

H. Davis

L E T T E R S

Rector of St. Dunstons. 1787.

John P^{SON} Richard - 1827: -

I N F I D E L I T Y.

George Horne, bishop of Norwich

THE SECOND EDITION.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
A L E T T E R T O
DR. ADAM SMITH.

The doctrine of Epicurus is ever ruinous to Society :
It had it's rise when Greece was declining, and
perhaps hastened it's dissolution, as also that of
Rome ; it is now propagated in France and Eng-
land, and seems likely to produce the same effect
in both. GRAY—MEMOIRS, P. 202.

*By G. Horne D.D. President
of Magdalen College
OXFORD:*

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS, MDCCCLXXXVI.

SOLD BY D. PRINCE AND J. COOKE, OXFORD:

G. ROBINSON, J. F. AND C. RIVINGTON,
AND T. CADELL, LONDON.

Kress
Room
Smith

Your obedient
servant

P R E F A C E.

LET no reader take offence, though the subjects debated in the following pages be of a serious nature, if the ideas and images employed should sometimes border upon the ludicrous. The contest between Elijah and the votaries of Baal was a very serious one, and heaven itself interposed in it's decision. Yet, strong and pointed is the *irony* of the Prophet—"Cry aloud, " for he is a God ; either he is " talking, or he is pursuing, or " he is in a journey, or perad-
a 2 " venture

ii P R E F A C E.

“ venture he sleepeth, and must
“ be awaked !” * Impiety pro-
vokes a frown ; absurdity occa-
sions a smile ; and many who
glory in the imputation of the
former, cannot but feel when they
are convicted of the latter. Some
opinions and arguments become
ridiculous, on being stated. A por-
trait is sufficient ; a caricature
needless ; perhaps, impossible.
Where such is not the case, no-
thing, it is hoped, has met with
this treatment, unless proved to
deserve it. Ridicule is not the
test of truth, because truth must
always be the test of ridicule ; and

* 1 Kings xviii. 27.

he who laughs in the wrong place, exposes no character, except his own. But, as the learned and ingenious Dr. Ogilvie has well observed, “He who can
 “fairly turn the laugh when it
 “has been raised against him,
 “will be pardoned readily, provided he has laughed in good
 “humour.” *

* Inquiry into the causes of the infidelity and scepticism of the times. P. 445.

C O N T E N T S.

LETTER *to* DR. SMITH.

LETTER—*Introductory* Page 1

I. *Remarks on the Apology for
Mr. Hume's Life and Wri-
tings* 5

II. ————*Continued* 18

III. ————*Continued* 34

IV. *A Dialogue on Philosophical
Scepticism* 47

V. *Examination of the Essay on
Suicide* 72

VI. ————*Continued* 108

VII. ————*Continued* 126

VIII. *Answer to a pamphlet, entitled,
“Doubts of the Infidels”
&c.* 139

IX. *Mira-*

C O N T E N T S.

IX. *Miracles — Testimony — Mr.
Valentine Greatrix* 152

X. *Pentateuch — Representations
of the Deity—Light before
the Sun—Darkness—Fir-
mament—Tree of Know-
lege—Death of Adam* 163

XI. *Fall—Cherubim* 175

XII. *Flood—Rainbow* 184

XIII. *Conduct of the Deity respect-
ing the posterity of Abra-
ham—Esau and Jacob* 197

XIV. *Pharaoh—Magicians—Egyp-
tian jewels —Horses and
Chariots* 208

XV. *Balaam —The Canaanites—
Judges i. 19.—Chemosb—
The Witch of Endor* 223

XVI. *David's treatment of the Am-
monites—the Amalekite—
numbering the people* 246

C O N T E N T S.

XVII. <i>Prophecy, and New Testament</i>	
— <i>Name of Christ—Nature of his kingdom—Thirty pieces of silver—Division of Christ's garments by lot</i>	
— <i>Differences of divines—Revelation of St. John—Genealogy of Christ—Pascal—Voice from heaven at Christ's baptism—Slaughter of the infants by Herod—Pious frauds—End of the world—Fig tree—Grain of wheat—Elias—Spurious Gospels—Liberty—Passion and resurrection—Faith and reason—Conclusion</i>	266

A
L E T T E R
T O
A D A M S M I T H, LL. D.
O N T H E
L I F E, D E A T H, A N D P H I L O S O P H Y
O F H I S F R I E N D
D A V I D H U M E, E s' q.

By one of the People called CHRISTIANS.

*Ibant obscuri, solâ sub nocte, per umbram,
Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna.*

V I R G.

T H E F I F T H E D I T I O N.

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

IT is of no consequence, gentle Reader, to you, any more than it is to Dr. SMITH, that you should know the name of the person, who now addresseth you. Your mind cannot be biased, either way, by that, of which you remain ignorant. The remarks in the following pages are not therefore true, or false, because I publish them; but I publish them, because I think them to be true. Read, consider, and determine for yourself. If you find no satisfaction, throw the book into the fire; regret (but with moderation, as becometh a philosopher) the loss of your shilling; and take care not to lose another, in the same manner. If, on the contrary, you *should* find satisfaction
(and

ii ADVERTISEMENT.

(and, it is humbly hoped, you will find a great deal) neglect not to communicate to others, what has thus been communicated to you. Speak handsomely of me, wherever you go, and introduce me to your kinsfolk and acquaintance. The enemies of Religion are awake; let not her friends sleep.

I intended a much longer work; but like the learned editor of Mr. HUME's Life, am necessitated to "gratify," with all possible expedition, "the impatience" of the public curiosity; so eager is it to hear, what they, who believe in God, can possibly have to say for themselves. And if this will do the business, why should you be troubled with more? I am far from agreeing with Mr. VOLTAIRE, in all his observations. But there is one, in which it is impossible to disagree with him. "I have said,
"and

ADVERTISEMENT. iii

“and I abide by it,” cries the little hero, “that the fault of most books is, “their being too large.” On reviewing what I have written, I really cannot see there is occasion to add another sentence.

Had I not chosen, for reasons best known to myself, thus to make my appearance *incog*. I would certainly have fate for my picture, and have tried to cast a look at my title page, as lively and good humoured, as that of Mr. HUME himself. My bookseller, indeed, told me, it would have been a much more creditable way of doing the thing; “and then, you know, Sir,” said he, “we could have charged the “other sixpence.”

A LET.

A

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

YOU have been lately employed in embalming a philosopher; his *body*, I believe I must say; for concerning the other part of him, neither you nor he seem to have entertained an idea, sleeping or waking. Else, it surely might have claimed a little of your care and attention; and one would think, the belief of the soul's existence and immortality could do no harm, if it did no good, in a *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. But every gentleman understands his own business best.

Will you do an unknown correspondent the honour, Sir, to accept a few plain remarks, in a free and easy way, upon the curious letter to Mr. STRAHAN, in which this ever memorable operation of *embalming* is performed? Our Philosopher's account of *his own life* will likewise be considered, as we go along.

Trust me, good Doctor, I am no bigot, enthusiast, or enemy to human learning—*Et ego in Arcadiâ*—I have made many a hearty meal, in private, upon CICERO and VIRGIL, as well as Mr. HUME.* Few persons (though, perhaps, as Mr. HUME says, upon a like occasion, “I ought not “to judge on that subject”) have a quicker relish for the productions of genius, and the beauties of composi-

* LIFE, p. 5.

tion. It is therefore as little in my intention, as it is in my power, to prejudice the literary character of your friend. From some of his writings I have received great pleasure, and have ever esteemed his History of England to have been a noble effort of *Matter and Motion*. But when a man takes it into his head to do mischief, you must be sensible, Sir, the Public has always reason to lament his being *a clever fellow*.

I hope it will not be deemed vanity in me likewise to say, that I have in my composition a large portion of that, which our inimitable SHAKESPEARE styles, *the milk of human kindness*. I never knew what envy or hatred was ; and am ready, at all times, to praise, wherever I can do it, in honour and conscience. DAVID, I

doubt not, was, as you affirm, a social agreeable person, of a convivial turn, told a good story, and played well at “his favourite game of whist*.”

I know not that JOHN THE PAINTER did the same. But there is no absurdity in the supposition. If he did not, he might have done it—Doctor, be not offended—I mean no harm. I would only infer thus much, that I could not, on that account, bring myself absolutely to approve his odd fancy of firing all the dock-yards in the kingdom.

Concerning the *philosophical opinions* of Mr. HUME you observe, † that “men will, no doubt, judge vari-
“ously.” They are certainly at liberty so to do, because the author himself did the same. Sometimes, to

* LIFE, &c. p. 43. † LIFE, &c. p. 59.

be sure, he esteemed them ingenious, deep, subtle, elegant, and calculated to diffuse his literary fame to the ends of the world. But, at other times, he judged very differently; very much so, indeed. “ I dine, says he, I play a
 “ game at back-gammon, I converse,
 “ and am merry with my friends; and
 “ when, after three or four hours
 “ amusement, I would return to these
 “ speculations, they appear so *cold*,
 “ so *strained*, and so *ridiculous*, that I
 “ cannot find in my heart to enter
 “ into them any farther.” * Now, Sir, if you will only give me leave to judge, before dinner, of Mr. HUME’s philosophy, as he judged of

* *Treatise of Human Nature*. I. 467. In the Postscript to this Letter, a view will be exhibited of the HUMIAN system, taken exactly as it appeared to it’s author at six o’clock in the evening.

it after dinner, we shall have no farther dispute upon that subject. I could indeed wish, if it were possible, to have a scheme of thought, which would bear contemplating, at any time of the day ; because, otherwise, a person must be at the expence of maintaining a brace of these metaphysical Hobby-Horses, one to mount in the morning, and the other in the afternoon.

After all, Sir, friend as I am to freedom of opinion (and no one living can be more so) I am rather sorry, methinks, that men should judge so *variously* of Mr. HUME's philosophical speculations. For since the design of them is to banish out of the world every idea of truth and comfort, salvation and immortality, a future state, and the providence, and even exist-

ence of GOD, it seems a pity, that we cannot be all of a mind about them, though we might have formerly liked to hear the author crack a joke, over a bottle, in his life time. And I could have been well pleased to have been informed by you, Sir, that before his death, he had ceased to number among his happy effusions tracts of this kind and tendency.

For—(let me come a little closer to you, Doctor, if you please, upon this subject—Don't be under any apprehensions—my name does not begin with a B—) Are *you* sure, and can you make *us* sure, that there really exist no such things as a GOD, and a future state of rewards and punishments? If so, all is well. Let us *then*, in our last hours, read LUCIAN, and play at WHIST, and droll upon CHA-

RON and his boat ; * let us die as foolish and insensible, as much like our brother philosophers, the calves of the field, and the asses of the desert, as we can, for the life of us. But—if such things BE—as they most certainly ARE—Is it right in you, Sir, to hold up to our view, as “ perfectly “ wise and virtuous”, † the *character* and *conduct* of one, who seems to have been possessed with an incurable antipathy to all that is called RELIGION; and who strained every nerve to explode, suppress, and extirpate the spirit of it among men, that it’s very name, if he could effect it, might no more be had in remembrance? Are we, do you imagine, to be reconciled to a character of this sort, and fall in love with it, because it’s owner was

* LIFE, &c. p. 47, et seq.

† LIFE, &c. p. 62.

good company, and knew how to manage his *cards*? Low as the age is fallen, I will venture to hope, it has grace enough yet left, to resent such usage as this.

You endeavour to entertain us with some *pleasant conceits* that were supposed by Mr. HUME to pass between himself and old CHARON. The philosopher tells the old gentleman, that, “ he had been endeavouring to open “ the eyes of the Public ;” that he was “ correcting his works for a new “ edition,” from which great things were to be expected ; in short, “ if “ he could but live a few years longer (and that was the only reason “ why he would wish to do so) he “ might have the satisfaction of seeing “ the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of *superstition*. * ”

* LIFE, &c. p. 50.

We all know, Sir, what the word *SUPERSTITION* denotes, in Mr. *HUME*'s vocabulary, and against what Religion his shafts are levelled, under that name. But, Doctor *SMITH*, do you believe, or would you have us to believe, that it is *CHARON*, who calls us out of the world, at the appointed time? Doth not *HE* call us out of it, who sent us into it? Let me, then, present you with a paraphrase of the *Wish*, as addressed to *HIM*, to whom it should, and to whom alone, with any sense and propriety, it can be addressed.—Thus it runs—

“ LORD, I have only one reason
 “ why I would wish to live. Suffer
 “ me so to do, I most humbly be-
 “ seech thee, yet a little while, till
 “ mine eyes shall behold the success
 “ of my undertaking to overthrow,
 “ by my metaphysics, the faith which

“ thy son descended from heaven
 “ to plant, and to root out the know-
 “ ledge and the love of thee from the
 “ earth.”

Here are no rhetorical figures, no hyperboles or exaggerations. The matter is even so. I appeal, in the face of the world, Sir, to yourself, and to every man, who can read and understand the writings of Mr. HUME, whether this be not, in plain, honest English, the drift of his *philosophy* as it is called; for the propagation of which alone he wished to live; and concerning which you are pleased to say coolly, “ men will judge variously, “ every one approving or condemning “ these opinions, according as they “ happened to coincide, or disagree “ with his own.* ” Our thoughts are very naturally carried back, upon this

* LIFE, &c. p. 59

occasion, to the author of the *first philosophy*, who likewise engaged to *open the eyes of the Public*—He did so ; but the only discovery they found themselves able to make, was,—that they were NAKED.

You talk much, Sir, of our philosopher's *gentleness* of manners, *good nature*, *compassion*, *generosity*, *charity*. Alas, Sir, whither were they all fled, when he so often sat down calmly and deliberately to obliterate from the hearts of the human species every trace of the knowledge of GOD and his dispensations ; all faith in his kind providence, and fatherly protection ; all hope of enjoying his grace and favour, here, or hereafter ; all love of him, and of their brethren for his sake ; all the patience under tribulation, all the comforts, in time of sorrow derived from these fruitful and

perennial sources? Did a good man think himself able, by the force of metaphysic incantation, in a moment, to blot the sun out of heaven, and dry up every fountain upon earth, would he attempt to do it?—TULLY had but a faint glimpse of the country towards which we are all travelling; yet so pleasing was any the most imperfect and shadowy prospect into futurity, that TULLY declared, no man should ravish it from him*. And surely, TULLY was a philosopher, as well as HUME. O had he seen the light which shone upon HUME, he would not have closed his eyes against it; had the same cup been offered to him, he would not have dashed it untasted from him!

* Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. DE SENECTUTE, ad Fin.

“ Perhaps our modern sceptics are
“ ignorant, that without the belief of
“ a GOD, and the hope of immortality,
“ the miseries of human life would
“ often be insupportable. But can I
“ suppose them in a state of total and
“ invincible stupidity, utter strangers
“ to the human heart, and to human
“ affairs ? Sure, they would not thank
“ me for such a supposition. Yet this
“ I must suppose, or I must believe
“ them to be the most cruel, the
“ most perfidious, and the most
“ profligate of men. Carested by
“ those who call themselves the great,
“ ingrossed by the formalities of life,
“ intoxicated with vanity, pampered
“ with adulation, dissipated in the tu-
“ mult of business, or amidst the vi-
“ cissitudes of folly, they perhaps
“ have little need and little relish for
“ the consolations of religion. But

“ let them know, that in the solitary
 “ scenes of life, there is many an
 “ honest and tender heart pining
 “ with incurable anguish, pierced
 “ with the sharpest sting of disap-
 “ pointment, bereft of friends, chilled
 “ with poverty, racked with disease,
 “ scourged by the oppressor, whom
 “ nothing but trust in Providence,
 “ and the hope of a future retribu-
 “ tion could preserve from the ago-
 “ nies of despair. And do they, with
 “ sacrilegious hands, attempt to vio-
 “ late this last refuge of the misera-
 “ ble, and to rob them of the only
 “ comfort that had survived the ra-
 “ vages of misfortune, malice, and
 “ tyranny ? Did it ever happen, that
 “ the influence of their execrable te-
 “ nets disturbed the tranquillity of
 “ virtuous retirement, deepened the
 “ gloom of human distress, or aggra-

“vated the horrors of the grave?
“Is it possible, that this may have
“happened in many instances? Is it
“probable, that this hath happened
“in one single instance?—Ye traytors
“to human kind, ye murderers of
“the human soul, how can ye an-
“swer for it to your own hearts!
“Surely, every spark of your gene-
“rosity is extinguished for ever, if
“this consideration do not awaken in
“you the keenest remorse, and make
“you wish in bitterness of soul—But
“I remonstrate in vain. All this must
“have often occurred to you, and
“been as often rejected, as utterly fri-
“volous. Could I inforce the pre-
“sent topic by an appeal to your va-
“nity, I might possibly make some
“impression. But to plead with you
“on the principles of BENEVOLENCE,
“or GENEROSITY, is to address you

“ in a language ye do not, or will not,
 “ understand ; and as to the shame of
 “ being convicted of absurdity, igno-
 “ rance, or want of candour, ye have
 “ long ago proved yourselves superior
 “ to the sense of it.—But let not the
 “ lovers of truth be discouraged.
 “ Atheism cannot be of long conti-
 “ nuance, nor is there much danger
 “ of it’s becoming universal. The
 “ influence of some conspicuous cha-
 “ racters hath brought it too much into
 “ fashion ; which, in a thoughtless
 “ and profligate age, it is no difficult
 “ matter to accomplish. But when
 “ men have retrieved the powers of
 “ serious reflection, they will find it
 “ a frightful phantom ; and the mind
 “ will return gladly and eagerly to
 “ it’s old endearments. One thing
 “ we certainly know ; the fashion of
 “ sceptical and metaphysical systems

“ passeth away. Those unnatural pro-
 “ ductions, the vile effusions of a hard
 “ and stupid heart, that mistakes it’s
 “ own restlessness for the activity of
 “ genius, and it’s own captiousness
 “ for sagacity of understanding, may,
 “ like other monsters, please awhile
 “ by their singularity; but the charm
 “ is soon over; and the succeeding
 “ age will be astonished to hear, that
 “ their fore-fathers were deluded,
 “ or amused, with such fooleries.”

You, Sir, have read the preceding
 paragraph before; but this Letter
 may come into the hands of many,
 who have not. It is the alarm bell
 to the admirers of Mr. HUME; and
 should be rung in their ears, till suc-
 ceeded by the last trumpet.

And now, Sir, will you give me
 leave to ask you a few questions?
 Why all this hurry and bustle, this
 eagerness to gratify the pretended

“impatience of the Public,*” and satisfy it, that our philosopher lived and died perfectly composed and easy? Was there, then, any suspicion, in SCOTLAND, that he might not, at times, be quite so composed and easy as he should have been? Was there any particular BOOK ever written against him, that shook his system to pieces about his ears, and reduced it to a heap of ruins, the success and eclat of which might be supposed to have hurt his mind, and to have affected his health? Was there any AUTHOR, whose name his friends never dared to mention before him, and warned all strangers that were introduced to him, against doing it, because he never failed, when by any accident it was done, to fly out into

* Preface to LIFE, &c.

a transport of passion and swearing? *
 Was it deemed necessary, or expedient, on this account, that he should represent himself, and that you should represent him, to have been perfectly secure of the growth and increase of his philosophic reputation, as if no book had been written, which had

* “ I was a man of mild dispositions, of
 “ command of temper, little susceptible of en-
 “ mity and of great moderation in all my pas-
 “ sions. Even my love of literary fame, my
 “ ruling passion, never sowered my temper.”
 LIFE, p. 32. Yet even by what is said of the
 Reverends and right Reverends — Bishop
 WARBURTON, Bishop HURD, the *Zealots* (that
 is, the *Christians*) and of the resolution once
 taken to “ change his name and to settle in
 “ France,” because his writings did not meet
 with sufficient encouragement — by these cir-
 cumstances, I say, there seems to have been
 something of the *irritable* in his constitution.
 But these are trifles. My quarry lies not this
 way, at present. I fly at nobler game. The
 atrocious wickedness of diffusing atheism
 through the land, is a subject which concerns
 every body.

impaired it ; it having been judged much easier to dissemble the fall of DAGON, than to *set him upon his stumps again* ? I am a *South Briton*, and, consequently, not acquainted with what passes so far in the opposite quarter. You, Sir, can inform us how these things are ; and likewise, when the great work of *benevolence* and *charity*, of *wisdom* and *virtue*, shall be crowned by the publication of a treatise designed to prove the SOUL'S MORTALITY, and another, to justify and recommend SELF MURDER ; for which, without doubt, the present and every future age will bless the name of the *gentle* and *amiable* author.

Upon the whole, Doctor, your meaning is good ; but I think you will not succeed, this time. You would persuade us, by the example of DAVID HUME Esq ; that atheism is

the only cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the fear of death. But surely, he who can reflect, with complacency, on a friend thus misemploying his talents in his life, and then amusing himself with LUCIAN, WHIST, and CHARON, at his death, may smile over BABYLON in ruins; esteem the earthquake, which destroyed LISBON, an agreeable occurrence; and congratulate the hardened PHARAOH, on his overthrow in the Red sea. Drollery, in such circumstances, is neither more nor less than

Moody madness, laughing wild,

Amid severest woe.

Would we know the baneful and pestilential influences of false philosophy on the human heart? We need only contemplate them in this most deplorable instance of Mr. HUME.

These sayings, Sir, may appear harsh; but they are salutary. And if

departed spirits have any knowledge of what is passing upon earth, that person will be regarded by your friend as rendering him the truest services, who, by energy of expression, and warmth of exhortation, shall most contribute to prevent his writings from producing those effects upon mankind, which he no longer wishes they should produce: Let no man deceive himself, or be deceived by others. It is the voice of eternal TRUTH, which crieth aloud, and saith to you, Sir, and to me, and to all the world—*He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.**

By way of contrast to the behaviour of Mr. HUME, at the close of a life, passed *without GOD in the world,*

* JOHN iii. 36.

permit me, Sir, to lay before yourself, and the Public, the last sentiments of the truly learned, judicious, and admirable HOOKER, who had spent *his* days in the service of his Maker and Redeemer.

After this manner, therefore, spake the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, immediately before he expired—

“ I have lived to see, that this
 “ world is made up of perturbations ;
 “ and I have been long preparing to
 “ leave it, and gathering comfort for
 “ the dreadful hour of making my
 “ account with GOD, which I now
 “ apprehend to be near. And though
 “ I have, by his grace, loved him in
 “ my youth, and feared him in mine
 “ age, and laboured to have a con-
 “ science void of offence, towards
 “ him, and towards all men ; yet, if
 “ thou, Lord, shouldest be extreme
 “ to mark what I have done amiss,

“ who can abide it? And therefore,
 “ where I have failed, Lord, shew
 “ mercy to me; for I plead not my
 “ righteousness, but the forgiveness
 “ of my unrighteousness, through
 “ His merits, who died to purchase
 “ pardon for penitent sinners. And
 “ since I owe thee a death, Lord, let it
 “ not be terrible, and then take thine
 “ own time; I submit to it. Let not
 “ mine, O Lord, but thy will be
 “ done! — GOD hath heard my daily
 “ petitions; for I am at peace with
 “ all men, and he is at peace with
 “ me. From such blessed assurance I
 “ feel that inward joy, which this
 “ world can neither give, nor take
 “ from me. My conscience beareth
 “ me this witness; and this witness
 “ makes the thoughts of death joy-
 “ ful. I could wish to live, to do the
 “ church more service; but cannot

“ hope it ; for my days are past, as a
 “ shadow that returns not.”

His worthy Biographer adds —
 “ More he would have spoken, but
 “ his spirits failed him ; and, after a
 “ short conflict between nature and
 “ death, a quiet sigh put a period to
 “ his last breath, and so, he fell asleep
 “ —And now he seems to rest like
 “ Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. Let
 “ me here draw his curtain, till, with
 “ the most glorious company of the
 “ Patriarchs and Apostles, and the
 “ most noble army of Martyrs and
 “ Confessors, this most learned, most
 “ humble, most holy man shall also
 “ awake to receive an eternal tran-
 “ quillity, and with it a greater de-
 “ gree of glory, than common Chris-
 “ tians shall be made partakers of.”

DoCTOR SMITH, when the hour of
 his departure hence shall arrive, will
 copy the example of the BELIEVER, or

the INFIDEL, as it liketh him best. I must freely own, I have no opinion of that reader's *head*, or *heart*, who will not exclaim, as I find myself obliged to do—

*Let ME die the death of the Righteous,
and let MY last end be like his!*

I am, Sir,

Your very sincere

Well-wisher, and

Humble Servant,

One of the People called CHRISTIANS.

P O S T S C R I P T.

As it is possible, Sir, nay, probable, that this little tract, because it is a little one, may be perused by many, who have not leisure or inclination to go through large volumes, and yet wish to know what Mr. HUME's philosophical system is; I shall here subjoin a short but comprehensive summary

of the doctrines which compose it, drawn up some few years ago, by a learned gentleman, for his amusement, with proper references to those parts of our philosopher's works, where such doctrines were to be found. And though I never heard, the compiler had the thanks of Mr. HUME for so doing, yet neither could I ever find, that he or his friends disputed the fidelity and accuracy with which it was done.*

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.

* See Dr. BEATTIE's Essay on Truth, Part II. Ch. I. Sect. I. and Part III. Ch. II.

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 it's 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 de-

* The fourth section of Mr. HUME's *Essays on the Human Understanding*, is called, *Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the human understanding*; and the fifth section bears this title, *Sceptical solution of those doubts*.

pende 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.

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,

* The poor prodigal *Gentile*, in the parable, was hardly reduced to feed upon such HUSKS as these. How good and how joyful a thing must it be, for one, that has been so reduced to return to the house of his heavenly Father, where *there is bread enough and to spare*—to know the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom he hath sent!

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.*

I believe, Doctor SMITH, the reader is now fully prepared to enter into the spirit of your concluding sentence, which therefore shall be mine.

* “ *My Enquiry concerning the Principles of
“ Morals* is of all my writings, historical, phi-
“ losophical, or literary, incomparably the
“ BEST.” LIFE, p. 16.

“ I have always considered Mr.
“ HUME, both in his life time, and
“ since his death, as approaching as
“ nearly to the idea of A PERFECTLY
“ WISE AND VIRTUOUS MAN, as per-
“ haps the nature of human frailty
“ will permit.”

