which prompts to love him with all the heart and soul, and strength, and understanding, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

THE manner, in which Infidel Philosophy has regarded truth, justice, and kindness to our fellow men, will be easily shewn from their own declarations also.

Mr. HOBBS asserts, that a Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice, to his subjects, and that he can do no wrong;

That a man, believing Christ in his heart, may lawfully deny him before the magistrate;

That every Man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them by force if he can.

LORD SHAFTSBURY, that the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it (Of course, so far as civil government operates on man, it is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it. Yet Mr. Hobbes makes obedience to Government, through fear, the only virtue, or right conduct.)

Mr. HUME supports the lawfulness of suicide on this, as one principal ground, that it cannot be opposed to the will of God, because it takes place. Of course, whatever takes place is conformable to the will of God. Falshood, therefore, injustice, murder, revenge, tyranny, fraud, and every other crime, are conformable to the will of God, for they all take place.

LORD BOLINGBROKE teaches, that Ambition, the Lust of Power, Avarice, and Sensuality, may all be lawfully gratified, if they can be safely gratified.

VOLTAIRE requests D'Alembert to tell in his behalf a direct falshood.

D'ALEMBERT informs Voltaire, that he has told this falshood.

IN these opinions, truth, justice, and kindness, to our fellow men, are plainly destroyed, the obligation to them wholly removed, and every violation of them justified. If a man may utter falshood, where Religion, or a friend, is concerned, he may lawfully utter it on every occasion, and to every person. If all have a right to all things, none can do any wrong. If that which takes place, is right because it takes place, wrong cannot take place. If ambition, the
lust

will of power, avarice, and sensuality, may be lawfully gratified, when they can be safely gratified, all crimes against our fellow men may be lawfully perpetrated, because all, which are called crimes of this nature, are merely gratifications of one or other of these passions.

LET us now examine the manner, in which these Philosophers have considered self-government.

Lord HERBERT declares, that men are not hastily, or on small grounds, to be condemned, who sin by bodily constitution; and

That the indulgence of lust and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy, or the sleepiness produced by the Lethargy.

Mr. HOBBS, that a man may lawfully get all things if he can.

Doctor TINDAL, that every man must form for himself his rule of moral conduct, and change it as his circumstances change.

Mr. HUME, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a small thing, when unknown, nothing;

That Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life;

That pride and self valuation are virtues;

That self-denial and humility are not virtues, but useless and mischievous; that they harden the heart, stupefy the understanding, and sour the temper.

Lord BOLINGBROKE teaches that the sole foundation of modesty, is a vain desire of shewing ourselves superiour to mere animals.

That Adultery, Incest, Polygamy, and lewdness of every kind and degree, except incest between the nearest relations, are warranted by the Law, or Religion, which he considers as the only Religion, or Law, of mankind. &c. &c.

THESE and the preceding declarations clearly
and

and directly authorize the full indulgence of every passion and appetite, and annihilate the existence of crime, and the possibility of virtue. Yet all these are solemnly taught as rules of life, and as parts of the will of the Infinite God.

BUT this is not all. They have eventually taught the same things, in assertions less direct, and yet by irresistible implication supporting the same conduct. The doctrine, that a Man is an animal, or that he is a machine, is a complete subversion of morality. No man ever believed an ox, a mill, or a coach wheel, to be a moral being. The same effects are produced by the light and indifferent manner, in which moral subjects are regarded in many doctrines of these Philosophers: as, when civil law is made the sole foundation of right and wrong, the magistrate the sole judge of religious truth, and the sole source of religious obligation, as by Hobbes and Shaftsbury; and when health, taper legs, and broad shoulders are declared to be virtues by Hume.

IN these and other similar declarations Philosophers clearly prove, that they are wholly indifferent to vice and virtue, sin and holiness, and to all their amazing effects. This indifference they hold out in a thousand forms, and with respect to the great body of moral principles. No sentiment is more insinuating than this. None more insensibly, or surely, steals upon the heart; none more thoroughly depraves the character; none more certainly conducts to misery and ruin.

THE same wretched consequence is fatally derived from the ridicule, which they cast upon every thing religious, virtuous, or serious.

UNSATISFIED, however, with all these efforts, and convinced, that a future state of man must, if it exist,

exist, be a state of reward to virtue, and of punishment to sin; that, if there be a God, he must be present to see every sin, and every virtue, and disposed to reward the one, and punish the other; and that, of course, there must be a judgment, and a recompense; they have applied themselves, with an industry worthy of a better cause, to overthrow the belief, and terminate the existence, of these truths.

Thus Mr. Hobbes declares, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. BLOUNT, that the Soul is probably material.

Lord SHAFTSBURY, that the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment, cannot consist with virtue.

Mr. COLLINS, that the Soul is material and mortal.

Mr. CHUBB, that the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unsatisfactory, and that it is probably material; and

That men will not be judged for their impiety, or ingratitude, to God; nor for their injustice, or unkindness, to each other; but only for injuries to the public; and

That even this is uncertain, and useless;

Mr. HUME, that the Soul of man is a machine; and that it is unreasonable to believe an Intelligent cause of all things. &c.

Lord BOLINGBROKE, that God does not concern himself with the affairs of men at all; or if he does, he regards only collective bodies of men;

That he punishes none but through the magistrate; and

That the Soul is material and mortal.

And the National Convention of France,

That death is an eternal sleep.

Thus by Infidel Philosophy is every hope taken away from Virtue, and every fear from Vice, however multiplied, or abandoned. This has indeed been the sum of all the purposes of this Philosophy. The belief and the hope of future rewards, and the belief
and

and the dread of future punishments, are the substance of all which they call superstition. To remove these from men, and especially the latter, they have studied and laboured most assiduously for ages.

SHOULD they succeed to the extent of their wishes, what must be the consequences? Men will be left with all the instructions concerning the lawfulness of vice, which have been recited, and innumerable others of the same nature, given by these, and the whole train of Philosophers; with all the proofs of the insignificance and the non-existence of virtue; with the general license to plunder, to defraud, to deceive, and to pollute; and with no other restraint but civil law, or private honour: Law, which cannot know one, in a hundred, of the crimes, which men commit: Honour, which even in a Christian state of society, sustained by many virtuous men, and strengthened by prevailing moral opinions auspicious to virtue and alarming to vice, will not either restrain, or regard, one crime in a thousand: Honour, which, in the state of Society thus accomplished, amidst rulers, Philosophers, and other men of influence, thoroughly initiated in these doctrines, and amidst the universal depravity of communities, would know no distinction between virtue and convenience, between crimes and disagreeables. How soon would law and government lose that authority and energy which are now chiefly sustained by appeals to the presence, the will, and the agency, of a Ruler all present, all powerful, and unchangeably and infinitely opposed to every iniquity? How soon would man, ceasing to reverence his God, cease to regard his neighbour? How soon would every moral, every natural, tie be dissolved, every motive to justice, truth, and benevolence, be lost, and every attempt to confine passion and appetite within any bounds be forgotten? Virtue and Vice, as objects of human esteem, would change
their

their places, and their characters. Pride would then be real virtue, the Lust of power real greatness, and Avarice real honour. The seat of Justice would be the nest of plunder and robbery, and the edifices of learning cells of studied iniquity, where methodized sin would be the science, and sagacious perpetration the art. The private dwelling would be converted into a brothel, and the venerable matron and the snowy virgin would change characters with the bawd and the strumpet; and the purity, the happiness, and the hopes, of mankind, would be buried under a promiscuous and universal concubinage.