LETTERS

L E T T E R S

O N

I N F I D E L I T Y.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO W. S. ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

YOU express your surprise, that
after the favourable manner in
which the *Letter to Dr. Smith* was re-
ceived by the public, and the service
which, as you are pleased to say,
was effected by it, nothing farther
should have been attempted; espe-
cially

cially as an *Apology for the life and writings of David Hume, Esq.* made it's appearance soon afterwards, and some posthumous tracts of that philosopher have been since published, to complete the good work he had so much at heart; not to mention other productions on the side of infidelity. A few strictures on the nature and tendency, the principles and reasonings of such performances, thrown out from time to time, in a concise and lively way, you observe, are better calculated to suit the taste and turn of the present age, than long and elaborate dissertations; and you see no reason why a method practised by Voltaire (and so much commended by D'Alembert) *against* religion, should not be adopted by those who write *for* it. In compliance with these
hints

hints, and that you may not think me desirous of leading an idle life, when there is so much work to be done, I have formed a resolution to look over my papers, and address what I may happen to find among them to yourself in a series of letters; a species of composition much in vogue, and which has these two advantages to recommend it, that it admits of matter however miscellaneous, and may be continued or broken off at pleasure.

A 2.

LET.


L E T T E R I.

I Begin, Dear Sir, with a few obser- L E T.
vations on the *Apology for the Life* I.
and Writings of David Hume, Esq.
drawn up soon after that work came
out, but reserved in expectation of
Mr. H——'s posthumous tracts.

With difficulty I am able to per-
suade my friends, that this author
and myself have not written in con-
cert; for his *Apology* and my *Letter*
fit each other like two tallies.* In
his *Dedication*, he expresses his ap-

* The *Apology* was written before the pub-
lication of the *Letter*, though sent into the
world after it.

A 3 prehension,

LET. I.  prehension, that “the CHRISTIAN
 “clamour would be raised afresh.”
 A clamour is accordingly raised by
 “one of the people called CHRISTI-
 “ANS.” Elsewhere he intimates his
 expectation that Mr. H—’s “affecti-
 “onate Dr. Smith” would come in
 for his share. A letter is accordingly
 written to that very Doctor.


You see, Dear Sir, how I have
 done my best to fulfil his predictions.
 Let us now enquire whether he may
 not have returned the favour, and
 been equally kind to me.

In my advertisement I ventured to
 suppose that, by a late publication,
 the admirers of Mr. H. imagined
 religion to have received it’s *coup de*
grace, and that the astonished public
 was utterly at a loss to conceive,
 “what they, who believed in God,
 “could

“ could possibly have to say for them- L E T.
 “ selves.” To convert my supposi- I.
 tion into matter of fact he opens his
 Apology with a kind of funeral ora-
 tion, most solemnly pronounced over
 Christianity as a breathless corpse,
 about to be for ever interred in the
 grave of Mr. H.

“ David Hume is dead! Never
 “ were the pillars of Orthodoxy so
 “ desperately shaken, as they are now
 “ by that event!” And at P. 9. he
 speaks of “ the particular circum-
 “ stances of this event” as “ increas-
 “ ing the aggregate of our *consterna-*
 “ *tion!*”

Here, the distempered imagination
 of the Apologist sees Mr. H. like an-
 other Samson, bowing himself with
 all his might between the *pillars*, and
 slaying more at his *death*, than all

LET. I,  prehension, that “the CHRISTIAN
 “clamour would be raised afresh.”
 A clamour is accordingly raised by
 “one of the people called CHRISTI-
 “ANS.” Elsewhere he intimates his
 expectation that Mr. H—’s “affecti-
 “onate Dr. Smith” would come in
 for his share. A letter is accordingly
 written to that very Doctor.

You see, Dear Sir, how I have
 done my best to fulfil his predictions.
 Let us now enquire whether he may
 not have returned the favour, and
 been equally kind to me.

In my advertisement I ventured to
 suppose that, by a late publication,
 the admirers of Mr. H. imagined
 religion to have received it’s *coup de*
grace, and that the astonished public
 was utterly at a loss to conceive,
 “what they, who believed in God,
 “could

“ could possibly have to say for them- L E T.
 “ selves.” To convert my supposi- I.
 tion into matter of fact, he opens his
 Apology with a kind of funeral ora-
 tion, most solemnly pronounced over
 Christianity as a breathless corpse,
 about to be for ever interred in the
 grave of Mr. H.

“ David Hume is dead! Never
 “ were the pillars of Orthodoxy so
 “ desperately shaken, as they are now
 “ by that event!” And at P. 9. he
 speaks of “ the particular circum-
 “ stances of this event” as “ increas-
 “ ing the aggregate of our *consterna-*
 “ *tion!*”

Here, the distempered imagination
 of the Apologist sees Mr. H. like an-
 other Samson, bowing himself with
 all his might between the *pillars*, and
 slaying more at his *death*, than all

LET. that he flew in his *life*. He sees the
 I. believing world aghast, the church
 tottering from it's foundations, and
 Christians *assembling in an upper cham-*
ber, with the doors shut, for fear of the
philosophers. What may be the state
 of religion upon earth, before the
 end shall come, we cannot tell. We
 have reason to think it will be very
 bad. But let us hope, notwithstand-
 ing all which has happened in Scot-
 land, that the Gospel will last our
 time.

Thus again—I scrupled not to as-
 sert, that the end proposed in giving
 an account of Mr. H——’s life and
 death was, to recommend his scepti-
 cal and atheistical notions. Dr. Smith
 indeed was wary and modest. He gave
 us a detail of circumstances, and then
 only added, that, “as to his philoso-
 phy,

“ phy, men would entertain various LET.
 “ opinions, but, to be sure, all must I.
 “ allow his conduct was unexception-
 “ able,” &c. But the Apologist has
 blurted it all out at once. — David
 Hume’s life was *right*, and there-
 fore his system cannot be *wrong*. My
 friend Dr. Smith will take him to
 task for this, as sure as he is alive.

And now for another piece of com-
 plaissance on *my* side — P. 9. He
 “ wishes only out of curiosity, to
 “ know the unaffected state of our
 “ feelings,” on perusing the account
 given by Dr. Smith — As if I had
 been privy to his thoughts, the wish
 was no sooner formed, than gratified
 by my Letter, which communicated
 to him and to the public the *state*
of our feelings, and in a manner, I do
 assure him, perfectly *unaffected*. But
 it

LET. it is a difficult matter to please him ;
 I. for now *he hath seen me, he doth not*
 like me.

At the close of his *Address*, he tells me, that “after accurately examin-
 “ing my Letter, and carefully re-
 “considering the whole subject of
 “the preceding Apology in conse-
 “quence of it, he sees no occasion
 “to alter a single sentence.” Let us therefore take a view of the Apology, which is pronounced to be unaffected by it.

P. 11. “It is less the design of
 “these papers to defend H—’s prin-
 “ciples, than to shew, upon the best
 “authority, that he *was earnest in*
 “*what he wrote* ; and that, through
 “every part of his life, even to the
 “very moment of his death, *he made*
 “*precept and practice go hand in hand*
 “*together.*” But,

But, surely, if the principles are LET.
 not to be *defended*; if they are, as they I.
 have been represented, sceptical and
 atheistical; does the man, who propa-
 gated them during his life, and took
 the requisite measures that they should
 be propagated after his death—does
 such a man deserve commendation,
 because he was *in earnest*? An Apolo-
 gy of this kind may be offered in
 behalf of every felon executed at
 Tyburn, provided only that by dying
 hard, he *make precept and practice go*
hand in hand together. And the A.
 very judiciously observes as much.

P. 10. “Many, indeed, will think,
 “that this, however perspicuously
 “proved, will be doing him no real
 “honour; since in proportion to the
 “clearness of the evidence upon this
 “matter, it will only shew his im-
 “piety

LET.

I.



“ piety and obstinate infidelity the
 “ plainer ; thereby, in the end, in-
 “ curring upon him a more general
 “ disgrace.”

Truly he has hit the mark. This is the very objection, which caused a friend of mine, on reading his book, to say, he should think it a less misfortune, to have the disgrace of hanging *incurred upon him*, than to have such an Apologist. And yet, in the case before us, he had a reason for making this Apology, namely, that there was no other to be made. The only question is, whether it might not have been better if he had said nothing, and suffered things to take their chance ? However, it is now too late. The objection is fairly stated, and we all stand, *arrectis auribus*, in expectation of the answer—Lo, it comes—

“ I

“ I am of a different opinion. The
 “ terms Infidelity, Impiety, and A-
 “ theism, should not be lavishly
 “ trusted from the lip”—Such a sen-
 tence (by the way) should not have
 been *lavishly trusted from the pen*—“ We
 “ should not presume

“ To deal damnation round the land

“ On each we deem our foe.”

Sir, your very humble servant—I most heartily wish you a good night—Here was the *jugulum causæ*, the precise point to be argued, over which I hoped to have had the honour of his good company for the evening; when, in the twinkling of an eye, he slips through my hands, like an eel, and is out of sight, in the mud.

We are not about to *deal damnation* on any man. But are there not such things as Infidelity, Impiety, and
 Atheism?

LET. ^{I.} Atheism? And are not the writings of Mr. H. justly chargeable with them? These are the questions.

The A. knows, as well as I do, that Mr. H—'s Essays contain arguments downright Epicurean, against the being of a God. Some of them are mentioned in the *Summary*, at the end of the Letter to Dr. Smith, and no notice is taken of the matter. In the *Natural History of Religion*, Dr. Hurd thought our philosopher was approaching towards the *borders* of Theism. But I never could find that he penetrated far into the *country*. These same arguments stand to this hour unretracted; the Essays which contain them are published and republished with the rest; whether, at the hour of death, he thought there was a God, or thought there was none, we have
not

not a single hint given us; and concerning his posthumous papers,* the A. informs us, in his dedication, LET.
I.

“there is every reason to believe they
 “turn upon similar researches with
 “such as have been already printed;
 “or, as it is more likely, they may
 “carry his philosophy still nearer to
 “THAT POINT, which he might not
 “think it DISCREET to *push too vigor-*
 “*ously* in his life time.” New discoveries in irreligion, then, it seems, still remain to be made. They who have duly considered the *vigour* displayed by Mr. H. in his life time, are rather at a loss to conceive, what THAT POINT may be, to which, by posthumous efforts, his *philosophy* is to be *carried*. It must lie somewhere

* These have been since published.

Beyond

LET.

I.



Beyond the realms of Chaos and old Night!

Discretion is, undoubtedly, as Sir John Falstaffe says, *the better part of valour*; but really, in these days of freedom, there is scarce a possibility of it's ever being called for. Something, however, is to come, which the A. supposes will occasion more CHRISTIAN *clamour*. When we are so severely *pinched*, he imagines we shall cry out.—Certainly, it cannot be thought we are *lavish* of the terms Infidelity, Impiety, and Atheism, when we apply them to such proceedings as these. What other terms can we apply, or would he himself wish us to apply? And he gravely apologizes for their author, by telling us, he was *consistent*, he was *in earnest*, he *died* as he *lived*, and left blasphemies to be published after his death

death, which he dared not to publish while he was yet alive. Whom shall we most admire, the Philosopher or his Apologist?

LET:

I.

~~~~~

B


LET-



---

## L E T T E R    II.

L E T.  
II.



OUR A. observes, Dear Sir, p.  
II. “ Whatever might be the  
“ force of Mr. H—’s *faith*, no one,  
“ it is conjectured, will charge him  
“ with having neglected *good works*.  
“ I do not pretend (adds he) to say  
“ how far those *are*, or are *not* suffi-  
“ cient.”

Indeed I believe there will be no  
absolute necessity, upon this occasion,  
of going deep into the controversy  
concerning *faith and works*. The cha-  
racter in which Mr. H. principally  
appeared, and on which he chiefly  
valued himself, was that of an *author*.

He

He passed his life in *writing*; the effects of his writings are visible in his worthy Apologist, and many others; they are likely to go down to posterity. An unwearied endeavour to propagate the principles contained in those writings, is what we can never consent to dignify with the appellation of a *good work*. To worship, to love, and to serve God, oneself, is the first of good works; to teach and incite others to do the same, is the second. To renounce every thing of this kind, oneself, is the first of evil works; and the second is like unto it, to tempt and seduce others, that they may fall after the same example of unbelief. This is the employment of that person, whom the A. mentions, as having joined with the *dancing master*, and the *perfumer*, in compounding

LET.

II.



LET. a system of manners, recommended  
 II. by the late Earl of Chesterfield.\* He  
 might possibly divert himself in that  
 way, at his leisure hours ; but when  
 he set to business in good earnest, the  
 issue was, AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING  
 HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

The A. is fond of citing two lines,  
 which have been often cited by others,  
 with a similar view—

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
 His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

The Christian faith, at it's first appearance, endured the trial of ten persecutions, and triumphed over the wit, wisdom, and power, of the whole Roman empire. Offered openly to the

\* P. 112. “—A system which seems to  
 “have been pillaged from the dancing-master,  
 “the perfumer, and the devil.”

inspec-

inspection and examination of the LET.  
 world, it has now stood its ground II.  
 above seventeen hundred years. The  
 A. hardly expects it should at length  
 fall before a couplet of Mr. Pope.  
 Poets, he knows, are not upon oath ;  
 and *one for sense, and one for rhyme*, is  
 often a fair composition. The verses  
 rhyme well ; but as to sense, that is  
 another question. Their author some-  
 where tells us, that in reading religi-  
 ous controversy, he still found himself  
 to agree with the last author he perused.  
 One cannot therefore well take him for  
 a guide in these matters. The bright  
 son of the morning fell from his ex-  
 alted station in the heavens ; and he,  
 who penned MESSIAH, was afterwards  
 unfortunately duped by the sophistry  
 of Bolingbroke. “ Evil communica-  
 tions corrupt good manners.”

LET.

II.



As to the verses in hand, I know not that they were designed to extend by any means so far as, by the present application, the A. means to extend them. If they were, the proposition contained in them will be this; that provided a man discharge the relative and social offices, it matters not what deity he acknowledges and worships; or whether he acknowledge and worship any.

I am sorry I should be obliged to go back to a thing so vulgar and antiquated, as my CATECHISM. But so it happens—I cannot forget, that, when a boy, *I learned two things, my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.* And, from that day to this, it never entered into my head, that the performance of the *latter* would atone for the neglect of the *former.*

*former*. Surely one might as well say, LET.  
II.  
the performance of the *former* would  
atone for the breach of the *latter*.

But the A. will never allow one;  
and we cannot submit to allow the  
other. What? Shall we make a con-  
science of discharging our duty to  
men like ourselves, and none of dis-  
charging that to our Maker, our  
Redeemer, our God? Is it rec-  
koned praise worthy, generous, no-  
ble, great, and good, to love and  
celebrate an earthly parent or bene-  
factor; and can it be deemed a point  
of indifference, whether we believe  
or deny, whether we bless or blas-  
pheme, our heavenly and eternal Fa-  
ther and Friend, who gives us life, and  
breath, and all things, in this world,  
and invites us to a far more happy  
and glorious state of existence in

LET. another? May we adore Jehovah, or  
 II. Baal; the Creator of the Universe,  
 or a Monkey, or Matter, or Chance,  
 or Nothing, as the whim takes us,  
 and be blameless? Tell it not to the  
 believers; publish it not among the  
 Christians!

The matter of fact is—that *life*  
 cannot be *in the right*, which is spent  
 in *doing wrong*. And if to question  
 all the doctrines of Religion, even  
 to the providence and existence of a  
 God, and to put Morality on no  
 other foot than that of UTILITY—if  
 to do this, be not to do *wrong*—then  
 farewell all distinction between right  
 and wrong, for evermore. To main-  
 tain and diffuse the truth of God, is  
 to *do his will*; to deny, corrupt, or  
 hinder it, is to *work iniquity*; and a  
 life so employed is a *wicked life*—per-  
 haps



haps the *most* wicked, that can be imagined. For what comparison is there between one who commits a crime of which he may repent, or, at worst, it may die with him; and one who, though he do not himself commit it, teaches and encourages all the world to commit it, by removing out of the way the strongest sanctions and obligations to the contrary, in writings which may carry on the blessed work from generation to generation? Let not these errors be called errors of *speculation* only. Action flows from speculation. No man ventures upon sin, till he has, for the time at least, adopted some false principle. And “when men begin to look about  
“for arguments in vindication of  
“impiety and immorality, such spec-  
“ulations as those of Mr. Hume  
become

LET.  
II.  
}



LET.

II.



“ become interesting, and can hardly  
“ fail of a powerful and numerous pa-  
“ tronage. The corrupt judge; the  
“ prostituted courtier; the statesman,  
“ who enriches himself by the plun-  
“ der and blood of his country; the  
“ petty-fogger, who fattens on the  
“ spoils of the fatherless and widow;  
“ the oppressor, who, to pamper his own  
“ beastly appetite, abandons the de-  
“ serving peasant to beggary and des-  
“ pair; the hypocrite, the debauchee,  
“ the gamester, the blasphemer—all  
“ prick up their ears, when they are  
“ told, that a celebrated author has  
“ written Essays, containing such  
“ doctrines, and leading to such con-  
“ sequences.” Weighed against a  
conduct like this, the moralities of  
social life (a system of which, by the  
way, according to Mr. H. every man

is

is left to compound for himself ) are LET.  
 dust upon the balance ; they are like II.  
 the salutation of Joab, when he smote  
 Amasa to the heart—" And Joab said  
 " to Amasa, Art thou in health, my  
 " brother ? And Joab took Amasa  
 " by the beard with the right hand,  
 " *to kiss him.* But Amasa took no  
 " heed to the sword that was in Joab's  
 " hand ; so he smote him therewith  
 " in the fifth rib, and shed out his  
 " bowels to the ground."\*—In short,  
 if faith in God be not the effect of  
 superstition and imposture, which no  
 man has yet proved it to be, we are  
 bound to regard it as our most valua-  
 ble possession, and to esteem those  
 who would rob the world of it as the  
 worst of thieves ; however, towards  
 each other, they may practise what

\* 2 Sam. xx. 9.

LET. the A. styles the *duties*, the *decencies*,  
 II. and the *charities*.\*

~~~~~

P. 12. “ Perhaps it is one of the
 “ very worst circumstances against
 “ Christianity, that very few of it’s
 “ professors were ever either so mo-
 “ ral, so humane, or could so philoso-
 “ phically govern their passions, as
 “ the sceptical David Hume.”

And yet, we do not every day hear
 of a *Christian* running round a coun-
 ter with his drawn sword after a *Re-*
viewer, or quitting a room on the en-
 trance of his antagonist. It appears,
 from a variety of instances, that Mr.
 H. when his literary character was
 concerned, could by no means “ go-
 “ vern his passions so philosophically”
 as his A. wishes to have it believed.
 But it is not my desire to depreciate

* P. 13.

any

any thing that might be really commendable in him. Thus much only I will venture to assert, that whatever it was, the merit of it is not due to his philosophical principles. These afford no motives to restrain men who have once embraced them from any vices to which their constitutions may happen to incline. It is too much for the same person to excel in every branch. It is enough if he point the way. All evil beings are not *immoral*. Lord Chesterfield's friend, himself, mentioned above, offends not in the articles of eating, wine, or women; he is differently employed. He is employed in tempting others to offend.

LET.

II.

The A. tells us, "Mr. H—'s most
 "abstract researches were in favour of
 "a behaviour perfectly irreproachable.

" — Who.

LET. “ —Whoever is acquainted with Mr.
 II. “ H—’s writings will bear witness,
 “ that he was a lover of decency, or-
 “ der, and decorum—It would be the
 “ drudgery of a day to detect a single
 “ light sentence in H.”*

I shall transcribe two or three sentences which lie pretty near together, in a *Dialogue* subjoined to his *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*.

“ There is almost as great diffi-
 “ culty, I acknowledge, to justify
 “ French, as *Greek gallantry*; except
 “ only, that the former is much more
 “ natural and agreeable than the lat-
 “ ter. But our neighbours, it seems,
 “ have resolved to sacrifice some of
 “ the *domestic* to the *sociable* pleasures;
 “ and to prefer *ease, freedom*, and an
 “ open commerce, to a strict fidelity

* P. 106, 110.

“ and

“ and constancy. *These ends are both* LET.
 “ *good*, and are sometimes difficult to II.
 “ reconcile; nor need we be sur-
 “ prised, if the customs of nations
 “ incline too much, sometimes to
 “ the one side, and sometimes to the
 “ other * — It is needless to dis-
 “ semble: the consequence of a very
 “ free commerce between the sexes,
 “ and of their living much together,
 “ will often terminate in intrigues
 “ and gallantry. We must sacrifice
 “ somewhat of the *useful*, if we be very
 “ anxious to obtain all the *agreeable*
 “ qualities; and cannot pretend to
 “ reach alike *every kind of advantage*.
 “ Instances of licence, daily multiply-
 “ ing, will weaken the scandal with
 “ the one sex, and teach the other,
 “ by degrees, to adopt the famous

* Essays Vol. ii. P. 397. edit. 1772.

“ maxim

LET.

II.



“ maxim of La Fontaine with regard
 “ to female infidelity, *that if one*
 “ *knows it, it is but a small matter ; if*
 “ *one knows it not, it is nothing.*” *

Verily, as Lord Foppington says to
 his brother, in the stage-play—A
 NICE MARALITY, TAM, STAP MY
 VITALS !

When we consider these sentences
 as proceeding from the pen of “ the
 “ first philosopher of the age,” in his
 palmary and capital work, designed
 to settle the principles of morality on
 their only proper foundation, “ it
 “ would be the drudgery of a MONTH”
 to find any thing in the system of
 Chesterfield and his three associates,
 “ the dancing-master, the perfumer,
 “ and the devil,” better calculated
 to multiply new *connections*, and dis-

* Essays Vol. ii. P. 402.

solve old ones; any thing, that so
much deserves the profoundest ac-
knowlegements from—the gentlemen
of DOCTORS COMMONS.

LET.
II.
}

C

LET-

L E T T E R III.

L E T.

III.

IT may still perhaps be asked, Dear Sir, how it should happen, that when Mr. H—'s principles were so bad, his practices should be no worse? Let me offer the solution given of such a phænomenon in the intellectual world, by a very ingenious and sagacious writer, who had not only studied mankind in general, but, as it should seem, had bestowed some pains upon the very case now before us.

“ This fact hath been regarded as
“ unaccountable : that sober men, of
“ morals apparently unblameable,
should

“ should madly unhinge the great L E T.
“ principles of religion and society, III.
“ without any visible motive or ad-
“ vantage. But by looking a little
“ farther into human nature, we shall
“ easily resolve this seeming paradox.
“ These writers are generally men of
“ speculation and industry ; and there-
“ fore, though they give themselves
“ up to the dictates of their ruling
“ passion, yet that ruling passion com-
“ monly leads to the tract of abste-
“ mious manners. That desire of dis-
“ tinction and superiority, so natural
“ to man, breaks out into a thousand
“ various and fantastic shapes ; and in
“ each of these, according as it is di-
“ rected, becomes a virtue or a vice.
“ In times of luxury and dissipation,
“ therefore, when every tenet of ir-
“ religion is greedily embraced, what

LET.

III.



“ road to present applause can lie so
 “ open and secure, as that of dis-
 “ gracing religious belief? Especially
 “ if the writer help forward the vices
 “ of the times, by relaxing *morals*, as
 “ well as destroying *principle*. Such a
 “ writer can have little else to do, but
 “ to new model the paradoxes of an-
 “ cient scepticism, in order to figure
 “ it in the world, and be regarded,
 “ by the smatterers in literature, and
 “ adepts in folly, as a prodigy of
 “ parts and learning. Thus his va-
 “ nity becomes deeply criminal, and
 “ is execrated by the wise and good ;
 “ because it is gratified at the ex-
 “ pence of his country’s welfare. But
 “ the consolation which degenerate
 “ manners receive from his fatal te-
 “ nets, is repaid by eager praise : and
 “ vice impatiently drinks in and ap-
 plauds

“plauds his hoarse and boding voice, LET.
 “while, like a raven, he sits croak- III.
 “ing universal death, despair, and
 “annihilation to the human kind.”

But taking the account of Mr. H——’s manners as his friends have given it, to say “that few of the
 “professors of Christianity ever equal-
 “led him in morality, humanity, and
 “the government of their passions,”
 is certainly going a great deal too far. Thousands, in the first ages of the Gospel, gave all their goods to feed the poor; renounced, in deed as well as word, the world and the flesh, and joyfully met death in its most horrid forms, for the love of their Redeemer. On the same principle, unnumbered multitudes, in every succeeding age, have manfully sustained the heaviest calamities of human life, and with

LET. faith unfeigned, and hope that maketh not ashamed, yielded up their souls into the hands of their Creator. Scenes of this kind are daily and hourly passing in the chambers of the sick and dying, as they, whose office it is to visit those chambers, well know. To others they must remain unknown, for want of biographers to record them. Every Christian who lives in piety and charity, does not favour the public with — HIS OWN LIFE. Every Christian, who expires in peace and hope, has not the happiness of a Dr. Smith to pen the story of his death——

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness in the desert air.

Far

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, L E T.
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray ; I I I.
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

“ Christianity,” says a learned writer,
“ has in every age produced good ef-
“ fects on thousands and ten thou-
“ sands, whose lives are not recorded
“ in history ; which is, for the most
“ part, a register of the vices, the
“ follies, and the quarrels of those
“ who made a figure and a noise in
“ the world ; insomuch that Socrates,
“ at the close of his work, observes,
“ that if men were honest and peace-
“ able, historians would be undone for
“ want of materials.”

But, whether the professors of a re-
ligion be many or few ; whether they
be influenced by the spirit of it, or
not ; whether they be sincere, or hy-

LET.

III.



pocrites; whether they be detected, or undetected; the religion is still the same: it does not change with the changing tempers, dispositions, and interests of mankind, in different times and places; nor is it to be charged with the guilt of practices, against which it protests in every page. No demonstration in Euclid can be clearer than this.