WERE Philosophy less exceptionable in its doctrines, and less favourably inclined to vice, still, in its attempts to restrain vice, and encourage virtue, it would be totally weak and inefficacious. Every Individual Philosopher utters many errors with the same breath and in the same discourse, in which he utters also some truths. Every individual contradicts, ridicules, and calumniates, every other individual; and every sect every other sect. Thus truth and falsehood come from the same mouth with equal gravity and force; and the contrary systems of the combatants, are on the one hand, derived from sources equally respectable, and, on the other, are equally the objects of obloquy and derision, mutually and successfully employed. As teachers, they have no authority, possess no power, can employ no sanction, and promise no reward. The only support of their systems is argument; often so abstruse, as to be understood imperfectly by themselves, and not at all by most men; often so weak and futile, as to produce no effect, beside contempt and ridicule; often so opposed by contrary arguments, as to be left without force, or influence; and always so uninteresting as to be neither read, nor regarded, by the body of mankind. This support their example effectually destroys: for no man will believe, that the
Philosophy,

Philosophy, which when heartily embraced does not render its author better, but leaves him worse, than multitudes of those, who are without it, can be either useful or true.

THE single phrase---Thus saith the Lord,---comes home to every serious man, with a force infinitely greater than that of all which Philosophers have ever said, or will ever say. The Teacher, here, can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His authority to enjoin, his knowledge to discern, his disposition and his power to reward obedience is immutable and boundless. Here something is presented to the mind, of sufficient importance to arrest its attention, to rouse its hopes, and to command its efforts. To disobedience the same attributes present a combination of motives, efficacious to alarm, and to deter. In the full view of these attributes, sin is perpetrated only with a trembling hand, and an aching heart.

BUT in spite of all the efforts, which Philosophy can make to dissuade men from vice, the single human conclusion will ever be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Some of the ancients, at times, made efforts of this nature; but they were sickly in their origin, and momentary in their operations; without energy, and without effect; an amusement to the fancy, but not a melioration of the heart. The modern Philosophy, uninterested in the subject, or discouraged by the attempts of its predecessors, has joined in the general cry, and determined to encourage and sanction this limited pursuit of good. Its doctrines, its arguments, its examples, have licensed and defended guilty pleasure, pleasure confined to the present life, the pleasure of sinners, the pleasure of animals. Before its pestilential breath, as man before the Simoom of Nubia, truth, virtue, and happiness, have sickened, fallen, and died; while vice, like the fabled Upaz of Java,

Java, has in the same rank atmosphere vigorously diffused its branches, shot up its infant stems, and corrupted and destroyed, around it, whatever had the principles or the promise of life.

3. INFIDEL Philosophy has not hitherto been able to support itself, nor to make any serious impression on the evidence of the Divine Origin of Scriptures.

THE great proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures have not, I apprehend, been at all seriously affected by the attacks of Infidels. The Necessity of admitting the History of the Scriptures, and the necessity of admitting the Revelation of the Scriptures, arising from the admission of the Scriptural History; The Arguments from Prophecy; from Miracles; from the Character of Christ; from the Origination of the New-Testament by uneducated men; from the Character and Conduct of the Apostles; from the erection and progress of Christianity; from the Authenticity and Genuineness of the Scriptures; from their pure, harmonious, and sublime Character; and from the present state of the Jews; have in no instance been solidly answered.

THERE is not, so far as I have been informed, any answer of any Infidel to a capital argument in support of Revelation, which has gained so great applause, or received, for the time, so general and confident reliance from Philosophers, as Mr. Hume's celebrated Essay on Miracles. In the Introduction to it, Mr. Hume says---"*He flatters himself, he has discovered an argument, which will prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion.*" But since the Essays on the same subject by Adams, Campbell, Farmar and Price, have been published, and read, the applause and the reliance appear to be in a great measure withdrawn. I have been informed,

that Mr. Hume himself considered Doctor Campbell's Answer to him as conclusive against him. If this most ingenious performance of the ablest Infidel, by far the ablest, who has hitherto appeared, has been so impotent to its purpose, the sufficiency of the rest may be easily determined.

THERE is, also, another argument, drawn from the comparative character of Christians, and Infidels, which may be alleged with a force, incapable of being obviated. The weight of virtue has been wholly on the side of Christianity. All moral truth is fairly tried by its influence on mankind. Nothing can be more properly or more forcibly contrasted, than the tendency of the doctrines of the Scriptures, and the tendency of Infidel Philosophy; and nothing can more strongly illustrate this contrast, than the opposite lives of Christians and Infidels. The life of St. Paul, alone, puts all Infidelity out of countenance. The early Christians, in general, even as represented by many of their most respectable enemies, have no parallels in the annals of Infidelity. From the infancy of the Christian church to the present time, in all periods some, and in most periods many, Christians have worn the same character. In our own land, and in every neighbourhood, may be found daily those, who adorn the human name with all the virtues, which Infidels have at any time professed, and with many of a superiour kind, to which they have never formed a pretension. So evident is the want of morals on the part of Infidels, in this country, generally, that to say---“A man is an Infidel”---is understood, of course, as a declaration, that he is a plainly immoral man. On the contrary, to say---“A man is a true or real Christian”---is universally understood as a declaration, that he is a man distinguishedly virtuous. This phrasology has its origin in the experience, and common-sense, of mankind, and may be fairly assumed as complete evidence of the sentiment alleged. THAT

THAT this Philosophy is unable to support itself, is evident from its progress. Philosophers, as has been remarked, have, from the beginning, changed continually the Infidel system. The doctrines, which Herbert and Tindal declared to be so evident, that God could not make them more evident, were wholly given up, as untenable, by Hume; and the Scepticism of Hume sustained no higher character in the mind of D'Alembert. Mere Infidelity gave up Natural Religion, and Atheism mere Infidelity. Atheism is the system, at present in vogue. What will succeed it cannot be foreseen. One consolation, however, attends the subject; and that is---No other system can be so groundless, so despicable, or so completely ruinous to the morals and happiness of mankind.

THE conduct of Philosophers in opposing their antagonists, and in supporting themselves, has been alike, and has alike evinced the weakness of their cause, in both respects. Each effort has had, as was to be expected, its day of applause and adoption, and has then given up its place, and importance, to a succeeding effort. Succeeding Philosophers, instead of relying on the arguments, or systems, of their predecessors, have laboriously devised new ones. Each relies apparently, and perhaps firmly, upon his own; but is of course forsaken by those, who come after him. The weight, which they have had, for a time, has been therefore casual; the weight of novelty, fashion, and currency, and the result of ingenuity and celebrity; not the weight of truth and evidence, nor the result of serious and permanent conviction. Were succeeding Philosophers satisfied with either the opposition, or the doctrines of their predecessors, they would of course have insisted anew on their arguments, and systems; explained more fully the parts and nature of each, and obviated the answers of their adversaries. Convinced of the truth and rectitude

rectitude of what had been done before, they would have felt themselves bound to exert themselves in its defence. Natural Religion, or Theism, would now have been the great reliance of Infidels, and all their arguments would have been directed to its support. The Atheists feel, at the present time, a triumphant confidence in the permanency of their system; the Theists, a few years since, felt equally satisfied of the continuance of theirs. This confidence in both was equally well founded. There is now all the probability, that those, who are to come, will desert Atheism, which there was a little while since, that the present system would desert Theism. Yet now the French Committee of Public Instruction declare, that a people of Theists will necessarily become Revelationists.

THE insolence and ridicule, exhibited universally by Infidel Writers, is, at least to my view, a strong indication of the consciousness of the weakness of their cause, and of the insufficiency of their arguments. Men who feel their cause to be good, and their means of support to be strong, usually discover moderation and decency in the management. A strong man is usually mild, and civil; a weak one, to conceal his weakness, is often petulant and blustering. Were Infidels satisfied of the goodness of their cause, and the soundness of their arguments, they would not, it is presumed, so often resort to ridicule instead of reasoning, nor intrench themselves behind insolence and contempt, instead of facts and evidence. In any other case, this conduct would be deemed a proof of weakness in the cause, and of doubt in its advocates.