To account for the opposition often so visible between the lives and the opinions of Christians, one must enumerate all the various methods, by which, in matters of moral and spiritual concern, men are wont to impose upon themselves. Appetite and passion, sloth and interest, will work wonders in this way—wonders, of which he has no idea, who has not been accustomed, with this view, to
con-

contemplate the conduct of those around him, and impartially to scrutinize his own. The religion of many a person professing Christianity, is, by these means, laid by, like a best coat, for Sundays and holidays. Not a single thought occurs of the necessity there is for its being brought into the daily and hourly concerns of common life. It is a speculative belief, deposited in the understanding, to which it's owner recurs, when he has nothing else to do ; he finds it where he left it, and is fully satisfied with its being there, instead of bearing it always about him, in his heart and affections, as an active principle, ready for use, to operate at all seasons, and on all occasions. He will even spend his days in discoursing and disputing upon the sublimest doctrines, and most
holy

LET.

III.



LET.

III.



holy precepts of religion, his own life still continuing unreformed. Nay, what is yet more strange, he will preach seriously, earnestly, affectionately, and repeatedly, against a failing, to which he himself is notoriously subject, and every one who hears him knows him to be so. It follows not necessarily, that he is designedly playing the hypocrite, and acting a part. He has some method of concealing himself from himself, or of excusing himself to himself. He does not *see* that he is the person, against whom all his own arguments are pointed. He does not *think* of it. He stands in need of a friend—or an enemy—to tell him—
THOU ART THE MAN.—This may seem to be a species of madness ; but this is human nature. Let me conclude with a story.

A friend

A friend of mine was much afflicted with a dangerous disorder, part hereditary, and part the fruit of his own industry. He sent for one of the best physicians in the kingdom, who, having discoursed, greatly to his satisfaction, on the excellency of medicine in general, and of a medicine proper for that disorder in particular, wrote his prescription, and took his leave. My friend, who was a scholar, had a learned gentleman with him at the time ; and the doctor was hardly out of the door, before a very warm controversy began between them, concerning the *style* of the prescription, whether it were *classical* or not. This and the virtues of the medicine were now the constant subjects of my friend's conversation, and he inveighed with great zeal and indignation, against
against

LET.

III.

LET. against the folly of those, who would
III. languish under disease, when there
was such a remedy to be had. The
distemper, mean while, increased up-
on himself, and began to seize the vi-
tals. The doctor was again sent for;
and knowing his patient to be a re-
markably ABSENT man, Pray, Sir,
said he, give me leave to ask you one
question—Have you TAKEN the me-
dicine? A summons to the bar of
judgment could hardly have astonish-
ed my friend more than this question.
He awoke as one out of a dream, and
very honestly owned, he had been so
occupied in talking and writing about
it, and recommending it to others,
that he had really quite forgotten that
part of the prescription. He did in-
deed recollect to have once tasted the
draught, but finding it rather bitter,
a flavour

a flavour always disagreeable to him, he had set it by again, trusting, it seems, for his cure, to the virtues which might escape the cork, as it stood upon the mantle-piece.—You see how easy it is for him who possesses the medicine to be like him who possesses it not; the medicine itself continuing all the while perfectly irreproachable.


LET.
III.
}

And now, if you please, Dear, Sir, we will take our leave of the Apology; for I have no design to meddle with the farrago of *extraneous* matter which it contains, respecting *gallantry, flattery, dedications*, &c. &c. &c. and as to the crude and angry remarks at the end of it, on the Letter to Dr. Smith—*valeant quantum valere possunt*! —I will trust any man with them, if, during the perusal, he will only hold
in

LET. in his hand the pamphlet to which
III. they relate—The Apology is indeed,
both for matter and manner, senti-
ment and language, so mean and
wretched a performance, that one
cannot sufficiently wonder, how any
person, accustomed to write, could
permit such a piece to come abroad,
with all its imperfections on its head.
I have selected those parts which af-
forded room for enlarging on topics
useful to be discussed, and have now
done with it for ever.

LET.

L E T T E R IV.

I AM truly concerned, Dear Sir, L E T.
to hear that your old constituti- IV.
onal complaint, a depression of spirits, 
has of late been more than usually
troublesome, and wish I may succeed
in the medicine I am going to admi-
nister, if not for the removal, at least
for a temporary alleviation of it.

The famous Dr. Radcliffe was once
called in to a person almost suffocated
by an imposthumated swelling in the
throat. The case required immediate
relief, and the doctor sent his servant
into the kitchen, to order and bring
up a large hasty-pudding. Upon it's
arrival

LET. arrival, falling into a violent passion
IV. because it was not made to his mind,
he flung an handful of it in the fellow's face, who returned the compliment, and an engagement ensued between them, till the ammunition was all spent. The sick man, who had been raised in his bed to see the battle, was forced into a violent fit of laughter; the imposthume broke, and the patient recovered.

In the present case, the philosophy contained in Mr. H—'s posthumous work, styled *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, shall be our hasty-pudding; and I will introduce a couple of gentlemen of my acquaintance to toss a little of it backwards and forwards, for your entertainment—May the effect prove equally salutary!

A DIALOGUE



A DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
THOMAS AND TIMOTHY
ON
PHILOSOPHICAL SCEPTICISM.

TIM. Whither away so fast, man?
Where art going this morning?

TOM. I am going to be made a
Christian.

TIM. The very last thing I should
have dreamed of. But pray, who is
to make you one?

TOM. David Hume.

TIM. David Hume? Why, I
thought he was an Atheist.

TOM. The world never was more
mistaken about any one man, than
about David Hume. He was deem-
ed a sworn foe to Christianity, whereas
his whole life was spent in its service.

D

His

LET. His works compose altogether a
 IV. complete *Præparatio Evangelica*. They
 lead men gently, and gradually, as it
 were, to the Gospel.

TIM. As how, Tom? Be pleased
 to take me along with you.

TOM. Why look you, here is chap-
 ter and verse for you. *Dialogues con-
 cerning Natural Religion*, P. 263, “To
 “be a *philosophical sceptic*, is, in a
 “man of letters, the first and most
 “essential step towards being a *sound
 “believing Christian.*”

TIM. When David was at Paris,
 I have heard, the wits there should
 say, he was a very worthy gentleman,
 but had his religious prejudices, like
 other people. As folks are quick
 scented in that country, perhaps they
 smelled a rat. Indeed, in a *Supple-
 ment to the Life of Mr. H.* we are told,
 that

that a brother of his used to observe of him, “ My brother Davie is a good enough sort of a man, but *rather narrow minded.*”—Well, I cannot tell what to say to it; there are abundance of pretty fancies stirring. I suppose there may be different ways of becoming a Christian. A *man of letters*, enters, belike, at the back door, and so goes round the house to come at it; a compass which we plain folk do not think it necessary to take. One thing is certain, that if scepticism be the road to Christianity, Mr. H. is a very proper person to keep the turnpike gate upon it. But what progress must one make, if one had a mind to try the experiment, in this same *philosophical scepticism*, before one could become a good *sound believ-*

LET.
IV.
}

D 2 ing

LET. *ing Christian?* Must one doubt of
IV. every thing?

TOM. Of every thing, in this world, and that which is to come; as I myself do at this present speaking. It is the most agreeable process in life; a charming delightful suspense of judgment. I doubt whether there be any such thing as matter; I doubt likewise whether there be any such thing as spirit; that is, I doubt whether there be creature or Creator; and whether I myself am any thing more than a bundle of perceptions, without either body or soul. We modern philosophers, you must know, consider matter and spirit as so much lumber, which should be cleared out of the way. There would then be a noble field open for speculation, and we might all set out afresh—I doubt, whether

whether the world, (supposing, for a moment, that there be one) did not exist from eternity, or whether it did not make itself; whether it be not a huge animal, somewhat like an ostrich, which lays now and then an egg, to be hatched into a young world; or whether it be not an overgrown vegetable, run to seed. LET.
IV.

“ As a tree sheds its seed into the
“ neighbouring fields, and produces
“ other trees; so the great vegetable
“ the world, or this planetary system,
“ produces, perhaps, within itself
“ certain seeds, which being scattered
“ into the surrounding chaos, vegetate
“ into new worlds. A comet, for
“ instance, is the seed of a world; and
“ after it has been fully ripened, by
“ passing from sun to sun, and star to
“ star, is at last tossed into the un-
D 3 formed

LET. “formed elements which every where
 IV. “surround this universe, and imme-
 ~~~~~ “diately sprouts up into a new sys-  
 “tem.” \*

TIM. Vastly ingenious! and really, upon the whole, not improbable!— But pry’thee TOM, if you are not in too great a hurry to be made a Christian, do stop for half an hour, and instruct me a little farther in this *New Week’s Preparation* of Mr. H. For the specimen you have given me is so exquisite, that it perfectly makes my mouth to water for more. What is the plan of these famous *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*?

TOM. You shall have it in few words—Once upon a time, then, there was a promising young man, whose name was Pamphilus. He was

\* *Dialogues*, P. 132.

brought

brought up by a philosopher called Cleanthes. Philo, a brother philosopher, came to spend some days with Cleanthes. The Dialogues are supposed to contain the substance of a conversation which passed between these personages, by way, among other things, of preparing young Pamphilus, in a proper manner, for the reception of the Gospel, by first making him a thorough sceptic. Pamphilus, who, as a hearer only, was to learn and be wise, relates this conversation, in a letter to his friend Hermippus. There is a third speaker in the Dialogues, styled Demea, one of your old fashioned orthodox gentry, who both firmly believes the existence of a Deity, and is rather disposed to speak well than ill of his Maker. But the two philosophers so

LET.

IV.



LET. astonish and discompose him, draw  
IV. him into so many ambuscades, and  
raise so thick a metaphysical dust  
around him, that at the close of the  
xith Dialogue, the old gentleman is  
glad to take a French leave, and va-  
nishes so very suddenly, that whether  
he went out at the door, or the win-  
dow, or up the chimney, no body  
knows to this hour. It would do  
your heart good to see the fun they  
make with him.

TIM. Before you go any farther,  
let me just ask you one question. Pray  
do you act upon this principle of phi-  
losophical scepticism in common life?

TOM. O, by no means. If we did,  
we should walk into a horsepond, or  
run our heads against a wall, and  
the boys would laugh at us. No, no,  
“to whatever length any one may  
“push



“ push his speculative principles of  
“ scepticism, he must act, and live,  
“ and converse, like other men ; and  
“ for this conduct he is not obliged  
“ to give any other reason, than the  
“ absolute necessity he lies under of  
“ so doing.” \*

LET.

IV.

}

TIM. I think it would be hard upon him if he were obliged to give any other reason ; for *absolute necessity* is an exceeding good one. But what, then, is it you are all about, spending your pains in constructing a system, which you are necessitated to contradict and protest against, every time you go down a ladder, or get over a stile. Surely you ought to be set in a corner, with fools caps upon your heads, like the misses at a boarding school. In the name of common sense, what can you mean ?

\* Dialogues, P. 24.

TOM.



LET. TOM.—It is an amusement— “ If  
 IV. “ a person carries his speculations  
 “ farther than this necessity constrains  
 “ him, and philosophizes either on  
 “ natural or moral subjects, he is al-  
 “ lured by a certain pleasure and sa-  
 “ tisfaction which he finds in employ-  
 “ ing himself after that manner.” \*

TIM. Suppose he were to play at push-pin, or span-farthing, would it not be more to the purpose? And then he would not disturb his neighbours. But that man’s heart must be as wrong as his head, who can “ find “ a certain pleasure and satisfaction” in endeavouring to persuade his fellow-rationals, that they are without God in the world. However, if amusement be the word, let us believers have some too. If philosophers will

\* Dialogues, P. 24.

amuse themselves with talking non-  
 sense, they must give us leave to  
 amuse ourselves by laughing at it. On  
 our side of the question it is possible  
 to be *merry and wise*, as well as to do  
 some little service to the world, by  
 shewing it what stuff these dreams are  
 made of. Come, Tom, you shall repre-  
 sent the genius of philosophical scep-  
 ticism. And now let us hear some of  
 those strong reasons which induce you  
 to deny the existence of a deity.

LET.  
 IV.  
 ~~~~~

TOM. Bless us! you shock me! I
 do not mean to deny the being, but
 only to philosophize a little concern-
 ing the nature of God.*

TIM. Well, then, be it so. Philo-
 sophize away.

TOM. Our reason, TIM, is very
 weak—very weak, indeed—we are

* Dialogues, P. 42.

poor,

LET. poor, finite, frail, blind creatures.
 IV. Our knowledge of the things around us
 is extremely limited and imperfect—
 we ought to humble ourselves*—

TIM. There is always mischief in the wind, when a philosopher *falleth down and humbleth himself*. But what is your inference from all these lowly considerations?

TOM. That it is presumption in such worms of the dust to argue about the nature and attributes of God.

TIM. But you will allow poor reason to exercise herself in her own province, and when she is furnished with premises, to draw a conclusion.

TOM. Ay, Ay, there is no harm in that.

TIM. When we see a house calculated to answer various purposes of

* Dialogues, P. 42.

beauty and convenience, and having in it all the marks of wisdom and design, we know it could not build itself. The senseless materials could never have prepared and arranged themselves in such order. The timber could not dance, cut and squared, out of the forest, nor the marble meet it, hewn and polished, from the quarry. The house therefore must have had a builder. We apply the same argument, *a fortiori*, to the case of the world, and its Maker, God; and Tully, if I remember right, makes no scruple to assert, that he who denies his assent to it does not deserve the name of a *man*. This is the argument called *a posteriori*, and lies open to the common sense of all mankind. Now, then, let us try the sincerity of that declaration of yours,

that

LET.

IV.

}

LET. that "the question is not concerning
IV. "the being, but the nature of God."
~~~~~  
For if you controvert this argument, you certainly mean to shake our belief in the *existence* of a Deity. You must of course attempt to shew, that the world might have been as it is, without one; and if that be the case, you will next defy us to prove that there is one.

TOM. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* I must stick to truth, let what will come of it. I am not bound to answer for consequences. I must own I look upon the argument to be inconclusive.

TIM. All very well; but why could not you say so at first? What occasion to be mealy mouthed, in an age like this? Now matters are in a train, and we can proceed regularly. What is your objection to the argument? Wherein does it fail?

TOM.

TOM. It will fail, d'ye see, if there be not an exact similarity in the cases. LET.  
IV.  
 You will not say, that there is an exact similitude between the universe and a house, or between God and man.\*

TIM. Why really, TOM, I never imagined the world had a door and a chimney, like a house; or that God had hands and feet, like a man. Nor is it at all necessary that it should be so, for the strength and validity of the argument, which is plainly and simply this—If stones and trees have not thought and design to form themselves into a house, there must have been some one, who had thought and design, to do it for them; and so, as I said before, *a fortiori*, with respect to the universe, where the thought

\* Dialogues, P. 50, 51, 58.

LET. that "the question is not concerning  
IV. "the being, but the nature of God."  
~~~~~  
For if you controvert this argument, you certainly mean to shake our belief in the *existence* of a Deity. You must of course attempt to shew, that the world might have been as it is, without one; and if that be the case, you will next defy us to prove that there is one.

TOM. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* I must stick to truth, let what will come of it. I am not bound to answer for consequences. I must own I look upon the argument to be inconclusive.

TIM. All very well; but why could not you say so at first? What occasion to be mealy mouthed, in an age like this? Now matters are in a train, and we can proceed regularly. What is your objection to the argument? Wherein does it fail?

TOM.

TOM. It will fail, d'ye see, if there be not an exact similitude in the cases. LET.
IV.
 You will not say, that there is an exact similitude between the universe and a house, or between God and man.*

TIM. Why really, TOM, I never imagined the world had a door and a chimney, like a house; or that God had hands and feet, like a man. Nor is it at all necessary that it should be so, for the strength and validity of the argument, which is plainly and simply this—If stones and trees have not thought and design to form themselves into a house, there must have been some one, who had thought and design, to do it for them; and so, as I said before, *a fortiori*, with respect to the universe, where the thought

* Dialogues, P. 50, 51, 58.

and

LET.

IV.



and design appear infinitely superior to those required in building a house. We have no occasion to suppose a resemblance of the universe to a house, or of God to man, in every particular.

TOM. “ But why select so minute,
 “ so weak, so bounded a principle,
 “ as the reason and design of animals
 “ is found to be upon this planet?
 “ What peculiar privilege has this
 “ little agitation of the brain which
 “ we call *thought*, that we must thus
 “ make it the model of the whole
 “ universe? Our partiality in our
 “ own favour does indeed present it
 “ upon all occasions; but sound phi-
 “ losophy ought carefully to guard
 “ against so natural an illusion.” *

TIM. It is not “ our partiality in
 “ our own favour that presents it to

* P. 60.

“ us


“ us upon all occasions,” but the necessity of the case. There is no other way of speaking upon the subject, so as to be understood. Knowledge in God and man, however different in degree, or attained in a different manner, is the same in kind, and produces the same effects, so far as relates to our present purpose. The knowledge of God is intuitive and perfect; that of man is by deduction, and is therefore imperfect, either when his premises are false, or when passion and prejudice enter into his conclusion. But wisdom, which consists in fixing upon proper ends, and fitly proportioning means to those ends, is wisdom, in whatsoever object, mode, or degree it may exist; and there is therefore no *illusion*, in saying, “ Every house is builded by

LET.

IV.



E . . . “ some .

LET. "some man, but he that built all
IV. "things is God." You speak of
 *thought, reason, or design*, as "a little
"agitation of the brain;" as if you
imagined, that *Paradise lost*, or the *Ad-
vancement of Learning*, might at any
time be produced, by simmering a
man's brains over the fire. Certainly
an author cannot compose without
brains, heart, liver, and lungs; but
I am of opinion something more than
all four must have gone to the com-
position even of the *Dialogues concern-
ing Natural Religion*. "Minute, weak,
"and bounded, as this principle of
"reason and design is found to be
"in the inhabitants of this planet,"
it can form and frustrate mighty
schemes; it can raise and subvert
empires; it can invent and bring to
perfection a variety of arts and sci-
ences;

LET.

IV.



ences; and in the hands of some very worthy gentlemen of my acquaintance, it can set itself up against all that is called God, and revile the works of the Almighty through 364 pages together.

TOM. I cannot but still think, there is something of *partiality* and self love in the business. “ Suppose there were
 “ a planet wholly inhabited by spiders
 “ (which is very possible;) they would
 “ probably assert, with the Bramins,
 “ that the world arose from an infinite
 “ spider, who spun this whole complicated mass from his bowels, and annihilates afterwards the whole, or
 “ any part of it, by absorbing it again,
 “ and resolving it into his own essence.
 “ This inference would there appear
 “ as natural and irrefragable as that
 “ which in our planet ascribes the

E 2

“ origin

LET. IV.
~~~~~ “origin of all things to design and  
 “intelligence. To us indeed it ap-  
 “pears ridiculous, because a spider is  
 “a little contemptible animal, whose  
 “operations we are never likely to  
 “take for a model of the whole  
 “universe.” \*

TIM. Possibly not; but I should  
 take that “little contemptible ani-  
 “mal” for an exact model of a scepti-  
 cal philosopher—

It spins a flimsy web, it's slender store;  
 And labours till it clouds itself all o'er.

And were there a planet wholly in-  
 habited by these same philosophers,  
 I doubt not of their spinning a cos-  
 mogony worthy an academy of spi-  
 ders—And so Tom, the *voluntary hu-*  
*mility* which discovered itself at your  
 setting out, ends at last in degrading

\* P. 142.

man

man to a spider; and reason is either  
 exalted to the stars, or depressed to  
 the earth, as best serves the cause of  
 infidelity. In this particular, how-  
 ever, you are at least as bad as the  
 parsons.\*—But let us proceed. What  
 have you more to say against the ar-  
 gument of the *house*?

L E. T.  
 IV.  
 {

TOM. I say, that arguments con-  
 cerning facts are founded on *experience*.  
 I have seen one house planned and  
 erected by an architect, and therefore  
 I conclude the same with regard to  
 others. But “will any man tell me,  
 “with a serious countenance, that an  
 “orderly universe must arise from  
 “some thought and art like the hu-  
 “man, because we have experience  
 “of it? To ascertain this reasoning,  
 “it were requisite that we had expe-  
 “rience of the origin of worlds.” †

\* See Dialogues, P. 37.

† P. 66.

LET.

IV.



TIM. Truly I know not how that can well be ; for worlds are not made every day. I have heard of the production of none since our own, and man could not see that made, because he himself was made after it ; and he could not exist, before he was made. The contrary supposition was indeed once ventured on, by the master of a Dutch puppet-show—Whether he were a metaphysician, I never heard. In the beginning of this ingenious drama, Mr. PUNCH posting over the stage in a very large pair of jack-boots, and being asked, whither he was going at so early an hour, replies, *I am going to be created.* His evidence, if you can procure it, is very much at the service of scepticism, and may go near to determine the matter. In the mean time, I shall presume my argument to be still good,

that



that if a house must be built by thought and design, a world cannot have been built without; though I have seen the one, and never was so fortunate as to see the other. Let me add farther, that if in the general contrivance and construction of the world there be evident demonstration of consummate wisdom, that demonstration cannot be set aside by seeming or real inconveniences in some parts, which, for good reasons, were either originally designed, or may have been since introduced, for the trial or punishment of its inhabitants, or for other purposes, unknown to us—This is the plain conclusion formed by common sense, and surely ten times more rational than to talk of eggs, and *seeds*, and *spiders*, and the necessity of *seeing* the world made, in order to know that it had a maker.

E 4

LET-

LET.

IV.





---

## L E T T E R    V.

L E T.

V.



I SHALL not pursue any farther, at present, the wild ramblings of the spirit of scepticism in the *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. If your disorder should return hereafter, Dear Sir, we may take another handful or two of the hasty-pudding. Let us advert in the mean time to something more mischievous than the *Dialogues*, because more intelligible to the generality of readers, I mean an *Essay on Suicide*, in which that practice is vindicated, and recommended to his Majesty's liege subjects, not only as lawful and innocent, but as containing  
and

and comprehending, in many cases, almost the whole duty of man.

LET.  
V.  
}

The Essay opens with a panegyric on philosophy, as the only remedy for superstition. But may not the remedy prove worse than the disease? A young gentleman, some years ago, suffered himself to be seduced to Popery. His friends sent him to the sage of *Ferney*, for a cure: and a most effectual one indeed was wrought. He came home a confirmed infidel, and has employed himself ever since in writing against Christianity. Popery may be bad; but irreligion is not better.

P. 1. Mr. H. laments that “men  
“endowed with the strongest capa-  
“city for business and affairs, crouch  
“all their lives under slavery to the  
“grossest superstition.”

Superstition surely is not the failing of the present age in Great Britain.

We

LET.

V.

~~~~~

We have reason to wish there was a little more of it than there is; since by “the grossest superstition,” philosophers often mean neither more nor less than the Christian Religion.

P. 2. “The fair sex feel many of
“their joys blasted by this importu-
“nate intruder.”

And lo, Mr. H. in his panoply of
“sound philosophy,” sallies forth as
their champion, to slay the giant,
and deliver the captive damsels—But
of what kind are the female “joys”
here alluded to? Innocent ones are
heightened by religion, and those that
are otherwise ought to be “blasted.”
Mr. H. we have been told, delighted
much in the company of women that
were modest, though the system of
Morals, with which he favoured the
world, was by no means calculated
to

to make or to keep them such. If they were edified by his conversation, I am heartily glad of it—"I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

LET.
V.
}

P. 2. "Superstition being founded
"on false opinion, must immediately
"vanish, when true philosophy has
"inspired juster sentiments of superior
"powers."

But where is this same "inspiring
"true philosophy" to be found? In
the writings of the ancient heathens?
Assuredly not. They were not agreed
whether there were many Gods, one
God, or no God. In the writings of
Mr. H.? Alas, his famous Dialogues
on Natural Religion shew, that, by
studying their works, he had brought
himself, and wished to bring his read-
ers, into the very same uncertainty.
"Just sentiments of superior powers"
can

LET. can be “inspired” only by those
 v. powers. From the apostasy of the
 nations to the coming of Christ,
 philosophy laboured at the task in
 vain ; and if she has succeeded in any
 respect better since, it is because she
 has borrowed light from Revelation,
 and not been honest enough to own
 it. Christianity is founded not upon
 “false opinions,” but facts, the truth
 of which all Mr. H—’s philosophy
 has never been able to disprove.

P. 3. To the direful effects of su-
 perstition, enumerated by Cicero,
 Mr. H. adds one still more direful ;
 that a man under it’s dominion,
 “though death alone can put a full
 “period to his misery, dares not
 “fly to this refuge, but still pro-
 “longs a miserable existence, from
 “a vain fear lest he offend his
 “Maker,

“ Maker, by using the power with
 “ which that beneficent Being has en-
 “ dowed him. The presents of God
 “ and nature are ravished from us by
 “ this cruel enemy, and notwithstand-
 “ ing that one step would remove us
 “ from the regions of pain and sorrow,
 “ her menaces still chain him down
 “ to a hated being, which she herself
 “ chiefly contributes to render mi-
 “ ferable.”

L E T.
 V.
 }

The superstition intended by Ci-
 cero is pagan superstition. But what
 is that superstition which in these
 times is understood to prohibit sui-
 cide? Evidently it is the Christian
 Religion. It is this therefore which by
 Mr. H. is called “ the modern Euro-
 “ pean superstition.” * This is the
 “ virulent poison ;” † the “ cruel

* P. 15.

† P. 2.

“ enemy

LET. "enemy,"* the "inhuman tyrant," †
 V. that "chiefly contributes to render
 { "life miserable;" and the Deity is
 complimented by him as a "benefi-
 cent Being," because he has "en-
 dowed a man with power" to cut
 his throat, or blow out his brains, in
 order to escape. The same benefi-
 cent Being has endowed a man with
 "power" (if that be all which is
 wanted) to cut the throat, or blow
 out the brains of his neighbour,
 should he judge that neighbour to be
 the cause of his misery. Upon the
 principles advanced by Mr. H. it is
 no easy matter to give a good and
 sufficient reason why he should not do
 so. For if he has a right to kill him-
 self when any great evil befalls him,
 or when he is under the apprehension

* P. 4.