As the great arguments in support of Christianity remain in full force, it is rationally concluded, that they will ever so remain. Infidel Philosophers, in great numbers, of the utmost enmity to the Christian cause,

cause, of eminent industry, and of as considerable ingenuity as will probably be found hereafter, have already exhausted their strength in their attacks on Revelation. As they have hitherto failed of success, it is fairly presumed, that they will finally fail. Almost all the topics of opposition have been thoroughly explored, and the most effectual use made of them, which is practicable. Hence they will probably gain little additional strength on the side of argument. More influence, and more converts, they may not improbably gain. The present time is supposed to be marked in Prophecy, as an eminent season of delusion; and the delusion has not, hitherto, reached the bounds predicted. But to gain these is a very different thing from acquiring additional strength from reason and evidence.

To a serious and candid man the fact, above recited, must appear of high importance. He cannot but see, that Christianity has been attacked by a numerous host of enemies, ardent, industrious, and ingenious, through a long period, with unremitting efforts, and on every side. No measure has been left untried, no means of success unexplored, and no kind of hostility scrupled. Its strength has therefore been proved. Such a man will feel of course, that Christianity must resist successfully every future assault, and that it will be early enough to doubt of its firmness, when its pillars shall begin to be shaken, and its foundation to be undermined.

4. PHILOSOPHY will not, and Christianity will, increase your comfort, and lessen your distresses here, and save you from misery, and confer on you happiness, hereafter.

FROM the observations already made, you must have clearly perceived, that Philosophy furnishes you with no directory to regulate your moral conduct,

duct, no scheme of the duties of life. As pure Theism, or Natural Religion, it teaches not a duty, which is not unspeakably better taught by the Scriptures; while it is wholly ignorant of very many, which, when taught, are seen to be of the highest importance. It knows not, it cannot know, what service, what worship, is acceptable to God, or whether any can be accepted. It sees all men to be sinners, and yet knows not, that sinners can be forgiven, or reinstated in the character and condition of faithful subjects of the government of God. If this be possible, it knows not how, when, or where. Of sanctions to enforce, and motives to encourage obedience, it is destitute and beggared. To the peace, which springs from the conscious performance of duty it is a stranger; and in the joy, which flows from hopeful acceptance with God, it shares not, even as a guest. Under these disadvantages, you will not wonder, that it lingers and languishes in its course, and halts at a distance from the gate of virtue.

As mere Infidelity, it teaches nothing but to contest all principles, and to adopt none. As Scepticism, it is an ocean of doubt and agitation, in which there are no soundings, and to which there is no shore. As Animalism and Atheism it completes the ravage and ruin of man, which, in its preceding forms, it had so successfully begun. It now holds out the rank Circean draught, and sends the deluded wretches, who are allured to taste, to bristle and wallow with the swine, to play tricks with the monkey, to rage and rend with the tiger, and to putrify into nothing with the herd of kindred brutes.

CHRISTIANITY, with an influence infinitely more benevolent, enhances the value of your present life beyond the search of calculation. It informs you, that you are the intelligent and moral creatures of
the

the All-perfect JEHOVAH, who made, who preserves, who rules the Universe, who is present in all places, who beholds all things; who is eternal and immutable; infinitely benevolent, infinitely beneficent; the faithful friend of the virtuous; the unchanging enemy of sin; the rewarder, and the reward, of all returning sinners, who diligently seek him. In this character it presents to you a direct, clear, and perfect system of rules for all your moral conduct; rules of thinking, speaking, and acting; rules, reaching every possible case, and removing every rational doubt. Here is no uncertainty, no wavering, no tossing on the billows of anxiety, no plunging into the gulph of despair. Your path is a straight and beaten way, and, were you wayfaring men, and fools, you need not err therein.

As you pass through the various stages of your journey, you are furnished with aids and motives infinite, to check your delays, to recall your wanderings, to cheer fatigue, to refresh your languor, to lessen your difficulties, to renew your strength, and to prolong your perseverance to the end. Should you at any time, through ignorance, inattention, or allurements, dangerously diverge from your course, a sweet and charming Voice behind you cries "This is the way, walk ye therein."

IN the sublime character of moral subjects of the All-ruling God, you are called to a life of obedience and virtue. Sinners, indeed, you are: and as such, in the eye of Natural Religion are condemned and lost; but in the Scriptures you are taught, that most delightful of all truths, that you may rise again to the character, and the blessing, of those, who have never fallen; and may thus rise upon conditions, which, if guided by wisdom, you would yourselves have chosen, as the most easy, the most reasonable, the most desirable, of all conditions; upon conditions,
which

which are distinguished blessings in themselves, and the beginning of blessings, which will multiply forever. A scheme of duty is proposed to you, and required of you; but every part of it is at once useful and delightful. From the performance of it will daily and infallibly spring the peace of an approving mind, the dignity of conscious virtue, the retreat of gloomy apprehension, and the dawn of radiant hope, the day-star of endless life.

SHOULD you hereafter have families, your communication of the principles, and your practice of the duties, of Christianity will beyond all things else, insure to you domestic peace and prosperity. Your households will assume the same dignified character, and share in the same requisite enjoyments. All will love, esteem, and befriend, and be loved, esteemed, and befriended. Your interests, designs, and pursuits, will be noble and virtuous, the parents of concord and happiness. To the ties of natural affection will be superadded the benevolence, and the brotherly love, of the Gospel; and these will animate, refine, and exalt every affection, and every purpose, will bring daily consolation and enduring joy, and will prove the delightful forerunners of future beatitude.

THE Friends, who visit you, will esteem and love you, for they will find in your character something to be esteemed and loved. They will also be friends, of the best character, will most cordially return your kind offices, and will most richly merit and lastingly retain your confidence. They will be friends here, and friends forever.

To the Neighbourhoods around you you will be, and will be esteemed, benefactors and blessings. The poor, the sick, the outcast, the friendless, and the disconsolate, will especially, acknowledge you as
their

their patrons. Enemies you will find ; for the performance of your duty will oppose lust, and restrain corruption but they will be such enemies, as, without a total change of their character, a good man would not wish to be his friend. Every vicious man will feel his inferiority to you with pain, and experience deep mortification in knowing, that he cannot look you in the face with a composed countenance, and steady eye. Compare your friends with your enemies, and you will find nothing to be regretted.

NOR will you be less useful to your Country. Rational Freedom cannot be preserved without the aid of Christianity. Not a proof is found in the experience, not a probability is presented to the judgment, of man, that Infidelity can support a free, and at the same time an efficient, government. In this country, the freest, and the happiest, which the world has hitherto seen, the whole system of policy originated, has continued, and stands, on the single basis of Christianity. Good subjects have been formed here by forming good men ; and none but good subjects can long be governed by persuasion. The learning, peace, mild intercourse, and universally happy state of society, enjoyed here, all own the same origin. Would you preserve these blessings during your own lives, would you hand them down to posterity, increasing multitudes of those who are not Christians, and all those who are, with one voice tell you “ Embrace Christianity.”

It is by no means my intention, or my wish, to flatter you with hopes of unmingled happiness on this side of the grave. This world has ever been and still is, a vale of tears. Want, pain, sorrow, disease, and death, are constant tenants of this unhappy soil, and frequent inmates of every human dwelling. To aid the sufferer to sustain, and to vanquish, these unfriendly visitors, Christianity furnishes the peace,

L.

the

the patience, and the fortitude of virtue, the consciousness of forgiven sin, and Infinite complacency, and the supporting hope of endless and evergrowing sanctity, happiness, and glory. In every throbbing bosom she sings "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed hereafter". The song is the song of Angels; the voice is the voice of God.

ALL these alleviations are, at a stroke, swept away by the besom of Philosophy. Like a rude, unfeeling nurse, she approaches the bed of pain and sickness, and tells the groaning sufferer, that he is indeed miserable; and that he may quietly resolve to bear his calamities, for they are irremediable and hopeless. To the despairing victims of want, infamy, and oppression, she extends her hand, empty of comfort, and passes by on the other side. The Parent, overwhelmed by woe for the loss of his only son, she coolly informs, that his tears and his sighs are useless, for his favourite has ceased from the light of the living, and vanished forever. To the failing eye of the poor, desponding, and expiring wretch she holds out her dark lantern, and as the only consolation which she can give, shews him the sullen region of annihilation, destined to receive and wrap him in eternal and oblivious night.