P. 5.

of

of it, why may he not have an equal right to kill another, who, as he apprehends, has brought evil upon him, or who, as he fears, will do it?—So again; if he may kill himself because he seems no longer of any use to society, why not, out of charity, kill another, whom he finds or fancies to be in the same predicament? If such be Mr. H—'s philosophy, the Lord defend us from it, and bless us with a little common sense, and common honesty!

LET.
V.
~~~~~

P. 5. Mr. H. undertakes to prove that suicide is no breach of our duty to *God*: and now let us attend to him.

“ In order to govern the material  
 “ world, the Almighty Creator has  
 “ established general and immuta-  
 “ ble laws, by which all bodies are  
 “ main-



LET. “ maintained in their proper sphere  
 V. “ and function.”



Without doubt he has established an agency of second causes, which we call the course of nature, operating, under his own superintendency, regularly and uniformly, unless when, for special reasons, he sees fit to alter or suspend it, as on many occasions he has done—Very well; now to proceed :

“ To govern the animal world, he  
 “ has endowed all living creatures  
 “ with bodily and mental powers ;  
 “ with senses, passions, appetites, me-  
 “ mory, and judgment, by which they  
 “ are impelled or regulated in that  
 “ course of life to which they are des-  
 “ tined.”

Here we must stop a little. And first, we will dismiss the other “ ani-  
 “ mals” from their attendance, be-  
 cause

cause the question proceeds solely  
upon man. This done, we ask, whe-  
ther there be really no difference be-  
tween the two cases ; whether man  
be not endowed with a will to chuse  
and refuse ; and whether he be not  
accountable for his actions ? If not—  
if he be necessarily “ impelled and  
“ regulated in his course,” as a planet  
in that marked out for it, by “ ge-  
“ neral and immutable laws,” there is  
at once an end of the morality of  
human actions, and neither suicide  
nor any thing else can be a crime.  
You will judge from what follows,  
how far it is Mr. H——’s intention to  
inculcate this idea.

P. 7. “ All events, in one sense,  
“ may be pronounced the action of  
“ the Almighty ; they all proceed  
“ from those powers with which he  
“ has endowed his creatures.”

F

The

LET.

V.



LET.

V.



The murder of Abel “proceeded  
 “from those powers with which God  
 “had endowed his creature” Cain;  
 since if Cain had not possessed such  
 powers, he could not have exerted  
 them. But what is the “one sense,”  
 in which “that event may be pro-  
 “nounced the action of the Almigh-  
 “ty?”—The power is from God;  
 but let man be answerable for the use  
 and abuse of it.

P. 7. “When the passions play,  
 “when the judgment dictates, when  
 “the limbs obey; this is all the  
 “operation of God.”

The same fallacy. That the pas-  
 sions can play, the judgment can  
 dictate, and the limbs can obey, is  
 of God; but that these several facul-  
 ties operate by righteousness unto life,  
 and not by sin unto death, man, assist-  
 ed

ed by divine grace, is competent to provide; and it is at his peril that he do provide. Otherwise, God is made the author of all the evil in the world.

LET.

V.



P. 8. “Men are intrusted to their  
“own judgment and discretion, and  
“may employ every faculty with  
“which they are endowed to pro-  
“vide for their ease, happiness, or  
“preservation”—

In subordination to the laws of God, and the duties he has enjoined; not *per fas atque nefas*. There are cases in which we ought to give up our own ease, happiness, and even preservation, for the benefit of others, our friends, our country, our religion; and we shall in no wise lose our reward.

P. 9. We are now coming to the point —

F 2

“What

LET.

V.



“ What is the meaning then of  
 “ this principle that a man who puts  
 “ an end to his own life to avoid pain  
 “ and misery, has incurred the indig-  
 “ nation of his Creator by encroach-  
 “ ing on the office of divine provi-  
 “ dence, and disturbing the order of  
 “ the universe ? ”

Mr. H. has been careful to insinuate repeatedly in the course of his argument, “ that the providence of the  
 “ Deity appears not *immediately* in  
 “ any operation, but governs every  
 “ thing by the general and immuta-  
 “ ble laws above mentioned ; \* that  
 “ there is no event exempted from  
 “ them, or peculiarly reserved for his  
 “ own. *immediate* action and opera-  
 “ tion ; † And that if general laws be  
 “ ever broken by particular volitions

\* P. 7.

† P. 8.

“ of the Deity, tis after a manner L E T.  
 “ which entirely escapes human ob- V.  
 “ servation.” \*—But God may act *me-*  
*diately*, though not *immediately*; he may  
*direct*, though he does not *control*.  
 The agency of second causes proceeds  
 not by chance, or a blind impulse;  
 it was created by God’s power, framed  
 by his wisdom, and is guided by his  
 providence. We have better authority  
 for affirming, than Mr. H. can have for  
 affirming the contrary, that not a spar-  
 row falls to the ground without our  
 heavenly Father. If he regards the  
 life of a bird, he cannot be indifferent  
 to that of a man. The inference is  
 made by the same authority — “ how  
 “ much *more*, O ye of little faith” —  
 quite contrary to another favourite po-  
 sition of Mr. H. that in the sight of

\* P. 8.

F 3

God

LET. God "every event is alike important,\*  
 V. "and that the life of a man is of no  
 "greater importance to the universe  
 "than that of an oyſter."†

If God be not inattentive to inferior animals, it muſt be becauſe he had ſome view in giving them exiſtence. And ſhall we ſuppoſe that man, the nobleſt of his creatures, the lord of this lower world, was formed without any view or deſign at all? No, ſurely; he is ſent upon earth, for a certain time, to perform a certain part, to act, or to ſuffer, as God for wiſe and juſt reaſons ſhall be pleaſed to ordain, till the part ſhall be finiſhed, and he ſhall be releaſed and diſmiſſed by the ſame hand. The Lord of nature gives, and takes away. It is the glory of a man to reſign himſelf to the di-

\* P. 8.

† P. 11.

vine dispensations, and to wait his discharge in faith and patience. There is something more rational and manly and comfortable in all this, than in the notion of our being subjected only to the “general laws of matter and motion,” and whenever we happen to be out of humour with the world and ourselves, flying at once for relief to the sword or the pistol.— But in this case, says Mr. H.

P. 11. It would be equally criminal “to act for the preservation of life, as for its destruction.”

By no means. God has implanted in every creature an instinct for the preservation of life, and great pains must be taken to overcome that instinct before we can bring ourselves to effect it's destruction.



LET. The reason assigned is, that in one  
 V.  
 case, as well as the other, “ we disturb  
 “ the course of nature, and infringe  
 “ the general laws of matter and mo-  
 “ tion.”

My dear philosopher, let us obey the law of God, and leave the laws of matter and motion to themselves. I am afraid it is impossible you should have imposed upon your own understanding, when you risked this argument.

P. 12. “ A hair, a fly, an insect  
 “ is able to destroy this mighty being,  
 “ whose life is of such importance”—  
 Undoubtedly—now for the inference  
 — “ Is it an absurdity to suppose that  
 “ *human prudence may lawfully dispose*  
 “ of what depends on such insignifi-  
 “ cant causes ?”

But

But is life of less importance while it continues, because by insignificant causes it may be taken away? Or because it may be so taken away, are we therefore authorized to extinguish it by our own act and deed? The consideration of it's frailty can only render it more precious, inciting us to make the best use of it while we have it, and to take all possible care lest we lose it.

P. 12. "It would be no crime in me to divert the Nile or Danube from it's course."

None at all. Some opposition might arise from the inhabitants of certain countries perhaps, when they found they were likely to lose their rivers. But I wish you had been so employed, instead of writing essays in defence of suicide.

P. 12.

LET.  
V.  
}

LET.

V.



P. 12. “Where then is the crime  
“ of turning a few ounces of blood  
“ from their natural channel?”

The public prints informed us some time ago of a man who killed his wife and children, as well as himself, to prevent them from being unhappy. And where was the crime? It was only “turning so many more ounces  
“ of blood from their natural channel.” — This, it seems, is the *philosophical* idea of murder, somewhat similar to the notion once entertained of perjury by an Irish evidence — “Who would  
“ not *smack the calveskin* (said he) for  
“ a friend?”

But more curiosities await us. We are now to be informed that resignation and gratitude are with the suicide; and that it belongs to the poor foolish Christian only to murmur, and be thankless. P. 12.

P. 12. “Do you imagine that I  
 “repine at Providence, or curse my  
 “creation, because I go out of life,  
 “and put a period to a being, which,  
 “were it to continue, would render  
 “me miserable.”

LET.

V.



I do really imagine, from all that I have observed and heard, that this is the disposition of mind in which many of those leave the world, who become their own executioners. Suicide is the refuge most frequently resorted to by pride, lust, and ambition, when disappointed in their schemes, or reduced to beggary by their own folly and extravagance. Sour, gloomy, and desperate, they put themselves upon the forlorn hope of atheism and annihilation, dash from the world, and plunge into eternity at a venture. Melancholy, if it proceed from the  
 above-

LET. abovementioned causes, partakes of  
V. their criminality. If it be constituti-  
onal, it is a disease, and must be  
judged of accordingly. As to the  
supposed instances of suicide, com-  
mitted to escape from pain and sick-  
ness, they very seldom happen. In that  
school of affliction men learn pati-  
ence, and with patience, many other  
good lessons. But from whatever  
cause such a resolution may proceed,  
he who throws back his life, the gift  
of God, in the face of the donor, and  
in effect says, he will have no more of  
it, most certainly “repines at Provi-  
“dence,” and cannot be far from  
“curfing his creation.” How would  
the despised christian virtues of humi-  
lity, repentance, faith, and charity, in  
every trial, set all right, and reconcile  
us to our sufferings and our duty!—  
But let us hear Mr. H.

P. 12. “Far be such sentiments  
 “from me——I thank Providence  
 “both for the good which I have al-  
 “ready enjoyed, and for the power  
 “with which I am endowed of escap-  
 “ing the ill that threatens me.”

LET.

V.

A very fine piece of still life, for one about to commit such an act of violence upon himself! A most amiable and gracious portrait of self murder, after the manner of the Stoics! Suppose, instead of thanking Providence for a “power,” which you are going to employ in a manner never intended by your Maker, when you are upon your knees, you should intreat for grace to bear your misfortunes like a man, and improve them to the purpose for which they were sent—Would not this conduct display more piety and resignation than cutting

LET. cutting your throat to escape them?—  
 V. Mr. H. is of a different opinion.

P. 13. “To you it belongs to re-  
 “pine at Providence, who foolishly  
 “imagine that you have no such  
 “power, and who must still prolong  
 “a hated life, though loaded with  
 “pain and sickness, with shame and  
 “poverty.”

Pardon me, Sir; the accents of a  
 Christian in such circumstances are  
 very different indeed—“Thou hast  
 “sent me sickness, and I have borne  
 “it with patience, without murmur-  
 “ing; great losses, and I have blef-  
 “sed thy holy name; calamities and  
 “afflictions, and I have received them  
 “with thanksgiving.”

P. 13. “Do not you teach, that  
 “when any ill befalls me, though by  
 “the malice of mine enemies, I  
 “ought

“ought be resigned to Providence, LET.  
 “and that the actions of men are the V.  
 “operations of the Almighty as much  
 “as the actions of inanimate beings?”

Certainly they are all under his direction—and now again for the inference ———

“When I fall upon my own sword,  
 “THEREFORE, I receive my death  
 “equally from the hands of the Deity,  
 “as if it had proceeded from a lion,  
 “a precipice, or a fever.”

That is, because I must be resigned to God's Providence, when, in the course of his dispensations, my life is taken from me, *therefore*—I may kill myself. This is an *argal* that would have disgraced the gravedigger in Hamlet—In the one instance we employ our utmost exertions to preserve  
 life ;



LET. life; in the other, we ourselves de-  
 V. stroy it.—But it is said,

~~~~~

P. 13. “ If my life be not my own,
 “ it were criminal for me to put it in
 “ danger, as well as to dispose of it.”

When it pleases God to call for life, in the way of duty, it must willingly be sacrificed. But suicide never lies in the way of duty. And no two cases can be more essentially different, than that of the *hero* who dies in the cause of his country, his king, or his God, and that of the *wretch*, who through pride, impatience, and cowardice, lays violent hands upon himself. Attempt not, for the credit of philosophy, to confound the two characters; for heaven and hell are not farther asunder.

P. 14 “ There is no being—which
 “ by ever so irregular an action can
 “ encroach

“ encroach upon the plan of the Crea-
 “ tor’s providence, or disorder the
 “ universe. It’s operations are his
 “ works equally with that chain of
 “ events which it invades, and which-
 “ ever principle prevails, we may for
 “ that very reason conclude it to be
 “ most favoured by him.”

LET.

V.



Rare news for pickpockets, profligates, and cut-throats!—A lady has paid a visit to a neighbour, and in the evening is returning to her home, which, according to the natural “ chain of events,” she should reach in peace and quietness. But a man, “ exercising the powers with which “ his Creator has invested him,” ravishes, robs, and murders her. This is the “ irregular action, which in- “ vades the chain.” Be of good courage, my Boy! “ It’s operations are
 G “ equally

LET.

V.



“equally the works of God with the
 “chain of events invaded by it, and
 “whichever principle prevails, we
 “may for that very reason con-
 “clude it to be the most favoured
 “by him.”—“God sees no sin in his
 “elect,” says the fanatic: but accor-
 ding to the new philosophy, God sees
 no sin, (for if this mode of reasoning
 be just, there neither is nor can be sin)
 in any man.

P. 14. “When the horror of pain
 “prevails over the love of life; when
 “a voluntary action anticipates the
 “effects of blind causes, it is only
 “in consequence of those powers and
 “principles which he (the supreme
 “Creator) has implanted in his crea-
 “tures.”

Does not the argument prove too
 much? May not the same be said of
 number.

numberless desires which arise in the heart of man, as at present circumstanced, and which, according to all the rules of true philosophy, as well as true religion, ought to be controuled and overruled by a superior principle? Will not the same plea be as valid in the case of him who finds himself strongly excited to revenge, to intemperance, to lust, &c. &c. &c. as of him who is tempted to destroy himself? All, it may be said, happens “in consequence of those powers and “principles implanted in us.” The truth is, that human actions must be directed, because they will be judged, by other measures than our pains or our pleasures. On one side is my propensity; on the other, the law of God. Can it be a matter of indifference, which of the two prevails?

LET. According to these arguments, as
 V. Rousseau has justly observed, “there
 “can be no crimes which may not be
 “justified by the temptation to per-
 “petrate them; and as soon as the
 “impetuosity of passion shall prevail
 “over the horror of guilt, a disposi-
 “tion to do evil shall be considered
 “as a right to do it.” See *Eloisa*,
 Lett. cxv.

P. 15. “Divine providence is still
 “inviolable, and placed far beyond the
 “reach of human injuries.”

Certainly. When Judas betrayed
 his Master, it was foreseen that he
 would do so, and all things were or-
 dered accordingly; “Providence was
 “still inviolable”—But Judas was not
 therefore guiltless.

P. 15. It is affirmed that “to di-
 “vert rivers from their course, to ino-
 culate

“ culate for the small pox, to put a
 “ period to our own life, to build
 “ houses, cultivate the ground, or
 “ sail upon the ocean, are actions
 “ equally innocent, or equally crimi-
 “ nal.” Why? Because “ in all of
 “ them we employ our powers of
 “ mind and body, to produce some
 “ innovation in the course of nature;
 “ and in none of them do we any
 “ more.”

L E T.
 V.
 ~~~~~

1. As to the actions of “ diverting  
 “ rivers, building houses, cultivating  
 “ the ground, and sailing upon the  
 “ ocean,” there is no occasion to dis-  
 cuss their legality.

2. The intention of inoculation is  
 to *preserve* life, that of suicide can be  
 only to *destroy* it; so that there is a  
 material difference between them.

3. No one ever rested the Morality

LET. of human actions merely on the cir-  
 V. cumstance here stated of “producing  
 “some innovation in the course of  
 “nature.” Otherwise, one might ar-  
 gue, after the manner of Mr. H.  
 “Jack kills a hog, and Dick kills a  
 “man. They must be equally inno-  
 “cent, or equally criminal. Jack em-  
 “ploys his powers to produce some  
 “innovation in the course of nature ;  
 “and Dick does no more. Each  
 “turns a few ounces of blood out of  
 “their natural channel ; and the blood  
 “of a hog makes as good puddings  
 “as that of a man.”

P. 15. “But you are placed by  
 “providence, like a centinel, in a par-  
 “ticular station, and when you desert  
 “it without being recalled, you are  
 “equally guilty of rebellion against  
 “your almighty sovereign, and have  
 “incurred his displeasure.”

This

This is an argument urged against suicide by heathen as well as Christian writers. How does Mr. H. overthrow it?

LET.

V.

P. 16. “ I ask, why do you conclude  
 “ that providence has placed me in  
 “ this station? For my part, I find  
 “ that I owe my birth to a long chain  
 “ of causes, of which many depended  
 “ on the voluntary actions of men.”

Here we should answer, but that Mr. H. like the mother of Sifera, returns answer to himself.

P. 16. “ But providence guided all  
 “ these causes, and nothing happens  
 “ in the universe, without it’s consent  
 “ and co-operation.”

Now comes Mr. H—’s reply.

“ If so, then neither does my death,  
 “ however voluntary, happen with-  
 “ out its consent.”



LET.

V.



If by *consent* Mr. H. means *permission*, all the evil ever perpetrated on earth has been perpetrated by God's permission; for otherwise it could not have been perpetrated at all. But if he means *approbation*, we must deny the proposition. Many things are *permitted*, which are not *approved*. Of his approbation or disapprobation we have other rules by which to judge.

P. 16.—“ And whenever pain or  
 “ sorrow so far overcome my patience,  
 “ as to make me tired of life, I may  
 “ conclude that I am recalled from my  
 “ station in the clearest and most ex-  
 “ press terms.”

Then may every man put an end to his own life when he thinks proper. The “patience” of some people is soon “overcome;” and perhaps there are few Englishmen, who  
 have

have not found themselves “tired of  
 “life,” in one part or other of the  
 month of November; but happily  
 prevented from hanging themselves  
 by a sense of higher obligation, they  
 have returned to business, and done  
 excellent service to their country, in  
 the month of January. The station  
 of a centinel is not, nor is it sup-  
 posed to be, a station of ease, but  
 of duty. A good foldier endures  
 hardship; and a good Christian must  
 do the same. Affliction is “a call,  
 “in the most clear and express  
 “terms,” not to fullenness and sui-  
 cide, but to the exercise of patience,  
 resignation, and fortitude. “For  
 “even hereunto are we called;” and  
 our commander himself has set us the  
 example. Let us follow him with  
 alacrity and chearfulness, and we shall  
 one

LET.  
 V.  
 ~~~~~

L E T T E R VI.

LET.
VI.

WE are next to enquire, whether suicide be any breach of our duty towards our *neighbour*.

P. 17. “How does it appear that
“the Almighty is displeased with
“those actions which disturb society?
“By the principles which he has im-
“planted in human nature; and
“which inspire us with a sentiment
“of remorse if we ourselves have
“been guilty of such actions, and
“with that of blame and disappro-
“bation, if we ever observe them in
“others. Let us now examine whe-
“ther suicide be of this kind of
“actions.”


Be-

Before we enter upon the examination here proposed, it is obvious to remark, that there is no instinct, or “principle implanted” in human nature, which seems to be more universal and more forcible than that of an aversion to suicide. For a man to destroy himself is directly against the voice and the very prime inclination of nature. Every thing desires to preserve itself. “No man
“hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth
“and cherisheth it.” And therefore, nations in general, as taught by the immediate voice of nature, by the very first accents which she utters to all, have abhorred men’s laying violent hands upon themselves: and to shew their abhorrence, have decreed to pursue self-murderers, after their death, with the highest marks of ignominy.

LET.

VI.



LET. ^{VI.}  nominy.* The argument from implanted principle, therefore, militates very powerfully against suicide.

But however, the truth is, that in this, as in many other cases, these implanted principles, by due labour and pains, may be overruled and suppressed. On which account, it becomes necessary for us to have some other criterion of moral rectitude evident to all, and to be eluded by none; lest obduracy should be deemed a proof of innocence, and because a man feels no remorse, he should apprehend no guilt.

For us Christians this matter is settled by a law, which we esteem to be wise, and just, and good, and most friendly to the interests of society.

* See Bp. Taylor's *Duct. Dubitant.* B. III. Ch. II. Rule III.

By

By the leave of the new philoso-
phers, we will take it with us; and
I am apt to think, it will appear
to great advantage, on this part of
our subject. Holding this light in our
hands, then, let us enter the dark
labyrinth of Mr. H—'s sophistry, and
it will bring us safely out again.

P. 18. "A man who retires from
"life, does no harm to society."

There are two ways of imposing
upon mankind through the abuse of
words; when a good thing is dis-
graced by a bad name, or a bad thing
dignified with a good one. Mr. H.
in this Essay affords us a striking in-
stance of the latter mode of decep-
tion. The *self-murderer* is sometimes
said by him to "dispose of life," as
a pedlar would sell two pennyworth
of inkle; at others, to "retire from
"life"

LET.

VI.



LET. “life,” as a gentleman, when he has
 VI.
 a mind to leave company, makes his
 bow, steps gracefully out of the room,
 and shuts the door.—It may be urged,
 perhaps, that as we understand Mr.
 H—’s meaning, it is needless to dis-
 pute any farther about his language.
 —Be it so. Proceed we then to con-
 sider the *sentiment*.

“A man who retires from life does
 no harm to society.”

Aristotle thought otherwise, and, as
 it should seem, better, upon this
 point. It was his opinion, that they
 who destroy themselves (without the
 command of God or the Public) are
 injurious to the commonwealth; from
 whose service they withdraw them-
 selves if they be innocent, and whose
 justice they evade, if they be guilty.*

* See Bp. Taylor, *ubi supra*.

But

But surely the suicide “does harm
 “to society,” by setting a detestable
 example, which, if generally followed
 in times of calamity and distress,
 would desolate a country, instead of
 defending it. Suicide originates in
 despair, of all evils political or moral
 the greatest, as cutting off every re-
 source of help and deliverance. Wise-
 ly, therefore, as well as bravely, did
 the Romans return public thanks to
 their general, who had been vanquished
 in a dreadful battle by the enemy,
 because he had nevertheless NOT DE-
 SPAIRED of the commonwealth. In
 the instance before us, example is
 particularly contagious. Once, as his-
 tory relates, it became a fashion a-
 mong the young women of a certain
 city in Greece to make away with
 themselves; nor could the magistrates

LET.

VI.



H

put

LET. put an end to the horrid practice, till
^{VI,}
having ordered the dead bodies of the culprits to be dragged naked through the streets, they overcame this most unnatural love of death by the dread of shame. In our own country, and, it is said, of late, upon the continent, partly by the examples of profligates, and partly by the writings of philosophers, the same fashion is more and more diffusing itself among all ranks of people, and the state is continually losing numbers, who might otherwise have lived long to serve it, and then have died in the faith and fear of God. It is not true, therefore, that the suicide “does no harm to society.” He does irreparable harm, and may continue to do so, to the years of many generations.

P. 18.

P. 18. "He only ceases to do
 "good ; which, if it is an injury, is
 "of the lowest kind."

LET.
 VI.
 {

To cease to do good is not so criminal as to do harm ; but it is criminal, notwithstanding. We were sent into the world to do good ; and we should do it to the end. The portion of the "unprofitable servant" is not to be envied.

P. 18. "But when I withdraw myself altogether from society, can I
 "be bound any longer?"

It is not possible to "withdraw
 "yourself altogether from society."
 There always will be some about you, whom you may improve by your conversation and example, and who may improve others by the relation of them.

P. 18. "I am not obliged to do a

H 2

"small

LET. “small good to society, at the ex-
 VI. “pence of a great harm to myself.”

~~~~~

Be not afraid, where no fear is. The “harm” is not “great” of bearing your afflictions as God requires you to bear them, who sends the trial, and will send the strength: and in a stage of our existence where so large a part of our duty lies in suffering, the “good” is not “small,” of shewing your companions in tribulation (and such more or less are all mankind) what it is to suffer and die like a Christian, in piety and patience, cheerfulness and resignation.

P. 19. “If upon account of age  
 “and infirmities, I may lawfully re-  
 “sign any office, and employ my  
 “time altogether in fencing against  
 “these calamities, and alleviating, as  
 “much as possible, the miseries of my  
 “fu-

“future life : why may I not cut short  
 “these miseries at once by an action  
 “which is no more prejudicial to so-  
 “ciety ?”

LET.

VI.

Suicide is in reality far “more pre-  
 “judicial to society,” as we have al-  
 ready shewn, because it exhibits a bad  
 example of impatience and despair,  
 which may be copied by any man,  
 who, in the hour of gloom and me-  
 lancholy (he being always the judge  
 of his own case) shall fancy himself  
 in circumstances which will justify the  
 action. How many have still con-  
 trived to the last in various ways to  
 do service to their families and to  
 the public, during the intervals of  
 pain and sickness ? And when they  
 could no longer teach their friends  
 how to live and act, have taught them  
 (as before mentioned, but it cannot

LET. be mentioned too often) that other  
 VI. equally necessary and important lesson  
 —to suffer, and to die?

Mr. H. is resolved to *die hard*—

P. 19. “But suppose that it is no  
 “longer in my power to promote the  
 “interest of society”—

I repeat it once more, that while  
 you have breath, it *will* be in your  
 power to do so.


—“Suppose that I am a burden  
 “to it”—

If the society be Christian, it will  
 readily, charitably, and kindly sup-  
 port the burden.

—“Suppose that my life hinders  
 “some person from being much more  
 “useful to society.”

As it is your duty to bear your af-  
 flictions, it is that of others to assist,  
 and minister to you in your necessities;  
 and

and they cannot be more “useful to  
 “society,” than while so employed.

LET:  
 VI.  


“In such cases, my resignation of  
 “life must not only be innocent, but  
 “laudable.”

Neither “laudable,” nor “inno-  
 “cent,” believe me, if by “resigna-  
 “tion of life” you mean *suicide*, for  
 the reasons many and good, above  
 assigned.

P. 19. “Most people who lie un-  
 “der any temptation to abandon ex-  
 “istence, are in some such situation :  
 “those who have health, or power;  
 “or authority, have commonly bet-  
 “ter reason to be in humour with  
 “the world.”

Yet this is by no means always so.  
 There are seasons when the world,  
 with all its pleasures, and all its glo-  
 ries, will fail him who has nothing

H 4                      else

LET.

VI.



else to depend upon. Accordingly, we have had instances, where, for want of the religious principle, “health, “power, and authority,” have proved insufficient to keep their possessors “in “humour;” and through the prevalence of pride, avarice, intemperance, caprice, and spleen, men have dispatched themselves, some, because they had taken a wrong step, and were blamed for it; some, because they had eaten too much, and therefore life was insupportable; some, to defraud their creditors; some, because they were tired of buckling and unbuckling their shoes; and some, to save charges. Poor unhappy man! How art thou tost upon the ocean of life, when once driven from the helm, which should direct thy course through time to eternity!

P. 20. “Mr. H. states the following case—

LET.

VI.



“A man is engaged in a conspiracy  
 “for the public interest; is seized  
 “upon suspicion; is threatened with  
 “the rack; and knows from his own  
 “weakness that the secret will be ex-  
 “torted from him: could such an one  
 “consult the public interest better  
 “than by putting a quick period to  
 “a miserable life?”

1. To avoid so untoward a situation, before a man “engages in a  
 “conspiracy,” let him be very well  
 assured that it is *indeed* “for the pub-  
 “lic interest;” that he is in the way  
 of his duty; and that the law of his  
 God will bear him out in the under-  
 taking.

2. This point being secured, and  
 the action of suicide supposed to be  
 (as



LET. (as we apprehend) *malum in se*, then  
VI. the resolution of the question is clear ;  
we are not to “do evil that good may  
“come ;” it were better the conspi-  
racy should be discovered than that  
the man should commit a sin, for the  
reason assigned elsewhere by Mr. H.  
himself, that “the damnation of one  
“man is an infinitely greater evil  
“than the subversion of a thousand  
“millions of kingdoms.”\* Let the  
man therefore continue in his integri-  
ty, and trust God for the event.

3. He who is invited to take a part  
in a dangerous and desperate enter-  
prize, should consider consequences  
possible and probable, and weigh well  
his own strength, beforehand ; and if  
he suspects himself likely to fail in  
the day of trial, let him by no means  
engage.


\* Essay on the immortality of the soul, P. 33.

LET.

VI.



A case of this kind may doubtless be imagined, which will seem extremely hard; and mankind will be disposed not only to excuse, but even to honour him who thus falls by his own hand, to save his companions, and his country. The behaviour of some Christian virgins in the early ages, who chose rather to inflict death upon themselves, than suffer the violation of their purity by their ruffian persecutors, has obtained in it's favour the suffrage of the Fathers, as a case excepted from the general rule; and we cannot readily blame those, who to preserve their honour, despised their life. They committed one sin, to escape another which they deemed greater; (though, as their will would not have been concerned, they were perhaps mistaken;) and destroyed

LET. VI.  stroyed the temple, to avoid it's prophanation. But these extraordinary instances, whatever may be thought of them, cannot prove that to be lawful, which is in itself unlawful.\*

As to the other case stated by Mr. H. in the same P. 20. that of “ a “ malefactor justly condemned to a “ shameful death,” there can be no difficulty. It is the duty of him who has transgressed the laws of his country to make the satisfaction they require. The virtues, called forth upon the sad occasion, of repentance, and faith in the divine mercy, consequent thereupon, are of the highest benefit to himself in his most important concerns ; while his example at his death undoes, as far as in him lies, the evil perpetrated in his life, and by warn-

\* See Bp. Taylor, ubi supra.

ing others not to offend, is of eminent service to the community—I am astonished that Mr. H. should ask, “can any reason be imagined why he may not anticipate his punishment?” and assert, that “he invades the business of providence no more than the magistrate did who ordered his execution;” and that “his voluntary death is equally advantageous to society.”—It is an unparalleled outrage at once upon common sense, the laws, and the religion of his country.

We may now, I believe, venture to conclude, notwithstanding all which Mr. H. has said to the contrary, that suicide is a breach of our duty to our *neighbour*.

LET.

VI.



LET.

---

## L E T T E R VII.

L E T.  
VII.

**L** E T us consider, in the last place, whether suicide be not a breach of that duty we owe to *ourselves*. On this head Mr. H. is short, and therefore we need not be long.

The argument lies in a narrow compass. Man is subject to misery, and suicide is the way to escape it.

P. 20. “ That suicide may often be  
“ consistent with interest, and with  
“ our duty to ourselves, no one can  
“ question, who allows, that age,  
“ sickness, or misfortune, may render  
“ life a burthen, and make it worse  
“ even than annihilation.”


That

That they “make it worse than annihilation,” is not the general opinion, because, however afflicted, few seem disposed to chuse annihilation, (if they thought they could obtain it) in preference. That the calamities of human life are many and great, there is neither room nor occasion to dispute. They have employed the pens of poets, orators, and historians, from age to age. They are frequently, without doubt, “a burthen.” But the burthen has often been borne; and what has been done, may be done again. It is laid upon us by our sins, and is no more than we deserve; therefore it ought to be borne patiently. It will last but for a little while; therefore it should be borne cheerfully. Through the mercies of a Saviour, it will terminate

LET.

VII.



LET. VII. minate in everlasting felicity; and therefore it should be borne joyfully. This is the ground upon which we stand. These are the principles by which we abide. Admit them, they solve every difficulty, and disperse every cloud. Through the valley of the shadow of death they open a fair and lovely prospect, extending far and wide beyond it. At their presence sorrow brightens into joy, light arises in darkness, and the mass of human wretchedness melts away before it, like the morning mist upon the mountains.—If the philosophers possess any principles that are better, and better founded, let them be communicative; if not, let them embrace these with us, and not be faithless, but believing—Whoever they may be of them that read this, Almost, I think, they are, at  
the

LET.

VII.



the moment, persuaded to be Christians—Would to God that every one who reads it, might become not only almost, but altogether such!

If, on the other hand, unhappily seduced by the subtlety and sophistry of Mr. H. men determine to adopt what he calls his philosophy, that is, to doubt concerning the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of rewards and punishments; whether there be any providence, concerning itself with human affairs; and whether the world be governed by a good or an evil Being, or by any Being at all—then may they, with Mr. H. esteem suicide “to be no crime, but the only way “in which we can be useful to society, by setting an example, which, “if imitated, would preserve to every  
I one



LET. “one his chance for happiness in life,  
 VII. “and would effectually free him from  
 ~~~~~ “all danger of misery.”

But according to a common saying, we are to look for the business of a letter in the *Postscript*. Subjoined to the Essay is a *Note*, in which Mr. H. asserts, and endeavours to prove, “that suicide is as lawful under the “Christian dispensation as it was to “the heathens.” If this be the case, we must beg his pardon for having supposed that Christianity was glanced at above, as the *superstition* which kept men in bondage, and prevented them from taking this short method to escape the evils of life. The Gospel, it seems, allows of suicide. It must be the Gospel, not according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, or St. John, but *according to Mr. H.*
 I know

I know of no single text that will prove the point, though I once heard of a gentleman who did effectually prove it by two texts judiciously laid together—"Judas departed, and went, "and hanged himself"—"Go, and "do thou likewise."

LET.

VII.



But though there be no text which enjoins it (as, considering the importance of the subject, might have been expected) Mr. H. is clear "there is "not a single text which prohibits it"—"That great and infallible rule of "faith and practice," continues he very gravely, "which must controul "all philosophy and human reasoning, "has left us in this particular to our "natural liberty."

The "liberty" of destroying himself cannot be thought very "natural" by any one believing in a God who

LET.
VII.

placed him here, and placed him here with some view and design. Much less can a Christian, while he continues in his senses, imagine himself left at this liberty by the Gospel; since above all things it enjoins and exhorts him, after the example of his Saviour, to suffer in patience, that he may reign in glory. Every precept of this sort is a virtual prohibition of suicide, which argues the last degree of impatience.

“Resignation to Providence is indeed recommended in Scripture; but that implies only submission to ills that are unavoidable, not to such as may be remedied by prudence or courage.”

“Prudence and courage” are both excellent things: they are two of the cardinal virtues. But that suicide is a dis-

display of them, is a proposition hitherto unknown to Reason, Law, and Gospel. There could be no occasion to preach patience under sufferings if it were so, because then no man could be under a necessity of suffering. He might avoid it, at a moment's warning, by the knife or the halter. There could be no such things as "unavoidable ills;" and the Gospel precepts would be almost as absurd as Mr. H—'s Note.

LET.

VII.

"*Thou shalt not kill*, is evidently
 "meant to exclude only the killing of
 "others, over whose life we have no
 "authority—Magistrates punish criminals capitally, notwithstanding the
 "letter of the law."

Magistrates have authority over the lives of others; but have we authority over our own, to put an end

LET.

VII.



to them when we please? Surely not; and therefore suicide is justly accounted and treated by our laws as one species of murder, forbidden by the commandment.

“ But were this commandment ever
 “ so express against suicide, it would
 “ now have no authority; for all the
 “ law of Moses is abolished except so
 “ far as it is established by the law of
 “ nature. And we have already en-
 “ deavoured to prove, that suicide is
 “ not prohibited by that law.”

This is modest—“ We have *endea-*
 “ *voured* to prove.” But the endea-
 vour, it is humbly apprehended, has
 been in vain, and ever will be so
 while there shall be piety enough left
 on earth to acknowledge God as the
 lord of life and death; for so long
 men will judge it their duty to adore
 his

his power, and wait his pleasure. — A trifling alteration in our religious services might perhaps answer Mr. H—'s purpose, without the *abolition* of any part. Let that little particle NOT be expunged from the *Commandments*, and inserted in the *Creed*.

LET.
VII.

“ In all cases Christians and Heathens are upon the same footing” —

They very soon will be so, when Mr. H—'s philosophy shall once become the established religion.

“ Cato and Brutus, Arria and Portia acted heroically ; those who now imitate their example ought to receive the same praises from posterity.”

Christianity inculcates a far nobler heroism. It teaches us, when we are engaged in a good cause, to die for it like men, but not by our own hands ;

LET. to “endure the cross, despising the
 VII. “shame.” Cato had not patience to
 do the one, and Brutus was too proud
 to do the other. That fortitude is not
 compleat, which cannot do both. But
 surely, Cato might have lived, though
 Cæsar conquered; and Brutus have
 left the world with a quiet conscience,
 though he had forborn to stab the
 Dictator, or himself. Of the Roman
 ladies *nil nisi bonum* — But there have
 been martyrs of that sex among us
 Christians, who could have shewn
 to them likewise “a more excellent
 “way.” There cannot be a finer or
 more just representation of this mat-
 ter than that given by Mrs. Chapone
 in the story of FIDELIA, first published
 in the *Adventurer*, No. 77, &c. and
 afterwards reprinted in a little volume,
 entitled, *Miscellanies in prose and verse*.
 Every


Every female, who, on account of her crimes, her miseries, or both, may be tempted to put a period to her life, should read that story. She may read it again and again, with increasing pleasure and improvement. Nor let me omit this opportunity of recommending to general perusal a charming Ode, published among the Poems of Mr. Warton, styled THE SUICIDE, in which the best of poetry is applied to the best of purposes.

“ The power of committing suicide
“ is regarded by Pliny as an advantage
“ which men possess even above
“ the Deity himself.”

Shame upon Pliny for uttering such a sentiment! But more shame upon Mr. H. for retailing it in a christian country! The thought is equally blasphemous and absurd. Blasphemous,
in

LET.
VII.
~~~~~



LET. in exalting man above the Deity, on  
VII. so wretched an account; absurd, be-  
 cause as God is liable to no calamities,  
he cannot need the means to escape  
them.

LET.

---

## L E T T E R    VIII.

SINCE the appearance of the un-  
believing fraternity among us,  
in these latter days, they have been  
celebrated for many extraordinary  
qualities: but their characteristic vir-  
tue, I think, has been *modesty*. A  
remarkable instance of this virtue has  
manifested itself in their conduct re-  
specting the publication of a certain  
edifying pamphlet, entitled *Doubts of  
the Infidels: or Queries relative to  
Scriptural Inconsistencies and Contradic-  
tions—Submitted to the consideration of  
the Bench of Bishops—By a weak Chris-  
tian.* It stole abroad in so humble  
and

L E T:  
VIII.



LET. and reserved a manner, without the  
VIII. name of printer, or vender, that it  
~~~~~ was a long time before I heard there  
was such a pamphlet in being. In-
formed, however, by a friend, that
there certainly was such a thing, and
that he had actually seen it, I made
application to several bookfellers of
note in town ; but they declared, they
knew nothing of the matter. As I am
one of those who love to learn what
is stirring, I was not to be easily put
by ; and therefore rested not, till I had
made myself master of a copy. Happy
in my prize, with my hand upon my
pocket I betook myself immediately
home, and having provided the imple-
ment necessary for the purpose, began
to open the leaves.

In the process of this operation,
the first words that caught my eye
were

were the following in P. v. of the epistle dedicatory to my lords the bishops — “ Inner chambers of the
 “ holy Inquisition — Whips, cords,
 “ pullies, screws, wheels, iron crows,
 “ and red hot pincers.” Having no predilection for good things of this particular kind, I resumed my work, determining not to peep any more, till I came to the top of P. 20. where my attention was again forcibly arrested by the expressions — “ Rip-
 “ ping women with child, dashing in-
 “ fants to pieces against the rocks,
 “ and broiling men to death with slow
 “ fires.”

I now laid down the pamphlet, and considered with myself, what had happened lately among us, to occasion this lamentable yelping. Sometimes I thought the archbishop of York, in
 the

LET.
 VIII.
 ~~~~~

LET. the course of his last visitation, must  
VIII. have wedged some northern heresiarch  
under the screw, and with one turn of the machine, to the great diversion of the company, cracked all the bones in his skin, like the claws of a lobster. At other times I concluded (though no mention had been made of it in the *Morning Chronicle*) that his grace of Canterbury had invited the bishops to dine with him upon a roasted infidel, whipped to death by his chaplains. That one of these events had taken place, there seemed to be little doubt, though it was impossible to say which.

I finished, however, my task of leaf opening, and began to read regularly; when I found that a deed had been done still more atrocious and petrifying than either of the above; for that, by an act of parliament procured

cured by these same bloody-minded prelates of ours, the infidels are now obliged, on a funday evening, to blaspheme in PRIVATE!

LET.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

This is a *falling off*, to which my memory furnishes me with nothing similar, unless it be the story of a man, much given to the use of the *long bow*, who asserted, one morning, to his family, that he had just seen *forty* couple of dogs running through the yard. It being denied that so many were kept in the country, “Nay,” cried he, “I am sure there were *twenty*.” The audience still continuing sceptical, “Why, then,” said he, with perfect gravity, “it was *our little brown cur!*”

For such “cruel, barbarous, and “inhuman” usage, these gentlemen are determined, it seems, to have their
revenge

LET. revenge upon the church, and really
VIII. think themselves able, at this time
~~~~~ of day, to write Revelation out of the  
world, in a twelve-penny pamphlet!  
— Take this whole business together,  
and it is enough to make the weeping  
philosopher laugh.

In the thirty sections of their pamphlet, they have produced a list of *difficulties* to be met with in reading the Old and New Testament. Had I been aware of their design, I could have enriched the collection with many more, at least as good, if not a little better. But they have compiled, I dare say, what they deemed the best, and in their own opinion presented us with the essence of infidelity in a thumb phial, the very fumes of which, on drawing the cork, are to strike the bench of bishops dead at once.

Let

Let not the unlearned Christian be alarmed, “as though some strange thing had happened to him,” and modern philosophy had discovered arguments to demolish religion, never heard of before. The old ornaments of deism have been “broken off,” upon the occasion, “and cast into the fire, and there came out this calf.” These same difficulties have been again and again urged and discussed in public; again and again weighed and considered by learned and sensible men, of the laity as well as of the clergy, who have by no means been induced by them to renounce their faith.

LET.

VIII.



Indeed, why should they? For is any man surprised, that difficulties should occur in the books of Scripture, those more especially of the Old

K                      Testa-



LET. Testament? Let him reflect upon the  
VIII. variety of matter on which they treat;  
the distance of the times to which they refer; the wide difference of ancient manners and customs from those of the age in which we live; the very imperfect knowledge we have of these, as well as of the language in which they are described; the conciseness of the narratives, sufficient for the purpose intended, but not for gratifying a restless curiosity; above all, the errors and defects of translations.

Many and painful are the researches sometimes necessary to be made, for settling points of this kind. Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines, which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer. When this is done, the  
same


same question shall be triumphantly asked again, the next year, as if nothing had ever been written upon the subject. And as people in general, for one reason or another, like short objections better than long answers, in this mode of disputation (if it can be styled such) the odds must ever be against us; and we must be content with those for our friends, who have honesty and erudition, candour and patience, to study both sides of the question—Be it so.

LET.  
VIII.  
}

In the mean time, if we are called upon seriously for satisfaction on any point, it is our duty to give the best in our power. But our adversaries will permit us to observe, that the way they are pleased to take (the way, I mean, of *doubts* and *difficulties*) is the longest way about; and I much fear

LET. they will never find it the shortest way  
VIII. home. For if they really have de-  
termined with themselves, not to be-  
come Christians, till every difficulty  
that may be started concerning the re-  
vealed dispensations of God, or any  
part of them, be fully cleared up, I  
will fairly tell them, that, I apprehend,  
they must die *deists*. I will likewise  
farther tell them, that if they should  
resolve not to believe in the existence  
of God, till every objection can be  
solved, relative to the works of crea-  
tion, and the course of his providence,  
I verily believe they must die *atheists*.  
At least, I will not undertake their  
conversion, in either case. For in  
the first place, whether the solution  
be satisfactory to themselves, none  
but themselves can be the judges;  
and their prejudices will not suffer  
them

them to judge fairly. In the second place, if they produce an hundred objections, and we can solve ninety nine of them, that which remains unsolved will be deemed a plea sufficient to justify their continuing in incredulity. In the third place, it is impossible in the nature of things, that we should be equal to the solution of every difficulty, unless we were well acquainted with many points of which it has pleased God to keep us in ignorance, till the last day shall open and unfold them. Nay, in some instances, it is impossible, unless we could see and know, as God himself sees and knows.

LET.  
VIII.  


But it is an axiom in science, that difficulties are of no weight against demonstrations. The existence of God once proved, we are not, in reason, to

LET.  
VIII.  
~~~~~

set that proof aside, because we cannot at present account for all his proceedings. The divine legation of Moses, and that of Jesus Christ, stand upon their proper evidence, which cannot be superseded and nullified by any pretended or real difficulties occurring in the Jewish and Christian dispensations. If we can solve the difficulties, so much the better; but if we cannot, the evidence is exactly where it was. Upon that evidence is our faith founded, and not upon the ability of any man, or set of men, to explain particular portions of Scripture, and to answer the objections which may be made to them. Otherwise, our faith, instead of resting on the power of God, would rest on the weakness of man, and might be subverted every day. Now the evidence
that

that may be produced for the divine
missions of Moses and of Jesus Christ,
is such as never was produced in fa-
vour of any others laying claim to
divine missions, since the world began;
and it is such as no person can reject,
without being obliged to believe a
series of absurdities and impossibi-
lities, that, in any other case, would
choke the faith of the greatest bigot in
Christendom: which is bringing the
matter as near to demonstration as a
matter of this kind is capable of being
brought, or as any reasonable being
would desire it to be brought.

Thus much being premised, to pre-
vent mistakes, I shall proceed in the
next Letter to the consideration of the
first section, the subject of which is
that of Miracles.

L E T T E R IX.

L E T.
IX.

THE substance of this section, thrown into an argumentative form, stands thus—"Miracles are not wrought now; therefore they never were wrought at all."

One would wonder how the premises and the conclusion could be brought together. No man would in earnest assert the necessity of miracles being repeated, for the confirmation of a revelation, to every new generation, and to each individual of which it is composed. Certainly not. If they were once wrought, and duly entered on *record*, the record is *evidence*

dence ever after. This reasoning holds good, respecting them, as well as other facts; and to reason otherwise, would be to introduce universal confusion.

LET.

IX.

It is said, “They are things in
“their own nature far removed from
“common belief.”

They are things which do not happen every day, to be sure. It were absurd, from the very nature of them, to expect that they should. But what reason can there be for concluding, from thence, that none ever were wrought? Why should it be thought a thing more incredible, that the ruler of the world should interpose, upon proper occasions, to controul the operations of nature, than that he should direct them, in ordinary? It is not *impossible* that a teacher
should

LET.

IX.



should be sent from God. It may be *necessary* that one should be sent. If one be sent, he must bring *credentials*, to shew that he is so sent; and what can those credentials be, but *miracles*, or acts of almighty power, such as God only can perform?—In the case of Jesus, common sense spake by the mouth of the Jewish ruler, and all the sophistry in the world cannot invalidate or perplex the argument—“ Master, thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.”

—“ They (miracles) require something more than the usual testimony of history for their support.”

Why so? If they *may* be wrought, and good reasons are assigned for their *having been* wrought upon any particular

cular occasion, “the usual testimony
“of history” is sufficient to evince
that they *were* wrought. But the
truth is, that they *have* “something
“more than the usual testimony of
“history ;” they have *much* more ;
for no facts in the world ever were at-
tested by such an accumulated weight
of evidence, as we can produce on
behalf of the miracles recorded of
Moses and Christ ; insomuch that the
mind of any person tolerably well in-
formed concerning them, till steeled
against conviction by the prejudices
of infidelity, revolts at the very idea
of their being accounted forgeries.

P. 3. “When Livy speaks of shields
“sweating blood, of it’s raining hot
“stones, and the like, we justly re-
“ject and disbelieve the improbable
“assertions.”

Doubt-

LET.
IX.
}

LET.

IX.

Doubtless. But what comparison can be properly instituted between these hearsay stories concerning pagan prodigies, and a series of miracles, like those openly and publickly wrought, for years together, in the face of the world, by Moses and by Christ? The historical facts related by Livy may be true, whatever becomes of his prodigies; but, in the other case, the miracles are interwoven with, and indeed constitute, the body of the history. No separation can possibly be made; the whole must be received, or the whole must be rejected.

P. 3. “ Neither is any credit given
“ to the wonderful account of curing
“ diseases by the touch, said to be
“ possessed by Mr. Greatrix, though
“ we find it in the Philosophical
“ Transactions.”

Mr. Greatrix's general method of curing diseases was not, as I remember, simply and instantaneously by the *touch*, but by the operation of *stroking* the part affected, and that long continued, or frequently repeated. Sometimes, it is said, this stroking succeeded, and sometimes it failed. If (as we are informed in a note) Boyle, Wilkins, Cudworth, and other great men, attested the fact, that there were persons who found themselves relieved by this new device, undoubtedly there were such persons. But whether this relief were temporary; whether it were owing in any, or what degree, to the working of the imagination, or to a real physical change effected by the application of a warm hand, or any particular temperament in the constitution of the stroker—
these

LET.

IX.



LET. these are points, which the reader
IX. may find discussed in Mr. Boyle's
letter to Henry Stubbe, written upon
the occasion, in which he reproves
Stubbe, as he well might, for sup-
posing there was any thing necessarily
and properly miraculous in the affair.
Mr. Valentine Greatrix, by all ac-
counts, was an honest, harmless, me-
lancholy country gentleman, of the
kingdom of Ireland, who after having
gained great reputation by *stroking* in
England, returned to pass his latter
days quietly and peaceably in his na-
tive country, and was heard of no
more. He had no new doctrine to
promulgate, pretended to no divine
mission, and, I dare say, never thought
of his cures being employed to dis-
credit those of his Saviour. The won-
ders reported to have been wrought
formerly

formerly by Apollonius Tyaneus, and more lately at the tomb of Abbé Paris, have been applied to the same purpose. — But their day is over—and now all depends upon poor Mr. Valentine Greatrix!

LET.

IX.



P. 3. “The miracles of the Old Testament were all performed in those ages, of which we have no credible history.”

Pardon me—There cannot be a more credible history than that of Moses; since it is impossible that he could have written, or the Israelites received his history, had it not been true. Would he, think you, have called them together, and told them, to their faces, they had all heard and seen such and such wonders, when every man woman and child in the company knew they had never heard or
seen

LET. seen any thing of the kind? What?
IX. Not one honest soul to cry out
priestcraft, and *imposture*! Let these gentlemen try their hands in this way. They have often been requested to do it. Let one of them assemble the good people of London and Westminster, and tell them, that on a certain day and hour, he divided the Thames, and led them on dry ground over to Southwark; appealing to them for the truth of what he says. I should like to see the event of such an appeal. There are many such appeals recorded of Moses to his nation; and the book, in which these appeals are so recorded, contains the municipal law by which that nation has been governed, from the days of Moses to the dissolution of their polity. This is a fact, without a parallel upon earth;

earth; and let any man produce an hypothesis to account for it, consistently with the idea of Moses being a deceiver, which will abide the test of common sense for five minutes. If the deists can reason us out of our faith, let them do so: but we are not weak enough, as yet, to be sneered, or scoffed out of it.

LET.

IX.

P. 3. “What reply can be made to
 “those who affirm, that miracles have
 “always been confined to the early
 “and fabulous ages?”

The reply is easy — that miracles were performed, by Christ and his apostles, in the age of all others esteemed the most polite and learned; and that the adversaries of Christianity, in those days, never thought of denying the facts. — It was a piece of assurance reserved for these latter times.

L

—“That

LET. —“ That all nations have had them ;
 IX. “ but that they disappeared in propor-
 ~~~~~ “ tion as men became enlightened, and  
 “ capable of discovering imposture.”

Many nations have had them, true or false ; the false disappeared, when discovered to be so ; but the true will abide for ever. The Jewish rulers had their senses about them, as much as other people ; and those senses sharpened to the utmost, by envy and malice. Yet were they obliged to confess — “ This man doth many miracles.” — It may be added, that had there been no genuine miracles, there would have been no counterfeits.