You, with the rest of men, must suffer woe. Poverty may betide, shame may arrest, pain may agonize, sorrow may sink, disease may waste, and death will befall you. In all these evils you will seek for consolation, support, and hope. From Philosophy you will find none. On that solemn day, which is fast approaching, when you will be extended upon the bed of death, when the physician has bidden you adieu, and your friends are watching for the parting gasp, your souls will cling to existence, will pant for relief, and will search the Universe for a glimmering of

of hope. Should Philosophy have been your bosom companion, and the arm on which you have finally rested, you will then know what it is to have renounced Religion, to look back on a life of sin with agony, and forward to a world of suspense with horror. Christianity, sighing her last farewell, and dropping her parting tear, will retire in silence and sorrow, and will mourn with deep compassion, that, forlorn and dreadful as was your lot, you would not suffer her to allay your misery, and with the lamp of hope light you through your melancholy path into the world of future being.

Religion, on the contrary, feels, and proves, a regard for the sorrows of man, infinitely more tender, soothing, and supporting. Like the fabled power of enchantment, she changes the thorny couch into a bed of down, closes with a touch the wounds of the soul, and converts a wilderness of woe into the borders of Paradise. Whenever you are forced to drink the cup of bitterness, Mercy, at her call, will stand by your side, and mingle sweetness with the draught; while with a voice of mildness and consolation she will whisper to you, that the potion, though unpleasant, is necessary and balsamic; that you have diseases to be removed, and morbid principles to be exterminated; and that the unpalatable administration will assuredly establish in you health immortal. The same sweetener of life will accompany you to the end, and, seating herself by your dying bed, will draw aside the curtains of eternity, will bid you lift your closing eyes on the end of sorrow, pain, and care, and in the opened gates of peace and glory will point to you, in full view, the friends of Christ, waiting to hail your arrival.

THAT Christianity gives all these blessings, and gives them certainly; that it produces no loss, and great gain, in the present world; that it makes nothing

ing worse, and every thing better; is clearly evident from the nature of the Christian system. The doctrines, precepts, and promises, contain and secure all this, and much more. At the same time, every Christian is a witness to this truth. Every Christian has, by experience, known the pleasures of sin, and, by the same experience also, has known the pleasures of religion. To whatever degree, therefore, his experience has extended, he is a complete judge of both. Many, very many Christians have also fully enjoyed the highest pleasures of science and intellect, and are of course unexceptionable judges of these pleasures. But no Christian was ever found, who for a moment admitted, that any pleasures were to be compared with those of religion; not one, who would not say, that for the loss of religion worlds would be a poor compensation. In every other case this evidence would be acknowledged as complete. Nor is it balanced, or lessened, by any contrary evidence. Infidels have never tasted the pleasures of religion, and, in the decision of this question, are, therefore, without a voice.

With these blessings in view, you will, I trust without a sigh, leave to the Infidel his peculiar gratifications. In every innocent enjoyment you can partake at least as largely as he. You will not, therefore, repine, that you cannot shine, at a horse-race; bet at a cockpit, win at a gaming-table, riot at the board of intemperance, drink deep at the midnight debauch, or steal to infamous enjoyments at the brothel.

But the most important consideration is yet to be suggested; a consideration infinitely awful and glorious. There may be an Hereafter. There may be a future Judgment, a future Retribution. The course of Sin, begun here, may continue forever. The seed of virtue, sown in the present world, and

raised to a young and feeble stem, may be destined to growth immortal. The misery, produced here by Sin, may be unceasingly generated by the same wretched cause, through ages which cannot end. The peace and joy, which virtue creates, during this transient life, the same illustrious power may expand, and prolong, through an ever-enlarging progress.