Upon the whole — in this section, on so leading an article, the infidels have made no considerable progress. Rather, they can hardly be said, in the nautical phrase, to have *got under way*.

LET-

---

## L E T T E R    X.

OUR infidels seem inclined to deny, that Moses was the author of the books which go under his name. To this purpose, they observe (and the observation is certainly a judicious one) that he could not have written the account of his own death, which occurs in the last chapter of Deuteronomy. There are likewise, as we all very well know, a few other passages, here and there, allowed both by Jews and Christians to have been inserted since his time. But these will never prevent us from looking upon him as the author of the Pentateuch,

L 2

L E T:  
X.  
}

LET. X. teuch, any more than a few interpolated passages in the works of Josephus prevent us from ascribing those works to that author. The Pentateuch and the institutions it prescribes have been in being ever since the days of Moses: how, when, and by whom, could they have been forged?

But they themselves do not build much on this part of their performance; for they say, P. 4. “Supposing  
“these and other objections of the  
“like nature to be removed” — which they therefore suppose *may* be removed—“the scripture is frequently  
“contradictory with regard to facts.” Perhaps not. At least we must have some proof; and so, in their own words, *vide infra*.

—“And represents the all-wise  
“Creator as angry, repenting, unjust,  
“arbitrary,

“arbitrary, and”—in short—“as a  
“dæmon.”

LET.  
X.



That it represents him “as angry  
“and repenting,” is true; it likewise  
“represents him as coming down,  
“and going up”—all in condescen-  
tion to our capacities, and “after the  
“manner of men,” as every child  
knows among us. Nor can we speak  
of the deity in any other manner, if  
we would speak intelligibly to the  
generality of mankind.\*—That the  
Scripture should represent God as  
“unjust, arbitrary, and a dæmon,”  
is very bad indeed. Let us hope bet-  
ter things than these of the Scripture,  
however. When the several charges

\* See a remarkable acknowledgement of  
this point by Collins, in Leland’s View of the  
deistical writers, Letter 29. Vol. 2. P. 125.  
edit. 4th.

LET. are brought forward, we must endeavour to answer them. And notwithstanding the jokes of these gentlemen about the *pillory*, one or other of us, I am afraid, will be found to deserve it.

X.

P. 5. “ Did God create light before the sun ? ”

Most assuredly. Why not ? When the orb of the sun was formed on the fourth day, it became the appointed receptacle of light, from whence that glorious fluid was to be dispensed, for the benefit of the system. Before the formation of the solar orb, light was supported in action by some other means, as seemed good to the Creator. The earth might be made to revolve by the same agency, and then another question is answered ; “ How could time be divided into days, before  
“ the

“ the creation of the sun ; since a day  
 “ is the time between sun rise and sun  
 “ rise ? ”

LET.

X.

~~~~~

P. 5. “ How could God divide the
 “ light from darkness, since darkness
 “ is nothing but the mere privation
 “ of light ? ”

The light was divided from the darkness, as it is now, by the interposition of the earth. This is plain, because it follows, “ God called the
 “ light Day, and the darkness he
 “ called Night.” *Day* was the state of the hemisphere, on which light irradiated ; and *Night* was the state of the opposite hemisphere, on which rested the shadow projected by the body of the earth. I see no absurdity in all this. But may not the assertion, that “ darkness is only the
 “ mere privation of light,” be con-

L 4

troverted ?

LET. are brought forward, we must endeavour to answer them. And notwithstanding the jokes of these gentlemen about the *pillory*, one or other of us, I am afraid, will be found to deserve it.

X.

P. 5. “Did God create light before the sun?”

Most assuredly. Why not? When the orb of the sun was formed on the fourth day, it became the appointed receptacle of light, from whence that glorious fluid was to be dispensed, for the benefit of the system. Before the formation of the solar orb, light was supported in action by some other means, as seemed good to the Creator. The earth might be made to revolve by the same agency, and then another question is answered; “How could time be divided into days, before
“ the

“ the creation of the sun ; since a day
 “ is the time between sun rise and sun
 “ rise ? ”

LET.

X.

P. 5. “ How could God divide the
 “ light from darkness, since darkness
 “ is nothing but the mere privation
 “ of light ? ”

The light was divided from the darkness, as it is now, by the interposition of the earth. This is plain, because it follows, “ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.” *Day* was the state of the hemisphere, on which light irradiated ; and *Night* was the state of the opposite hemisphere, on which rested the shadow projected by the body of the earth. I see no absurdity in all this. But may not the assertion, that “ darkness is only the mere privation of light,” be con-

L 4 troverted ?

LET.

X.


troverted? When Moses says, that “darkness was upon the face of the “deep,” he did not mean that *nothing* was there. Of the darkness in Egypt it is said, that it “might be “*felt*.” And if the fire at the solar orb could be suddenly extinguished, would not the whole body of the celestial fluid instantly become a torpid congealed mass, and bind the creation in chains of adamant? At the beginning, “light was formed “out of darkness;” and therefore may not the truth be this? In scripture language, may not light be the celestial fluid, in a certain condition, and a certain degree of motion; and darkness the same fluid in a different condition, and without that degree of motion, or when such motion is interrupted by the interposition of an opake

opaque body? A room, for example, is full of light. Close the shutters, and that light instantly disappears. But what is become of it? It is not annihilated. No: the substance, which occasioned the sensation of light to the eye, is still present, as before, but occasions that sensation no longer. Let philosophers consider, and determine.

L E T.
X.
~~~~~

P. 5. “How could the firmament  
“be created, since there is no firma-  
“ment, and the false notion of it’s  
“existence is no more than an imagi-  
“nation of the ancient Grecians?”

Never again let critics, while they live, undertake to censure the writings of an author, before they understand something of the language in which he wrote. The *Greek* version of the LXX has indeed given us the word *στερεωμα*, which has produced in our translation the corresponding word  
*firm-*

LET. *firmament*. But these terms by no means furnish us with the true idea of the original word, which is derived from a verb signifying, to *spread abroad, expand, enlarge, make thin, &c.* The proper rendering then is, *the expansion*. But *expansion* of what? Doubtless, of the celestial fluid before mentioned, of light, air, æther, or whatever you please to call it. In Scripture it is styled the *heavens*.—"Who stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain!\*"—That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."† How far this expansion of the heavens extends, is another question. That portion of it diffused around the earth is well known by the name of *the atmosphere*; and its force may at any

\* Ps. civ.

† Isai. xl. 22.

time be felt by the hand, when laid on the aperture of an exhausted receiver. Sir Isaac Newton appears to have thought, that it might reach to the orb of Saturn, and beyond, even through all the celestial spaces. It seems to go out from one part of the system, and circulate to the other, and nothing is hidden from it's influence; to be in every place, and to possess powers which nothing is able to withstand. The Royal Society, by it's late worthy president, earnestly requested Dr. Priestley to make enquiry after this same wonderful substance; so that, by and by, it is likely, we may hear more of it;\* and gen-

LET.

X.



\* Many curious particulars concerning that, and other subjects connected with it, have already been communicated to the world by the Reverend and learned Mr. Jones, in his very valuable

LET. tlemen may by degrees be induced to  
 X. entertain a more favourable opinion of  
 the Jewish legislator; as it is said of  
 a great man, some years ago, that  
 having, in the decline of life, acci-  
 dentally dipped into a bible, he de-  
 clared, “he found Moses to be a cle-  
 “ ver fellow; and if he had met with  
 “ him a little sooner, he did not  
 “ know but he might have read him  
 “ through.”

P. 6. “How shall we explain the  
 “ business of the tree of knowlege of  
 “ good and evil, and of a tree of  
 “ life—?”

As my lords the bishops have kindly  
 taken so much pains to bring the infi-  
 dels into a good way of spending their

valuable work, entitled, *Physiological Disqui-  
 sitions, or Discourses on the natural philosophy of  
 the Elements*, printed for Rivington, and Robinson.

sunday

funday evenings at home, I think  
 it would not be amiss, if they were,  
 now and then, at such times, to read  
 a sermon. Let me therefore recom-  
 mend to them four discourses, by the  
 present Dean of Canterbury, on the  
 creation of man, the garden of Eden,  
 the tree of life, and the tree of know-  
 lege. It may appear, perhaps, that  
 the Mosaic history is not necessarily  
 so pregnant with absurdities, as they  
 are apt to suppose; but that a ra-  
 tional account may be given of man's  
 primæval state, as there described,  
 and of that trial, to which he was sub-  
 jected by his maker.

LET.  
 X.  
 ~~~~~

In another part of the pamphlet,
 P. 39, it is objected to us, "that
 "Adam was threatened with death
 "on the day of his transgression, but
 "lived at least 800 years afterwards.
 The

L E T.

X.



The execution of the sentence, then, was respited, in consideration of his repentance, agreeably to the proceedings of God with his descendants, both individuals and communities, in numberless instances upon record. Transgression rendered him mortal, and his life from thenceforward was a gradual progress, through labour, pain, and sorrow, towards death.

L E T.

L E T T E R X I.

P 3. “ Is the account of the fall of
• “ man, in the book of Genesis,
“ physical, or allegorical ? ”

L E T.
X I.

I apprehend it to be an historical narrative of what really passed in the garden of Eden. With regard to the parties concerned, there is no dispute concerning three of them, the Creator, the Man, and the Woman. But there appears a fourth, whose nature and character it has been thought not so easy to ascertain. He is called THE SERPENT ; but is throughout represented as an intelligent being, and treated as such. He proves himself
also

LET. also to be the TEMPTER. Can we
XI. doubt, for one moment, who this being is? The SERPENT, the OLD SERPENT, the DRAGON, are the appellations bestowed in the New Testament, upon the great adversary of mankind, the TEMPTER, the DECEIVER, the ACCUSER, the MURDERER. One question remains, whether, upon the occasion before us, he assumed the form of the natural serpent, or be only described under the name, and by imagery and expressions borrowed from the corresponding nature and qualities of that creature, and applied to him, by analogy? Either way, it is beyond all controversy, with us who believe the Scriptures, that HE is the principal agent in the whole affair: HE is all along intended, and addressed; on HIM was the weight and force of the
tremen-

tremendous sentence to light; between HIS seed and that of the woman was the enmity to subsist; and HIS head was to be finally crushed by victorious Messiah. However Christians may have differed in their interpretation of particular words and phrases, this is the substance of what always has been, and always must be maintained among them, upon the subject. If all be confined to the natural serpent, or beast of the field, the account must then be, as Dr. Middleton contends, an *apologue*, or *fable*, with a moral couched under it. But the writers of the New Testament ever refer to it as true history, and invariably declare SATAN to have been the SERPENT, who “through his subtlety deceived Eve.” The account of man’s redemption is no *apologue*, but true history, built

M

upon

LET.

XI.



LET. upon and presupposing the truth and
XI. reality of his temptation and fall,
effected by the wiles of his enemy ;
who, for that reason, was to be crushed,
together with his works, by the power
of the Redeemer. As to the change
wrought in the natural serpent after
the fall (a subject on which the infi-
dels divert themselves more than they
will divert any body else) no man
can deny that a change might take
place ; and no man can precisely as-
certain the nature of such change,
unless he knew the form in which that
species of creatures was originally
made. Nor does the sentence (so far
as it may relate to the natural ser-
pent) imply, that he should *chuse*
dust for his food, or that it should
be his *only* food. They who grovel in
dust, must sometimes come in for a
mouth-

mouthful. The expression intimates to us the very lowest degree of prostration, humiliation, and the most abject wretchedness, similar to that other of the prophet, “His enemies shall *lick the dust.*”—Let gentlemen take care, that they are not of the number. The history of man’s fall is no fable, and will hereafter be found no jest.

LET.

XI.



P. 6.—“A tree of life, which God
“was obliged to guard by Cherubim
“and a flaming sword, lest man
“should eat of the fruit, and become
“immortal?”

The passage here alluded to has long been a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. It may, perhaps, cease to be so, when the following particulars are duly weighed and considered—

1. There is no reason in the world for supposing the Cherubim here men-

M 2

tioned

LET. tioned to have been different from
 XI. those described at large, as exhibited in vision to Ezekiel, figures of which were placed in the tabernacle and temple. Moses says, “God placed “*Cherubim*.” The people for whom he wrote were perfectly well acquainted with the nature, form, and design of them. The prophet, upon beholding them in vision, declares, “I knew that they were *the Cherubim*.”

2. The words rendered in our translation, “A flaming sword turning “every way,” may, and, it is apprehended, ought to be rendered, “A “devouring fire, turning, or rolling “upon itself;” as the Cherubim, which Ezekiel saw, are said to have stood in the midst of a fire “catching, “or infolding itself.” The expressions are equivalent, and correspond exactly.

3. This

3. This body of *fire*, generally attended by, and subsisting in a *cloud*, is styled “the glory of the Lord;” and always accompanied the appearance of the Cherubim.

LET.

XI.



4. The most ancient expositions left in the world, which are the two Jewish Targums, paraphrase the verse thus; “And he thrust out the man, and
“caused the glory of his presence to
“dwell of old, at the east of the
“garden of Eden, above the two
“Cherubim.”

5. If such be the real import of the passage, and it relate only to the manifestation of the divine presence, by it's well known symbol, above or between the Cherubim, may we not fairly and reasonably conclude, that the design of such manifestation, at the east of the garden of Eden, was the same

LET.

XI.



as it was confessedly afterwards, in the tabernacle and temple; namely, to reveal the will of God for the conduct of his people; to accept the sacrifices offered to him; and favourably to regard the prefigurative atonement made by “the sprinkling of blood, without which there was (after the fall) no remission?” And all this was done “to KEEP, OR PRESERVE, the way to the Tree of Life,” immortality being now the object of a new covenant, with other conditions. There were good reasons why our first parent should not be suffered, in the state to which he had reduced himself, to “put forth his hand, and take, and eat.” The dispensation of Eden was at an end. Old sacraments were abolished, and new ones were to be instituted. In the spirit of repentance
and

and faith the delinquents were to wait,
“till one happier man should regain
“the blissful seat,” and “open the
“kingdom of heaven to all believers;”
himself the true TREE OF LIFE IN THE
PARADISE OF GOD.

LET.
XI.

To the learned and candid of all denominations these remarks are submitted. If there be any thing in them, the text in question, which has been so long the butt of infidels, and the stumblingblock of believers, not only becomes cleared of it's difficulties, but throws a light and a glory on the whole patriarchal dispensation.

L E T T E R X I I .

L E T .
X I I .
~~~~~

**P** 7. “The account of the Flood  
• “is very embarrassing.”

Possibly it may—There was a great deal done in a little time ; and neither these gentlemen nor myself were present to see how it was done.

Ibid. “From whence came the water ?”

From the place to which it returned, and in which it has remained (God be praised) ever since. The globe of the earth, as the Scriptures inform us, is a shell, or hollow sphere, inclosing within it a body of waters, styled “the great deep,” or abyfs. The  
earth,

earth, at the creation, was covered on all sides with water, which, at the command of God, retired to this abyss beneath, from whence, at the same command, it came forth in the days of Noah ; and having performed it's task, was again dismissed, as before. “ The fountains of the great “ deep,” by the divine power, were “ broken up ;” gravity for a time was suspended, or overcome ; the waters were violently thrown upwards into the atmosphere, and descended in torrents and cataracts of rain. If we measure the circumference of the earth, and gauge it's contents, we shall find water enough, I dare say, to answer every purpose mentioned in the book of Genesis.\* The shells, and

LET.  
XII.  
}

\* “ Some are puzzled to find water enough  
“ to form an universal deluge : to assist their  
endeavours

LET.

XII.



other marine bodies, deposited in the bowels and on the tops of the highest mountains, all the world over, afford sufficient evidence, that the waters have been there. If any one can give a better account than Moses has done, when and how they came there, e'en let us have it. A learned and respectable person expresses his surprise, that the shell fish should *transport themselves* from the bed of the ocean, where they were much better accommodated, to so uncomfortable a situation as the summit of a barren mountain. Alas, worthy Sir, it was

“endeavours it may be remarked, that was it  
“all precipitated which is dissolved in the air,  
“it might probably be sufficient to cover the  
“surface of the whole earth to the depth of  
“above thirty feet.” WATSON'S Chemical  
Essays, Vol. III, P. 87.

no *party of pleasure*! Whenever they took the journey, depend upon it, it was—"upon compulsion, Hal!"

LET.  
XII.  
~~~~~

P. 8. —"Neither can we easily persuade infidels, that *the windows of heaven were opened*, while they know "it has no windows."

They can know nothing of the matter, till they know the meaning of the phrase, and its usage in the Scriptures, where the heavens are said to be *opened* when it rains, and *shut* when rain is withholden, and the like. What is more common than such modes of expression are in all languages? Suppose, to describe an uncommon fall of rain, I should say "the *fluices* of heaven "were opened;" would it not be the height of absurdity to reply, that "the fluices of heaven cannot be "opened, because it has no fluices?"

Every

LET. Every body knows the expression to
 XII. be metaphorical. But the truth is,
 { that the original word * does not
 signify *windows*, according to the
 modern idea, but rather *clefts*, *fissures*,
passages: these were *opened*, the clouds
 were *rent*, as we say. The waters
 rising from beneath met the rains
 descending from above, and, uniting
 their forces, they deluged the world.

P. 7. “It (the flood) ceased not by
 “annihilation of the waters, but they
 “were evaporated by a wind.”

There was no occasion for annihi-
 lating the waters. They returned to
 the place from whence they came.
 And as to the *wind*, which God caused
 to pass over the earth, it was not in-
 tended merely to *evaporate*, but, like
 that which moved upon the chaos at

* אַרְבּוֹת

the

the creation, to separate the waters from the earth, and carry them down to their former habitation. We have no adequate idea, perhaps, of this element the air, and of what mighty things it can effect, when employed in full force by it's Creator.

LET.
XII.
~

P. 8. "It seems strange, that so
" vast an assemblage of animals could
" be inclosed in an *ark*, or *chest*."

— But why, *chest*? The Hebrew word is used only for this ark of Noah, and that in which the child Moses was committed to the Nile; both hollow vessels, constructed to float upon the waters. But there was something pleasant in the notion of the whole animal world being shut up in a *chest*; and the temptation was not to be resisted.

— "Which had but one window
" (which

L E T. “ (which window was kept shut for
XII. “ more than five months) without
“ being stifled for want of air.”

All this, the infidels say, “ seems
“ strange”—it does so; but it is not more
strange, than *true*. That air would be
necessary to support the life of the crea-
tures inclosed in the ark, was as well
known to him who enjoined it to be
built, as it can be to them. Our con-
clusion therefore is, that either a pro-
per supply of it was conveyed in some
manner from without, or else the air
within, by means natural or preterna-
tural, was preserved in a state fit for res-
piration. There might be various con-
trivances in and about the ark, which
are not mentioned in so concise a his-
tory. The general facts, of which it
concerned us to be informed, are these
two; that the world was destroyed
by

by a flood; and that one family, with a number of animals sufficient to replenish the earth, was preserved in a vessel constructed for that purpose.

LET.
XII.
~~~~~

It is asked farther, How the small family in the ark could give due attendance to the wants of so many creatures; and how the carnivorous animals were supplied with food proper for them?

Many more questions of a like kind might easily be asked, if one were to set one's wits to work upon the subject. But it should be considered, that the author who relates this transaction, relates it to have been carried on under the immediate direction and inspection of God. By divine power the creatures were brought to Noah, and the fierce dispositions of the wild kind overruled and mollified, that  
they



LET.

XII.



they might live quietly and peaceably with one another, and with those of the same sort, for the time appointed. Otherwise, instead of asking, how they were taken care of and fed in the ark, it should first have been asked, how they came into it, or stayed a single moment in it, before the flood began?—When “the wolf thus dwelt  
“with the lamb, the lion might *eat*  
“*hay* like the ox.”—We should not recur to miracles upon every occasion; but if the event under consideration took place at all, it must, from the very nature of it, have been miraculous, and out of the common course, as it is said to have been. Some means of preserving the *fish* might therefore be provided by their *maker*, notwithstanding the dilemma to which the learned and respectable writer above-mentioned



LET. natural one. “ When, in the com-  
 XII. “ mon courſe of things, I bring a  
 “ cloud over the earth, under certain  
 “ circumſtances, I do ſet my bow in  
 “ it. That bow ſhall be from hence-  
 “ forth a token of the covenant I now  
 “ make with you to drown the earth  
 “ no more by a flood. Look upon  
 “ it, and remember this covenant.  
 “ As certainly as the bow is formed,  
 “ by the operation of phyſical cauſes,  
 “ in the cloud, and as long as it conti-  
 “ nues to be thus formed, ſo certainly  
 “ and ſo long ſhall my covenant endure,  
 “ ſtanding faſt for evermore, as this  
 “ faithful witneſs in heaven.” Jacob,  
 we are told, \* “ took a ſtone, and ſet  
 “ it up for a pillar, and ſaid, This  
 “ pillar be witneſs.” God, in like  
 manner (if we may ſo expreſs it)

\* Gen. xxxi. 45, 52.

“ took

“took the rainbow, and said, this  
 “bow be witness.” Neither the stone  
 nor the rainbow were new created for  
 the purpose. When the Jews behold  
 the rainbow, they bless God, who  
 remembers his covenant, and is faith-  
 ful to his promise. And the tradition  
 of this it’s designation to proclaim  
 comfort to mankind was strong among  
 the heathen; for according to the  
 mythology of the Greeks, the *rainbow*  
 was the daughter of *Wonder*, “a sign  
 “to mortal men,” \* and regarded,  
 upon it’s appearance, as the messenger  
 of the celestial deities. Can we any  
 where find a more striking instance of  
 the sublime, than in the following  
 short description of it? “Look upon  
 “the rainbow, and praise him who  
 “made it: very beautiful it is in the

LET.

XII.



\* Τέρας μεγάλων ανδρῶπων. Hom.

LET. "brightness thereof: it compasseth  
XII. "the heaven about with a glorious  
"circle; and the hands of the most  
"High have bended it!"

LET.


---

## L E T T E R XIII.

P<sup>10.</sup> “What answer shall we  
“give to those who are in-  
“clined to deny, that an all-powerful  
“and just God could make use of the  
“most unjustifiable means to attain  
“his great purpose of aggrandizing  
“the posterity of Abraham?”

L E T.  
XIII.  
~

The answer, without doubt, must be, either that the means in question (all circumstances duly known and considered) were not unjustifiable; or, that they were used by man, and only *permitted* by God. For men often make use of means to attain their own purposes, by which they unwittingly

LET. become the instruments of carrying  
XIII. into execution the counsels of God;  
 yet are they not hereby justified in the use of such means. All the actions of holy men of old, related in Scripture, are not to be deemed blameless, because related in *Scripture*, or because related of *them*; though there may often have been circumstances, imperfectly known at this distance of time, which rendered them less blameable than they now appear to be; and therefore they are not to be judged of, without great caution and circumspection. These, perhaps, are in no instances more necessary, for that reason, to be observed, than in reviewing those parts of sacred story, which relate to the *birthright* and  *blessing* of the ancient patriarchs.

Ibid.

Ibid. “ Could this benevolent and  
 “ just Being approve of the ungene-  
 “ rous advantage which Jacob took  
 “ over his faint and hungry brother?”

LET.

XIII.

That the crime of Esau, in being so ready to part with his birthright, was of a more atrocious nature than at first sight it may seem to have been, is evident from the remark subjoined in the narrative ; “ thus Esau *despised* “ his birthright;” as also from his being stigmatized by St Paul with an epithet denoting *profaneness*, and *impiety*, qualities which were therefore manifested in the act of lightly and wantonly parting with the birthright, and those high and heavenly privileges annexed to it—I say, *lightly* and *wantonly*; because, though he returned faint and hungry from the field, there could be no danger of his *starving* in



LET.  
XIII.  
~~~~~

his father's house. He parted with it, as men often do now, for the sake of gratifying a liquorish appetite towards that which was his brother's, "for one morsel of meat," one particular dish, which he vehemently affected. There was no reason why a privilege thus rejected should be again conferred. Like the Jews, in an instance somewhat similar, he "judged himself unworthy." He cast it from him, and it became another's—With regard to the part borne by Jacob, in buying what Esau was thus ready to sell, there seems no necessity for pronouncing him faultless. The fact is related like many others, without approbation or censure; and the designs of God were accomplished by the free agency of man. To his own master he standeth or falleth, respecting this and every other action of his life.

Ibid.

Ibid. “ Could this omnipotent and
“ upright Spirit adopt no method of
“ distinguishing his favourite Jacob,
“ but that of fraud and lies, by which
“ he deprived the same unsuspecting
“ brother of his father’s blessing?”

L E T.
XIII.
~~~~~

The following considerations may assist in directing us to form a right judgment of this matter.

1. The proposition of deceiving Isaac originated not with Jacob, but with Rebekah. Jacob remonstrated against it, as likely to bring a curse upon him, rather than a blessing; nor would consent to perform his part, till she engaged to take all the blame on herself—“ On me be thy curse,  
“ my son; only obey my voice.”

2. From this speech, and from the earnestness and solicitude discovered by Rebekah, it may not unfairly be presumed,

LET.

XIII.




presumed, that she had some special reason for what she did; that Isaac was about to take a wrong step in a concern of great moment, which ought to be prevented, and could be prevented by no other means.

3. The rectitude of Rebekah's judgment seems evidently to have been recognized and allowed by Isaac, at the conclusion of the matter. For though he had blessed Jacob, intending to bless Esau, yet, as if recollecting himself, he confirmed and ratified that blessing in the strongest terms; "Yea, and " he shall be blessed." Still farther—at sending him away, he again repeated the benediction, in the most solemn and affecting manner; "God " give thee the blessing of Abraham!" It is hard to assign any other reason, why, if so disposed, upon discovering the

the

the fraud, he might not have reversed the proceeding. Nay, by the kind meeting of the brothers afterwards, one should be inclined to suppose, that Esau himself acquiesced at length in the propriety of what had been done.

4. If such were the case, Isaac was only deceived into what was right, and what himself acknowledged to be so, in the conclusion. The deception was like those often practised by physicians for the benefit of their patients; and casuists must decide upon it in the same manner. The offence of Jacob is certainly alleviated, if not entirely taken off, by the circumstance of Rebekah pledging herself to bear the blame; as the conduct of Rebekah seems justified by that of Isaac ratifying and confirming to Jacob the blessing

LET.  
XIII.  


LET.  
XIII.

bleffing originally intended for Efau: Upon the whole, if there were an offence, it was one that might be forgiven; and if God, notwithstanding, continued to blefs Jacob, he did forgive it, and had reasons for fo doing.

Ibid. “ In fhort, how fhall we juftify God for the continual diftinction he is faid to have beftowed on a people, who from their own annals appear to have been unparalleled for cruelty, ingratitude, inurbanity, &c.”

The article of *cruelty*, for proof of which we are referred, in a note, to the acts of Joshua, may be deferred till we come professedly to confider thofe acts. Their *ingratitude* towards God their Saviour was indeed flagrant; but perhaps might be matched *elsewhere*. As to the charge of *inurbanity*, it was brought againft them by Voltaire,

taire, who spake of them as a  
“wretched nation, ever ignorant, and  
“vulgar, and strangers to the Arts.”

LET.

XIII.

}

The following reply was made to him. When the infidels shall have duly considered it, we shall hope to be favoured with their sentiments upon it.

“Does it become you, a writer of  
“the 18th century, to charge the an-  
“cient Hebrews with ignorance? A  
“people, who, while your barbarous  
“ancestors, whilst even the Greeks and  
“Latins, wandering in the woods,  
“could scarcely procure for themselves  
“cloathing and a settled subsistence,  
“already possessed all arts of necessity,  
“and some of mere pleasure; who  
“not only knew how to feed and  
“rear cattle, till the earth, work up  
“wood, stone, and metals, weave  
“cloaths,

L E T. “ cloaths, dye wool, embroider stuffs,  
XIII. “ polish and engrave on precious  
“ stones, but who, even then, add-  
“ ing to manual arts those of taste  
“ and refinement, surveyed land, ap-  
“ pointed their festivals according to  
“ the motions of the heavenly bodies,  
“ and ennobied their solemnities by  
“ the pomp of ceremonies, by the  
“ sound of instruments, music, and  
“ dancing ; who even then committed  
“ to writing the history of the origin  
“ of the world, that of their own  
“ nation, and their ancestors ; who  
“ had poets and writers skilled in all  
“ the sciences then known, great and  
“ brave commanders, a pure wor-  
“ ship, just laws, a wise form of  
“ government ; in short, the only  
“ one of all ancient nations, that has  
“ left

“left us authentic monuments of L E T.  
“genius and of literature. Can this XIII.  
“nation be justly charged with ig-  
“*norance and inurbanity?*”

LET-



---

## L E T T E R    X I V .

L E T .  
X I V .  
~~~~~

P I I . “ Unbelievers affirm, that
“ a just God could not punish
“ Pharaoh for an hardness of heart, of
“ which he himself (God) was evi-
“ dently the cause.”

When we meet with an assertion apparently contrary to all the truth and equity in the world, it is but common justice to any writer, human or divine, to suppose, that we mistake his meaning, and that the expression employed to convey it is capable of an interpretation different from that which may at first present itself. We cannot, for a moment, imagine,
that

that God secretly influences a man's will, or suggests any wicked stubborn resolution to his mind, and then punishes him for it. We are therefore to consider, by what other means, not incompatible with his nature and attributes, he may be said, in a certain sense, and without impropriety, to harden a man's heart.

There are many ways by which we may conceive this effect to be wrought, without running into the absurdity and impiety abovementioned. The heart may be hardened by those very respites, miracles, and mercies, intended to soften it; for if they do not soften it, they will harden it — God is sometimes said to do that which he permits to be done by others, in the way of judgement and punishment; as when his people rejected his own

O righteous

LET.

XIV.



LET. righteous laws, he is said to have
 XIV. “given them” the idolatrous ones of
 their heathen neighbours, “statutes
 “that were not good”—The heart may
 be hardened by his withdrawing that
 grace it has long resisted; men may
 be given up to a reprobate mind; as
 they *would* not see when they possessed
 the faculty of sight, the use of that
 faculty may be taken from them, and
 they may be abandoned to blindness.
 But all this is judicial, and supposes
 previous voluntary wickedness, which
 it is designed to punish. The case of
 Pharaoh is exactly that of the Jews.
 God is said to have “blinded their
 “eyes, and hardened their hearts.”
 But how? As it is here represented?
 Would he do this to his own people?
 Was HE the cause of their rejecting
 their Messiah; Or does he—can he—
 intend

intend to say that he was so? — Let
 us hear no more of this, for the sake
 of common sense and common ho-
 nesty, if such things are yet left
 among us.

LET.
 XIV.
 }
 }
 }

But it is asserted, that when the
 objection is urged by unbelievers,
 “ we (Christians) usually answer, that
 “ the potter has power over the clay,
 “ to fashion it as he lists ; ” to which
 the infidels in the gayety of their hearts
 triumphantly reply, that “ if the clay
 “ in the hands of the potter were ca-
 “ pable of happiness and misery, ac-
 “ cording to the fashion impressed on
 “ it, the potter must be malevolent
 “ and cruel, who can give the pre-
 “ ference to inflicting pain instead of
 “ happiness.”

The similitude of the *potter* is em-
 ployed by St. Paul : but it does not

LET. stand exactly in his writings, as it
XIV. does in the pamphlet before us. By
him it is adduced in proof of one
single point only, that when men are
become sinners, and obstinate sinners,
God has a right of dealing with them
according to his pleasure, and as may
best answer the purposes of his dis-
pensations, respecting others, as well
as themselves. The comparison is
first used by God himself (Jer. xviii.)
and applied to the power by him
exercised of destroying or preserving
an offending people, as they should
either continue in sin, or repent and
amend. It is applied precisely in the
same manner by St. Paul, (Rom. ix.)
to shew (as appears by the verses im-
mediately following) that God might,
without injustice, deal with the Jews,
as he had before dealt with an har-
dened

dened Pharaoh; and for the same reason; because they had refused to hearken to his voice, as Pharaoh had done. He might reserve them for a more signal destruction, which would display his glory, and forward the conversion of the nations; while, at the same time, he shewed the riches of his mercy to such, whether Jews or Gentiles, as embraced the Gospel; whom he owned as the spiritual seed of Abraham, and his peculiar people. Whoever will condescend with candour and attention to peruse Dr. Whitby's annotations on Rom. ix. cannot, I think, have the shadow of a doubt left on his mind, respecting either the drift of St. Paul's reasoning, or the truth of it.

P. 12. "We know it is our duty
 "to believe that Aaron's miracle was

O 3

"per-

LET.

XIV.



LET: “performed by the power of God;
XIV. “but we are at a loss to discover, by
“what power the magicians per-
“formed theirs.”

It is a pleasure to me to find these gentlemen solicitous about the performance of their *duty*; and therefore, let me address to them a word of consolation and encouragement. Be not swallowed up by overmuch uneasiness, as touching this matter. Rest satisfied that whatever may be determined concerning the wonders wrought by the magicians, whether they are supposed to have been wrought in reality, or appearance only; by legerdemain, or the power of evil spirits, through the permission of God, willing to make his power known in this grand contest—either way, the argument drawn from miracles, in support of Revelation,
tion,

tion, will remain in it's full strength. The superiority of the God of Israel was manifested, and the contest yielded by the adversaries, who could not protect themselves or their friends from the maladies and plagues inflicted by omnipotence. Whatever the magicians did, or however they did it, it appeared evidently, they might as well have done nothing. Mankind can never be ensnared by pretences of this sort, when they see such pretences controlled and overruled by a superior power.—You are men of too much sense, I am sure, to be found on the side of Jannes and Jambres, or to take a *retainer* from Simon Magus.

P. 13. “Where did the magicians
“find water to practise their art up-

O 4

“on

LET.
XIV.

LET. “on, since Aaron had already turned
 XIV. “it all into blood?”



Not *all*, gentlemen, by your leave. The Egyptians not being able to drink of the water of the river, “digged round about it (as you are told*) for water to drink.” And, depend upon it, they found some, or it had been very bad with them indeed.—But the truth is, that nothing is more common among writers, both sacred and profane, than the use of the word *all*, not in an *absolute*, but a *relative*, or *comparative* sense, as implying *many*, *some of all sorts*, &c. By adverting to this simple and obvious consideration, you might have spared yourselves the trouble of labouring in vain, through three or four pages, to be witty on the subject of Pharaoh’s

* Exod. vii. 24.

cattle being killed more than once,
and such like pleasant conceits.—
These are poor *piddling* doings; but
we shall have some *flashing*, by and by,
to make amends.

LET.

XIV.

P. 15. “ Some weak believers are
“ in doubt, whether so mean, so un-
“ generous, and so dishonest an act,
“ as borrowing the jewels of the
“ Egyptians, without any intention
“ of returning them, did not rather
“ originate in that disposition, which
“ characterizes the Jews to this day,
“ than in the command of the just
“ God, who certainly could need no
“ such tricks to accomplish his inten-
“ tions.”

Much reason have we to wish, that
some one among the unbelievers would
take the pains to acquire a moderate
stock of Hebrew, that so he “ might
“ have

LET.

XIV.



“ have to give,” upon such occasions as these, “ to him that needeth.” For that the Israelites, in the proper sense of the English word, *borrowed* these jewels, or gave the Egyptians reason to expect a *return* of them, does by no means appear from the original, to which a man, when he is disposed to play the *critic* upon an author, should always have recourse, if he be solicitous to deserve the character of an honest man, and a scholar. The general signification of the word * is to *ask*, to *require*, to *demand*. In the three texts ‡ relative to this transaction, the LXX, † and in the two former, the Vulgate, || render it by a term of similar import. It is said, “ the Israelites *spoiled* the Egyptians;”

* לָקַח. † Exod. III. 22. XI. 2. XII. 35.

‡ Αἵτεω || Postulo.

they

they took these jewels, vessels, &c. and the Egyptians gave them, as the *spoil* of a conquered enemy, glad to escape with life, and to dismiss a much injured people; they took these spoils, as wages due, and withholden, for immense labour undergone; as a recompence for long and cruel oppression; some of them, probably, as *insignia* of the vanquished Egyptian deities, to be afterwards employed in the service of the true God, whom Egypt, as well as Israel, ought to have acknowledged and adored; who, as the great Lord and Proprietor of all things in heaven and earth, taketh from one, and giveth to another, according to his good pleasure, founded evermore in wisdom, truth, and righteousness; who at the beginning foretold *, that

LET.

XIV.



* Exod. iii. 22.

LET.
XIV.
~

the Egyptians should be spoiled, and when the time came, directed his people so to spoil them. “ God gave “ them favour :” the act was his, and the Israelites were instruments only in his hands.—If men are pleased to concern themselves at all with the history, they must take the whole as it stands, neither blaming those on whom no blame can properly fall, nor accusing their Maker of iniquity, who can be guilty of none, but at a future day, to the confusion of all his blasphemers, will be fully “ justified in “ his saying, and clear when he is “ judged.”

One cannot but bless oneself to see how ready these writers are, at every turn, to give sentence against the people of God, in favour of their enemies ; as if they emulated the
same

fame of a set of worthies in the fifth century, called *Cainites*; who, having reprobated the Saviour of the world, his prophets and apostles, are said to have adopted into the catalogue of their saints, and paid especial honours to the memories of—Cain, Korah, Dathan, Esau, the Sodomites, and Judas Iscariot.

As to their intimation, at P. 17. that, because Egypt was a country intersected by canals, there never were any *horses* or *chariots* in it, they ought for this to take their part in the next general flogging, at Westminster School. During the operation, perhaps, the captain of the school will be enjoined by the master to read aloud the following short passage from Rollin's Ancient History—
“Foot, Horse, and Chariot-races
“ were

LET.

XIV.



LET. “ were performed in Egypt with won-
XIV. “ derful agility, and the world could
“ not shew better horsemen than the
“ Egyptians.”*

In the next letter we shall proceed
to the consideration of a topic entirely
new—BALAAM’S ASS.

* Vol. 1. P. 48.

LET-

LETTER XV.

THE first difficulty here is, “Why
“ God should be angry with
“ Balaam for going, when he had
“ given him leave to go?”

LET.
XV.

To be sure, all circumstances continuing the same, it would be strange—
—it would be passing strange. But if
circumstances varied, the divine conduct
might vary too. “Go,” says God,
but—observe—“the word which
“ I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou
“ do.*” Balaam seems to have set
out with a resolution to obey; for
like a man, and like an honest man,

* Numb. xxii. 20.

LET. he had boldly and nobly said, “ If
 XV. “ Balak would give me his house-full
 “ of silver and gold, I cannot go be-
 “ yond the word of the Lord my
 “ God, to do less or more.*” How-
 ever, it is possible, that upon the
 road, either by the persuasive argu-
 ments of the princes of Moab who
 accompanied him, or by the wicked
 suggestions of his own deceitful heart,
 an alteration had taken place in his
 mind, and interest had gained the
 ascendant over duty. I say, this is
possible: considering his character, it is
probable: but a passage in the history
 itself seems to make it *certain*. “ I
 “ went out to withstand thee, be-
 “ cause thy *way* is *perverse* before
 “ me.†” But what *way*? Not mere-
 ly his journey, for he had leave to

* Numb. xxii. 18. † Ver. 32.

take

take it, conditionally. *Way* must necessarily be understood in it's *moral* acceptation. Something was wrong in the *course* of his thoughts, his imaginations, in his design and intention, now changed from what they were at setting out. “The foolishness (or wickedness) of man PERVERTETH his way.*” Therefore God was angry, not, as it is in our translation, “because he went; †” but “as he was going—while he was on the road. ‡” Upon Balaam's humbling himself, and offering to return, leave of proceeding is again granted, but with a significant repetition of the original proviso—“Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.§”—“Go on; but

LET.
XV.
}

* Prov. XIX. 3. † Numb. XXII. 22s

‡ כי הולך § Ver. 35.

LET. “remember, to me your heart is open,
 XV. “your desires are known. If you betray
 { “your trust, the drawn sword of the
 “angel waits to punish your duplicity
 “as it ought to be punished.”—This
 appears to be a fair and reasonable solution of the first difficulty.

As to the second, it is observed, P. 17. that “the as exhibited a specimen of penetration and prudence, “of which the asses of modern times “seem to be divested.”

The observation brings to my mind one made upon the subject some years ago, by that father of the faithless, Dr. Tindal. “What a number of “ideas must Balaam’s as have (says “he) to be able to reason with her “master, when she saw and knew an “angel?”*—Will these gentlemen do

* Christianity as old, &c. P. 254.

me the favour to accept Dr. Waterland's answer?—"Now, as to the
 "number of ideas which the ass must
 "have; I believe she had as many as
 "asses commonly have: and he may
 "please to count them at his leisure,
 "for his own amusement.*"—If they
 have ever an anatomist among them,
 I dare say he could very easily demonstrate, from the configuration of its organs, the impossibility of the creature's speaking at all. And his demonstration would be just as much to the purpose, as Tindal's question. The plain truth is this—If it pleased God to take this particular method of
 "rebuking the prophet's madness,†"
 the severest philosophy cannot question his power to produce sounds articulate

LET.

XV.



* Scripture Vindicated, i. 42.

† 2 Pet. ii. 16.

LET: and significant, either *with* the organs
 XV. of any animal, or *without* them. A
 voice proceeding from a dumb creature was made, upon this occasion, to teach a lesson similar to that deduced, upon another, from the example of the same creature—"The ox knoweth his
 "owner, and the ass his master's
 "crib; but man doth not know—a
 "prophet doth not consider.*"—If it be objected, that the occasion was not worthy; that it was not *dignus vindice nodus*; we shall certainly take the liberty to think that God Almighty was a much better judge of that matter than the infidels can possibly be, even were they ten times wiser than they are. The whole transaction, in which Balaam bore so conspicuous a part, is of very great moment, and

* See Isaiah, i. 3.

the history which relates it, full of
 deep instruction, as well as abounding
 in the beautiful and sublime.*

LET.

XV.

A predecessor of these gentlemen, Mr. Chubb, I remember, called the Supreme Being to a very severe account for his conduct respecting the Canaanites; and they seem disposed to do the same, in a bitter, sarcastical, canting section, P. 19, &c. the drift of which is to compare the Israelites in Canaan to the Spaniards in Mexico, and represent the former as the more detestable people of the two. The objection will perhaps be obviated, and it's futility evinced, by proposing the few following queries.

1. Has not the Almighty a fove-

* “Nihil habet Poesis Hebræa in ullo genere limatius aut exquisitius.” LOWTH de Sacra Poesi Heb. Præl. xx, ad fin.

L E T. reign right over the lives and fortunes
XV. of his creatures?

2. May not the iniquity of nations become such, as to justify him in destroying those nations?

3. Is he not free to chuse the instruments by which he will effect such destruction?

4. Is there more injustice or cruelty in his effecting it by the *sword*, than by famine, pestilence, whirlwind, deluge, or earthquake?

5. When these latter means are employed, do not women, children, and cattle, perish with the men?

6. Does not God take away thousands of children every day, and perhaps more than half the species, under ten years of age?

7. Does not the circumstance of a divine commission entirely alter the state
of

of the case, and distinguish the Israelites from the Spaniards, as much as a warrant from the magistrate distinguishes the executioner from the murderer?

LET.

XV.

8. May not men be assured of God's having given them such a commission?

9. Were not the Israelites thus assured; and is there not at this day incontestable evidence upon record, that they were so?

This is a fair and regular distribution of the subject into it's several parts. Whenever the infidels shall find themselves in a humour to discuss all or any of them, we must consider what they may offer farther upon this topic.

P. 18. They cite the following passage from Judges, 1. 19. "The
" Lord was with Judah, and he drove

P 4

" out

LET: "out the inhabitants of the moun-
 XV. "tain: but could not drive out the
 "inhabitants of the valley, because
 "they had chariots of iron." They sub-
 join—"It is difficult to conceive how
 "the Lord of heaven and earth, who
 "had so often changed the order, and
 "suspended the established laws of
 "nature, in favour of his people,
 "could not succeed against the in-
 "habitants of a valley, because they
 "had chariots of iron!"

At the end of this sentence is placed only a single note of admiration. There ought to have been at least half a dozen; for never was any thing more truly wonderful! The "diffi-
 "culty of conceiving it" is very great indeed! So great, that one should have thought, for very pity's sake, our adversaries would have looked
 about

about them a little, to see whether they understood the text, and whether there were no possible way of bringing us off. As they have not been kind enough to do it for us, we must e'en try what we can do for ourselves.

We apprehend, then, in the first place, that when it is said, "HE drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley;" the antecedent is *Judah*, not *Jehovah*; because *Jehovah* had often displayed much more eminent instances of his power; and he that effected the greater, could certainly have effected the less. In the second place, though it pleased God to give success to *Judah* in one instance, it does not necessarily follow, that therefore he should give it in all. So that there is no more

LET.

XV.



LET. more absurdity in the passage, than
 XV. there would be in the following speech,
 if such had been addressed to the So-
 vereign by one of his Commanders
 returned from America—"By the
 " blessing of God upon your Ma-
 " jesty's arms, we overcame general
 " Greene in the field ; but we could
 " not attack general Washington, be-
 " cause he was too strongly intrenched
 " in his camp." There is no reason,
 therefore, for supposing, that " the
 " Jews considered the God of Israel
 " their protector as a local divinity ;
 " who was in some instances more,
 " and in others less powerful, than
 " the gods of their enemies." *

Nor is it altogether " THUS that
 " David in many places compares the
 " Lord with other Gods : " since he

* P. 19.

compares him *with* them, only to set him *above* them; as sufficiently appears by the passage quoted—"The Lord is a great God, and a great king above *all gods*."* In the heathen world there were "gods many, and lords many." An Israelite acknowledged one only God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all the supposed deities that were therein. "All the gods of the heathen (so styled by them) are but idols; but it is the Lord that made the heavens."

LET.
XV.
}

Such, as an Israelite, must have been the sentiments of Jephthah, as well as David; and therefore the citation from his address to the king of the Ammonites will avail nothing to the purpose for which it is adduced

* P. 19.

—"Wilt

LET. — “Wilt thou not possess that, which
 XV. “Chemosh thy god giveth thee to
 } “possess? So whomsoever the Lord
 “our God shall drive out from be-
 “fore us, them will we possess.” *

It cannot seriously be thought, that Jephthah, a judge in Israel, intended to acknowledge the real divinity of the Ammonitish idol, Chemosh. No: the argument is evidently of the kind which logicians style *argumentum ad hominem*, an argument formed upon the principles of the adversaries, and therefore conclusive to *them*. — “You deem
 “yourself entitled to any possession,
 “acquired, as you imagine, by the
 “assistance of him whom you call
 “your god, and cannot reasonably
 “expect us to yield that, which we
 “know the Lord our God has awarded

Judg. xi. 24.

“to

“to us.” Jephthah, in a negotiation with the Ammonites, had no occasion to discuss the subject of their idolatry, or tell them what he thought of Chemosh; but states the matter according to their own ideas, supposing them, for a moment, to be true, though he believed them to be false; as is done every day.

LET.

XV.

~~~~~

Voltaire has amused himself much with this text, and between one and another of his manifold publications, kept it up like a shuttle-cock. He struggles hard for it — but in vain.

“The words of Scripture (says he) are not, *Thou thinkest thou hast a right to possess*, &c. but expressly, *Thou hast a right to possess*, &c. for that is the true interpretation of the Hebrew words, *otbo thirafch*.” \* Ay,

\* אתו תירש Treatise on Toleration, Chap. XII.

my

LET. my little man, so it is, according to  
 XV. the *Vulgate* — “Tibi jure debentur.”  
 But any modern schoolboy would have informed thee better, and told thee, that the words, in very deed, denote neither more nor less than, “Thou wilt possess it.” — Are we to give up our Bible, and pin our faith upon the sleeve of such a man as this?

After Balaam's Ass, the Canaanites, and Chemosh, one naturally expects — and lo, she is at hand —

#### THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

It was not unusual among us here in England some years ago, for an old woman, if she had the misfortune to live at the corner of a common, to be suspected of witchcraft, and tossed into a horsepond, to see whether she would sink, or swim. To put an end to such ridiculous barbarities, as well as  
 some



some others of a more serious and solemn kind, the legislature of Great Britain very wisely ordained, by an Act of 9 G. II. ch. 5. that no person should in future be vexed, or prosecuted, under that notion; and that whoever pretended to any thing of the kind, should, on conviction, be adjudged to the pillory.—These gentlemen have their fears, upon this occasion, for the authority of the Bible. I cannot say, for my part, that I feel any such apprehensions.

P. 23. “The witch of Endor, and  
“the Jewish Law, both prove by di-  
“vine argument (whatever that may  
“be) the existence of such professors,  
“though, like miracles, they have  
“now ceased to appear.”

But the non-existence of miracles  
at present is no proof that they never  
existed;

LET.

XV.

~~~~~


LET. existed; for they most certainly once
 XV. did exist, if evidence be evidence.

⏟

The argument therefore is full in their own teeth; and there might be witches, as well as possessed persons, formerly, though there may be none now. The Bible may yet be true, and (blessed be God) the parliament not *infidel*. They “deplore the infidelity of *that* parliament.” Bold words these, indeed!—I would not have said such things of *any* parliament, for the world—They are apprehensive of persecution—Let them take more care, another time.

It appears by the Jewish Law, that there were then men and women, who, in the language of our translation, are styled “diviners, observers of times, enchanters, witches, charm-ers, consultants with familiar spirits,

“rits, wizards and necromancers.”*
 These practices are said to be “the
 “abominations of the *beathen*”; † and
 we know they were continued, lower
 down, among the Greeks and Romans,
 whose philosophers were sometimes
 puzzled how to determine concerning
 them. With the idolatry of their
 neighbours, the Israelites frequently
 adopted these it’s appendages. That
 there was in them *much* of juggling
 and imposture, may be true; but
 that *all* was so, is more than many wise
 and learned men have thought proper,
 upon a due consideration of the mat-
 ter, to assert; because, that there are
 no evil spirits, or that mankind never
 had any communication with them,
 are negatives, not easily proved.

LET.
 XV.
 ~~~~~

Respecting the transaction at En-

\* Deut. xviii. 10.

† Ver. 9, 12.

LET. dor, the case, in few words, stands  
XV. thus. Convinced by proper evidence  
of the authority of the book in which  
it is related, we of course believe  
(having, as we judge, good reason to  
believe) that the several incidents  
happened, as they are there said to  
have happened. By what power or  
agency they were brought about, or  
how the business was conducted, is  
another question, which we must en-  
deavour to solve, if we can do it; if  
not, it must remain as it is, being  
confessedly to us, at this distance, of  
an obscure and difficult nature.

That God should permit evil spirits,  
employed by a wretched woman, to  
summon, at pleasure, his departed  
servants from the other world, is  
not to be imagined. It remains there-  
fore, either that the whole affair of  
Samuel's

Samuel's appearance was a contrivance; or that, by the interposition of God, there was a real appearance, which the enchantress did not expect, nor could have effected. The surprize and alarm occasioned in her seem to point us this way, and there are two instances recorded in Scripture of a proceeding somewhat similar.

LET.