WHAT the natural eye thus sees with dim and probable vision, Christianity, possessed of superiour optics, discerns, and promises, with clear, prophetic certainty. Endless death and endless life are written in full and glowing characters in the book, sealed to unenlightened and unassisted man with seven seals. That book a hand infinite and supreme unrolls to every humble, penitent, believing mind, and discloses to the enraptured view the page of eternity, on which things divine and immortal are pencilled with sun-beams. A residence finished with infinite workmanship, employments pure and ravishing, a character completely dignified and lovely, companions the first and best in the universe, a system of Providence, composed wholly of good, refining, ascending, and brightening forever, and a God seen, known, and enjoyed, in all his combined perfection, are there drawn in colours of light and life.

In the same volume is disclosed by the same hand the immense woe, destined to reward the perpetration of iniquity, voluntary blindness, and immovable impenitence. Allured and charmed by supreme endearments, on the one hand, the mind is, on the other, equally awakened and alarmed. Good and evil passing conception, passing limits, are offered to the choice; and by that choice alone the good may be secured, and evil avoided, forever.

With respect to these amazing things, Philosophy knows nothing, threatens nothing, promises nothing.
To

To Philosophy the invisible world is an unknown vast, over which, like the raven sent out of the ark, she wanders with a wearied wing, seeking rest, and finding none. To her exploring eye, the universe is one immense, unfathomable ocean. Above, around, beneath, all is doubt, anxiety, and despair. Her accounts are, like her views, uncertain and conjectural only, the foundations of no assent, no satisfaction. If you adhere to them, you cannot lose, and you may infinitely gain. An infinite difference of possible good and evil, therefore, demands your adoption of Christianity. I need not place the subject on higher ground. To every thinking man there is, here, a motive infinite to embrace Christianity, and reject Infidel Philosophy.

If there is a God (and that there is, is more certain, and evident, than that there is any being beside one's self) he is doubtless perfect in holiness, as well as in power and knowledge. With holy or virtuous creatures he must of course be pleased; because holiness is obedience to his will, and because it is a resemblance to his character. As he must be pleased with his own character, so he must be pleased with his creatures, whenever they possess a character similar to his own. That he should not be pleased to have his will obeyed is impossible. The very supposition, that the Ruler has a will, involves in it necessarily, that he must be pleased to be obeyed. All the doctrines of Revelation, all the precepts, are summed up in this memorable sentence, "Be ye holy, as I the Lord your God am holy." To accomplish holiness, or virtue, in man is the single end of the Christian system. Christianity therefore teaches, enjoins, and with infinite motives pursues, what reason dictates as the highest wisdom of man. But, in all this, Infidel Philosophy has no part, nor lot, nor memorial.

Thus, in every view, the state and the prospects of the Christian are full of comfort, peace, and hope, of medicines for grief, and seasonings for joy. The present state of the Infidel is destitute of both, and prospects he has none. Here, the religion of the Christian brings with it, in hand, worth, usefulness, and dignity ; and hereafter, in bright reversion, and through an interminable progress, life, wisdom, virtue, happiness, and glory. Philosophy, on the contrary, adds to him, here, no enjoyment, and robs him of the chief support of suffering ; and, beyond the grave, plunders him of heaven, and consigns him to annihilation and despair.*

* Since these discourses were sent to the press, I have seen a Work lately published in Great Britain, and republished in America, written by J. Robison, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and Secretary of the Royal Society in that city, and entitled *A Conspiracy against all the Governments and Religions in Europe*. In this work the reader may see the dangers of Infidel Philosophy set in the strongest light possible. He may see a plan formed, and to an alarming degree executed, for exterminating Christianity, Natural Religion, the belief of a God, of the immortality of the Soul, and Moral obligation ; for rooting out of the world civil and domestic government, the right of property, marriage, natural affection, chastity, and decency ; and in a word for destroying whatever is virtuous, refined or desirable, and introducing again universal savageness and brutism. All this is to be done under the pretence of enlarged Philanthropy, and of giving mankind liberty and equality. By this mask is carefully concealed the true end, which is no less than to reduce the whole human race under a complete subjugation to these Philosophers ; a subjugation of mind as well as of body.