XV.

~~~~~

When king Balak had recourse to forceries and divinations, hoping to procure some relief, or fair promises at least from them, God himself interposed, and so overruled Baalam and all his divinations, that Balak could obtain no favourable answer from them, but quite the reverse.*

In like manner, when king Ahaziah had sent to consult Baalzebub, the dæmon of Ekron, to know whether

* Numb. xxiii.

LET. he should recover of the sickness he
 XV. then lay under, hoping, no doubt,
 to obtain a favourable answer there,
 as probably he might have done;
 God himself took care to anticipate
 the answer by Elijah the prophet, who
 assured the messengers, meeting them
 by the way, that their master Ahaziah
 should not recover, but should surely
 die.*

Thus, probably, was it in the case
 of Saul: when he hoped for a kind
 answer from Samuel, and, it is likely,
 would have had a very favourable
 one from some *pretended* Samuel, God
 was pleased to disappoint both the
 forcerefs and him, by sending the
true Samuel, with a true and faith-
 ful message, quite contrary to what
 the woman and Saul had expected:

* 2 Kings 1.

which so confounded and disordered him, that he instantly fell into a swoon, and could no longer bear up against the bitter agonies of his mind.

LET.


XV.

The sense of the Jewish church, about 300 years before Christ, is given by the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, when, speaking of Samuel, he says thus—"After his death
 " he prophesied, and shewed the king
 " his end, and lifted up his voice from
 " the earth in prophecy, to blot out
 " the wickedness of the people."*
 This author plainly enough supposed, that it was Samuel himself who appeared in person, and prophesied to king Saul.

* Eccclus. XLVI. 20.

L E T T E R XVI.

L E T.
XVI.



WE come now to some observations on the character and conduct of David. And here, the extracts are more scanty, than one should have expected, from *Messrs. Bayle, Morgan, and Co.* or rather from the last retailer of this kind of ware, the *Historian of the man after God's own heart.*

P. 21. David is scoffed at for his cruelty towards the Ammonites, shewn by “putting them under saws
“and under harrows of iron,” &c.*

Whatever the words in the original

* 2 Sam. xii. 29.

may signify, it seems but reasonable to conclude, that if David inflicted on these people punishments extraordinarily severe, there must have been an extraordinary cause. We read in the book of Judges, that the men of Judah “pursued after Adonibezek, “and caught him, and cut off his “thumbs and his great toes.” Had nothing more been related, this would have appeared a strange instance of savage and wanton barbarity. But what says the suffering prince himself?—“Threescore and ten kings “having their thumbs and great toes “cut off, gathered their meat under “my table; as I have done, so God “hath requited me.”* The cruelties practised by the Ammonites upon others might be returned, by the just

LET.
XVI.
~

* Judg. i. 6, 7.

Q 4

judg-

LET: judgment of heaven, upon themselves.
 XVI. There is no ground for supposing
 ~~~~~ that David treated them worse than  
 they would have treated the Hebrews,  
 or than prisoners of war were treated  
 in those times: and Dr. Chandler, it  
 is apprehended, has given very good  
 reasons why the passage should be  
 rendered in the manner following--  
 “He brought forth the inhabitants,  
 “and put them to the saw, and to  
 “iron mines, and iron axes, and  
 “transported them to the brick-kiln,”  
 or rather “to the brick-frame, and hod,  
 “to make and carry bricks;” that is,  
 he reduced them to slavery, and put  
 them to the most servile employments.  
 See Chandler’s Life of David, vol. 11.  
 P. 227---a book, which should be  
 carefully perused by those who are  
 disposed to favour us with any fresh  
 disquisi-

disquisitions on the subject of it.—  
 But we must proceed to David's sen-  
 tence on the Amalekite.

LET.

XVI.



The two accounts of the manner of Saul's death, one given in the course of the history, at the close of the first book of Samuel, the other by the Amalekite, at the beginning of the second, are so different, that "one of them (the infidels say, P. 26.) must be false." Very well; suppose it so to be, and what then? Why then, they put the following resolution of the difficulty into the mouth of their Tom Fool of a *Christian*, as they call him. "To this *we* can only answer, " *as it becomes the faithful* in all such cases of seeming contradiction; namely, that they were both written by the pen of Inspiration, consequently must both be true, how-  
 " ever

L E T. “ ever contradictory or absurd they  
XVI. “ may seem to mere human reason.”  
—Well said, Tom !

But let me ask these gentlemen, what mortal, besides themselves, Tom’s elder brethren, ever imagined the Amalekite to have been *inspired*, when he told his story to David ? — An idle pickthank fellow, who stripped Saul of his diadem and bracelets, and ran away full speed with them to David, to let him know that all was safe, his old enemy was fallen, and *he* had put him out of his pain ! David saw through the character of the man, and, from his forward officiousness in the affair, probably concluded, he had taken some undue advantage of Saul in his wounded state, and slain him, on purpose that he might find favour with his successor in the kingdom,

dom, by bringing him all this good news. “As the Lord liveth who hath  
 “redeemed my soul out of all adver-  
 “sity (says he upon another occasion)  
 “when one told me saying, Behold  
 “Saul is dead (*thinking to have brought*  
 “*good tidings*) I took hold of him,  
 “and slew him in Ziklag, *who thought*  
 “*that I would have given him a re-*  
 “*ward for his tidings.*” \*

LET.  
 XVI.  
 ~~~~~

But whether David suspected it, or not, as the narrative of Saul's death given in the course of the history is true, the story told by the Amalekite is certainly false in some particulars, which are inconsistent with that narrative. Nay, it is not probable, if indeed it be possible, that the main circumstance of all should have been true. — Saul desires his armour-bearer

* 2 Sam. iv. 9, 10.

LET. to kill him, who refuses; he falls upon
 XVI. his sword; and the servant, seeing
 his master dead, does the same. Now,
 where is the interval, or opening, for
 the scene between Saul and the Ama-
 lekite to take place? Or would the
 armour-bearer, who refused to kill
 Saul, stand by, and suffer an *Amale-*
kite to kill him?—But though David
 judged this man unworthy to be *his*
 friend, he may make a very good fi-
 gure in the unbelievers' catalogue of
saints, and I would recommend him
 to occupy a nich in that temple.

Let us, however, for a moment,
 suppose, that David had judged other-
 wise; that he had rewarded him hand-
 somely, and promoted him to honour.
 What would have been said, *then*?
 Why, that poor Saul had escaped the
 sword of the Philistines, but “this
 “ruffian”

“ruffian” (such is the courtly appellation bestowed upon David*) had employed an assassin to dispatch him, during the hurry and confusion of the retreat! — O it had been a delicious morsel, exactly seasoned to the palate of infidelity!

LET.
XVI.
~~~~~

P. 27. The infidels are much disconcerted, it seems, about *the book of Jasher*: it was extant previous to the writing the book of Joshua, and was not finished till after the accession of David to the throne of Israel; so that, as they apprehend, either the author of Jasher must have lived upwards of four hundred years, or the book of Joshua was not written till after the time of David.

Here again, a little Hebrew would have done us no harm. It does not

\* P. 25.

appear

LET. appear that *Jasber* was the name of  
 XVI. an individual, or that the book so  
 styled was all written in the same age  
 by the same man. The transactions  
 of the times were regularly entered  
 in a public register, by a person de-  
 nominated the *Recorder*, or *Historio-*  
*grapher*, a stated officer to the Jewish  
 kings.\* And *the book of Jasber* was  
 the *standard authentic* book, in which  
 they were so entered by authority,  
 and from which extracts were made,  
 as occasion required.†

\* מִזְבֵּיר See 2 Sam. viii. 16. 1 Kings iv. 3.  
 2 Kings xviii. 18. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8.

† Le Clerc seems to have imagined that  
 this record was kept in verse — “Crediderim  
 “*Librum Recti* fuisse collectionem *hymnorum* aut  
 “*carminum* de rebus gestis Hebræorum, forté  
 “non uno tempore factum.” Cler. in Josh. x.  
 13.—We read indeed of psalms and proverbs,  
*which the men of Judah copied out.*



P. 29. Some difficulties are started relative to the history of David numbering the people. LET.  
XVI.

In our translation we read, 2 Sam. xxiv. that “*the Lord* moved David “to number Israel;” and, 1 Chron. xxi. that “*Satan* moved him to do “it.”

Nothing is more common with the sacred writers, than to represent God as doing that which, in the course of his providence, and for the purposes either of mercy or judgment, he permits to be done by the instrumentality of second causes, animate or inanimate, corporeal or spiritual. In the case of Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. he is represented, after the manner of men, and in condescension to our capacities, as a king keeping his court, with spirits of all kinds in waiting  
before



L E T.

XVI.



before him, prepared to execute his will upon earth. One of these spirits is commissioned to influence the false prophets, and they persuade Ahab, who will not listen to the true prophet of God — Taking the matter, therefore, as it stands in our English translation, the import of both passages laid together, according to a fair explanation, would evidently be, that, for good and sufficient reasons known to himself, God permitted Satan to tempt, and David to yield to the temptation, in this instance.

But if we consult the original, we shall find there is no necessity to suppose that David was excited either by God, or by Satan. The word *Satan*, though often denoting that person who is emphatically styled THE *Adversary*, signifies only, in general, AN *Adversary*;

*Adversary* ; and therefore the passage  
 1 Chron. xxi. may very properly be  
 rendered, “ *An* adversary stood up  
 “ against Israel, and excited David.”


LET:  
 XVI.

This adversary might be some coun-  
 fellow, or &c. The other passage, 2  
 Sam. xxiv. may as properly be trans-  
 lated, “ The anger of the Lord was  
 “ kindled against Israel, and *one ex-*  
*cited David,*” or, “ *David was ex-*  
*cited by some one,* ( the person men-  
 “ tioned in Chronicles ) saying, Go,  
 “ number Israel.”

Of the different kinds of punish-  
 ment offered to David for his choice,  
 upon this occasion, one is that of a  
 famine for *seven* years, according to  
 2 Sam. xxiv ; but for *three* years only,  
 according to 1 Chron. xxi.

It has been observed by some learned  
 men, that the year in which this hap-

R                      pened

LET.  
XVI.  


pened was the *fourth* year since a famine had commenced on another occasion, mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 1. This circumstance considered, the question, as it is worded in one place,—“ Shall  
“ *seven* years of famine come unto  
“ thee in thy land ? ” — is tantamount to saying, “ Wilt thou chuse *three ad-*  
“ *ditional* years of famine,” &c. Which removes the apparent contradiction.

It may be urged, that “ the prophet delivered the message no more  
“ than once, and therefore must have  
“ said either *seven*, or *three* : he could  
“ not have said *both*.”

True ; but the sacred, like other historians, often relate the same conversation in different terms ; that is, they give the sense and substance of what passed, varying the phraseology.

Instances

Instances frequently occur in both Testaments. LET.  
XVI.

If no other satisfactory solution of the difficulty could be assigned, candour and common sense surely would suppose, that the word *seven*, in 2 Sam. xxiv, was originally *three*, especially as *three* is the word in the Greek version of the LXX.\*

But—“ If David only sinned, why  
“ should the punishment fall upon  
“ the *people* ? ”

Such is the union between king and people, like that between the head and the body, that this happens continually in the natural order of things ; and therefore, why not, judicially ? What greater misfortune can befall a king, or a father, than the loss of his subjects, or his children ?

\* Τρία ετη.

LET.

XVI.



It is possible, however, that such might not be altogether the case, in the present instance, though David, like a true patriot king and most affectionate father, intercedes for his people, and desires to receive in his own person and family the stroke that was ready to descend on them — “ I  
 “ have sinned, and done wickedly :  
 “ these sheep, what have they done ?  
 “ Let thine hand, I pray thee, be  
 “ upon me, and upon my father’s  
 “ house ” — Notwithstanding all this, I say, it should seem, that the people were by no means without fault. For the history opens thus ; “ The anger  
 “ of the Lord was kindled *against Is-*  
 “ *rael*, and ” — as a consequence of it  
 — “ David was excited to number  
 “ Israel.”

But

But of what nature, then, after all, was this act of numbering the people, and why should it have been followed by a plague?

LET.

XVI.

I am persuaded that we are much in the dark upon this point. If any light can be thrown upon it, that light must proceed from a passage in the book of Exodus, Ch. xxx. 12. where God says to Moses, “When  
 “thou takest the sum of the children  
 “of Israel after their number, then  
 “shall they give every man a ransom  
 “for his soul unto the Lord, when  
 “thou numberest them, that there be  
 “no plague among them, when thou  
 “numberest them.” To number the people, then, was not, as it should seem, merely to count them out of curiosity, or vain glory. It was a religious rite, it was a muster, a review,

R 3

a visi-

LET. a visitation, an inquisition into their  
 XVI. conduct, into the religious and moral  
 state in which they at that time stood  
 before their God. For upon such in-  
 quision something came out, or ap-  
 peared against them, which required  
 an offering, by way of atonement or  
 ransom for their souls — “ They shall  
 “ give a ransom, that there be *no plague*  
 “ *amongst them, when thou numberest*  
 “ *them ;*” A very observable expres-  
 sion ; for when David numbered them,  
 this was the very thing that hap-  
 pened ; *there was a plague among them,*  
 in consequence of their *being numbered.*  
 They might be in such a state, that  
 God would not accept them, or their  
 offerings. It is not improbable that  
 they should be in such a state, if we  
 consider what corruptions must needs  
 creep in under Saul’s wicked reign,  
 and



and David's long wars, during most of which time the country had been overrun by the Philistines, &c. who would propagate their idolatry, with it's flagitious concomitants. In short, Israel had provoked God; for otherwise, his anger would not have been kindled against them, as we are informed that it was; their offences called for punishment, and on the numbering the people, an opportunity was taken to inflict it. Joab appears to have been aware of the consequence, as a known case. "Why  
 " (says he) will my lord the king be  
 " a cause of punishment, trespass, or  
 " forfeiture,\* to Israel?" As if he knew, that, upon a visitation, they must be punished who should be found guilty; and was unwilling that the

\* מִשְׁפָּחָה 1 Chron. xxi. 3.



LET. number of the king's subjects should  
XVI. be lessened. But David might think  
it necessary, and his zeal prevailed.  
Otherwise, it is extraordinary that  
such a man as Joab should see what  
David either could not, or would not  
see.

This account of the transaction  
was offered to the public, many years  
ago, by a learned writer, well skilled  
in biblical knowledge and criticism.  
That it is entirely free from objec-  
tion, or will solve all difficulties, is  
more, perhaps, than can be affirmed.  
But it is curious, and certainly de-  
serves attention.

On the whole, to adopt the words  
of Dr. Chandler, "If they who ob-  
ject, credit the history of the Old  
Testament in this part of it, and  
think it is true, that one of these  
three

“ three plagues was offered to David, L E T.  
“ as the punishment of his offence; XVI.  
“ that he chose the pestilence, that  
“ it came accordingly, and was re-  
“ moved upon his intercession; they  
“ are as much concerned to account  
“ for the difficulties of the affair, as  
“ I or any other person can be. If  
“ they do not believe this part of the  
“ history, as the sacred writers repre-  
“ sent it, let them give us the ac-  
“ count of it, as it stands in their  
“ own imagination; and tell us, whe-  
“ ther there was any plague at all,  
“ how and why it came, and how it  
“ went and disappeared of a sudden.”

L E T

---

## L E T T E R   X V I I .

L E T .  
X V I I .  
~~~~~

A FEW more *doubts* remain, touching the *prophecies*, and some passages in the *New Testament*.

P. 39. “The great evangelical prophet could foretell the downfall of Babylon by Cyrus, but could not tell the name of the Messiah.”

Who enabled him to foretell the downfall of Babylon by Cyrus?—“He might take the advantage of writing that prophecy after the events took place,” say the infidels, P. 40. But how so? Isaiah spake of Cyrus at least 100 years before his birth. Had a *history* of Cyrus been
among

among the books of Scripture, under the name of *Isaiah*, they would have placed the author, for longevity, in the same class with their friend *Jasher*.

LET.
XVII.
~~~~~

“*Isaiah* could not tell the name of “*Messiah*.”—He could have told it, had it been communicated to him, as that of *Cyrus* was. He has described *Messiah* in a manner not to be mistaken. There might be very good reasons why the name was not declared beforehand. And as God did not see proper to do it, there certainly were such reasons.

But “if *Christ* were intended by “the name *Immanuel*, the prophet “was mistaken, for he was never “called by that name.”

The first commentator one opens will inform one, that in Scripture language to be *called* is the same as to  
*be*

LET. *be.* Thus, of Messiah it is said,  
 XVII. Ch. ix. 6. “His name shall be called  
 “*Wonderful, Counsellor,*” &c. though  
 he was never called by any of the  
 names there enumerated; of the same  
 person, Jer. xxiii. 6. “This is his  
 “name whereby he shall be called, *The*  
 “*Lord our Righteousness*”; of Jerusa-  
 lem, Is. i. 26. “Thou shalt be called,  
 “*the city of righteousness.*” — No man  
 should presume to criticise a book, if  
 he will not be at the pains to study  
 the phraseology peculiar to it.

P. 40. “If the prophecies are evi-  
 “dent and clear, how happened it,  
 “that the whole Jewish nation, toge-  
 “ther with the angel Gabriel, should  
 “mistake, and suppose the kingdom  
 “of Messiah to be temporal?”

The angel Gabriel was certainly  
 under no mistake upon this point,  
 because,

because of Christ he says expressly, L E T.  
 Luke 1. 33, “He shall reign for XVII.  
 “ever, and of his kingdom there shall {  
 “be no end.” And as to *the case of*

*the Jews*, it is treated of at large in  
 a discourse under that title, by the  
 author before mentioned at P. 173.  
 to which these gentlemen are referred,

P. 40. “Could not those inspired  
 “writers, who prophesied concerning  
 “things of no consequence, as the  
 “thirty pieces of silver, and the cast-  
 “ing lots for Christ’s garments, have  
 “predicted with equal certainty the  
 “more important circumstance of his  
 “death and resurrection?”

The death and resurrection of  
 Christ are predicted in the strongest  
 terms, Ps. xxii. cx. Isai. liii. And  
 what can add more weight to this  
 kind of evidence, than the prediction  
 of

LET. of particulars so minute and circum-  
XVII. stantial as those of the thirty pieces,  
~~~~~ and the division of the garments by  
lot? One would think, at the contem-
plation of them, all infidelity would
stop it's mouth, instead of opening it.

P. 41. "In short, they beg to be
" shewn a single prophecy, concerning
" which divines are agreed."

What Tully said of philosophers
may be true perhaps of divines, con-
sidering the multitude of them that
have lived from the days of the Apostles
to the present times; namely, that
there never was an opinion, however
absurd, which has not been maintained
by some one or other. And therefore,
to reject the evidence of prophecy,
till all divines shall agree exactly about
it; argues a conduct as wise in the in-
fidels, as if they should decline sitting
down

down to a good dinner, till all the clocks in London and Westminster struck four together.

LET.

XVII.



P. 41. “ They desire to know, why
“ the Revelation of St. John should be
“ more obscure and ænigmatical than
“ any which was written during the
“ typical and shadowy dispensation of
“ Moses ? ”

Much valuable instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion may be gathered from the Revelation, in the most clear and perspicuous manner; witness the *Moral Reflections* on that book, by Pere Quesnelle. Of the predictions in the former part of it many have been explained to general satisfaction; and others may be so explained hereafter, as by the studies and labours of different persons the symbolical language of Scripture becomes

LET.
XVII.
~

comes better understood, and the events predicted are brought forward in their order. If sufficient reasons may be assigned why prophecy should be in some degree obscure for a time, they will hold with regard to those of the New, as well as those of the Old Testament. — Let gentlemen bestow due attention on the evidences of Christianity so often set before them. When they shall thereby be happily induced to believe, it will be time enough to argue with them on such points as the obscurity of St. John's Revelation, and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is scoffed at in a very unbecoming manner, P. 32.

Thus much for *prophecy*. We proceed to some objections against particular passages in the *New Testament*.

Of these the first respects the difference

rence between the genealogy of our Lord Christ, as given by St. Matthew, and that given by St. Luke. On this subject let it be observed,


LET.
XVII.

1. That genealogies in general, and those of the Jews in particular, with their method of deriving them, and the confusion often arising from the circumstance of the same person being called by different names, or different persons by the same name, are in their nature, and must be to us, at this distance of time, matters of very complicated consideration, and it is no wonder they should be attended with difficulties and perplexities.

2. The Evangelists, in an affair of so much importance, and so open then to detection, had there been any thing wrong to be detected, would most assuredly be careful to give Christ's pedigree

S

degree

LET. digree as it was found in the authentic
XVII. tables, which, according to the cus-
tom of the nation, were preserved in
the family, as is evident from Josephus,
who says, “ I give you this succession
“ of our family, as I find it written
“ in the public tables.”

3. As it was well known the Mes-
siah must descend from David, the
genealogical tables of that family
would be kept with more than ordi-
nary diligence and precision.

4. Whatever cavils the modern
Jews and others make now against the
genealogies recorded by the Evange-
lists, the Jews their contemporaries
never offered to find fault with, or to
invalidate the accounts given in the
Gospels. As they wanted neither op-
portunity, materials, skill, nor malice,
to have done it, and it would have
afforded

afforded them so great an advantage against the Christians, this circumstance alone, as Dr. South well remarks, were we not now able to clear the point, ought with every sober and judicious person to have the force of a moral demonstration.

Thus much premised, let us hear the objection.

P. 33. “Matthew reckons 27 generations from David to Christ, Luke reckons 42, and the names totally disagree. Matthew traces the descent from Solomon, and Luke from Nathan, both sons of David. According to our feeble notions, 27 cannot be equal to 42, neither can Nathan be imagined to be Solomon.”

But were the objectors never informed, that in the opinion of those

S 2

who

LET.
XVII.
~~~~~

LET.

XVII.



I would gently admonish the infidels, if they touch upon this subject again, to behave with better manners than they have done in their 34th page.

The excellent Pascal has observed, as many others have done before and after him, that the Evangelists, by differing in some things from each other, have afforded us a proof of their not having written in concert, and that such difference is so far an argument in their favour. The observation is sensible and just. Not so the inference drawn by the objectors, P. 35. that therefore “contradiction in evidence is a mark of truth.” For Mr. Pascal did not allow, or suppose, any more than we do, that the

Edit. See likewise Dr. South’s 7th Sermon of his 3d Volume, and Macknight’s Harmony.


Evan.

Evangelists, when rightly understood and explained, really contradicted each other. His words, as cited by themselves, are, “*Les faiblesses les plus APPARENTES sont de forces,*” &c. This is a piece of coin from the mint of *Ferney*, and bears strongly imprest upon it the image and superscription of the coiner.

LET.  
XVII.  
~~~~~

P. 35. “When Christ was baptized
“by John, the heavens were opened,
“and a voice was heard, declaring
“his divine origin: such a prodigy
“must have awakened the attention
“of all Judea; yet we find the histo-
“rians totally silent.”

What historians? A pagan historian would not concern himself with the report of a Jewish prodigy; nor would a Jewish historian have related a circumstance favourable to Christianity,

L. E. T. XVII.  such a story as this, had it been otherwise than true; nor is there any thing in the character of Herod that renders it improbable.—Quite the contrary.

As to the sneers upon *interpolations* and *pious frauds*, in P. 36, I am sorry occasion has ever been given for them. We want no such aids. *Magna est veritas, et prævalet*. I only wish that our adversaries, in their representations of the Scriptures and Christianity, were never guilty of *frauds* which are not quite so *pious*.

The purport, in few words, of all the parade and flourish, P. 37, is this.
 “ Our Lord and St. Paul foretold the
 “ end of the world, as an event that
 “ should happen in their time. It did
 “ not so happen; therefore they were
 “ under a mistake and delusion.”

Our Lord, Luke xxi, in that figurative

rative and majestic style well understood by those who understand the language of scripture, describes the destruction of the Jewish polity and system. The terms may and do apply to the end of the world, for this obvious reason, that the two events are in many instances parallel and analogous. His own declaration shews plainly of which he was primarily and immediately speaking—"This generation shall not pass away, till all these things are fulfilled:" And the figures are those usually employed, in like case, by the prophets of old.

The charge against St. Paul is founded solely on his use of the *first person*; 1 Theff. iv. 16. "*We*, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." But how common is it for us, when speaking

LET.
XVII.
}

LET. speaking of a society, an army, a na-
 XVII. tion, to which we belong, to say, *we*
 went, or came, or did such a thing,
 or *shall* do so and so; though we our-
 selves neither had nor shall have any
personal concern in the matter; though
 the event happened before we were
 born, or is to happen after our decease?
 Thus, in the Old Testament, Ps.
 LXVI. 6. “They went through the
 “water—there did *we* rejoice.” Hos.
 “xii. 4. Jacob found God in Bethel;
 “there he spake with *us*.” By the
 terms “*we*, who are alive,” the apos-
 tle means, doubtless, *those of us Chris-*
tians who shall then be alive. In ano-
 ther place, 1 Cor. iv. 4. he says, “We
 “know that he who *raised up* the Lord
 “Jesus, shall raise up *us* also.” He
 could not believe contradictory pro-
 positions, that he should *die*, and that
 he

he should *not* die. But what is decisive upon the point, in the second epistle to the same Thessalonians, written only a few months after the first, he most earnestly admonishes them not to be *deceived*, as if by any thing that had fallen from him, either in speech or writing, they were to imagine “the day of God was at hand;” since the grand apostasy, and other events, which required much intervening time for their accomplishment, were first to take place in the world. See 2 Theff. i. 1, 2. Nay, he reminds them, ver. 5. that he had told them as much, “while he was yet with them;” that is, before either epistle was written.

P. 41. “How came it to pass that
“Christ should curse a fig tree for
“being without fruit in March; or
“be

LET.

XVII.



LET. "be ignorant that it was not the sea-
 XVII. "son for figs?"



1. It is certain, in fact, that one sort of figs were ripe at that time of the year, namely, at the passover.

2. By the *season of figs* may be meant the season of *gathering figs*, as in Matt. xxi. 34. "When the time, "or season, of the fruit drew near," that is plainly, the time for *gathering* the fruit, "the Lord of the vineyard "sent his servants to receive the fruit." If therefore one sort of figs was ripe about that time of the year, and yet the time for *gathering* them was not fully come, Christ might with reason expect to find fruit on the tree. In construing the passage thus interpreted, as Mr. Macknight observes, the latter clause must be joined with the words *he came if haply he might find*
any

any thing thereon, and the intermediate words thrown into a parenthesis, thus —*He came if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves) for the time of figs—of gathering figs—was not yet.* That this is the true construction (adds Mr. M.) is plain, because the Evangelist is not giving the reason why there were no figs on the tree, but the reason why Jesus expected to find some on it. He tells us, the season for gathering figs was not yet come, to shew that none had been taken off the tree; and consequently, that having it's whole produce upon it, there was nothing improper in Christ's expecting fruit on it then. Whereas, if we shall think the reason why he did not find any figs was, that the time of them was not come, we must
 acknow-

LET.
XVII.



LET. XVII. } acknowledge, that the tree was cursed
 very improperly for having none.
 This interpretation makes a *trajection*
 necessary, but there is one of the same
 kind in Mark xvi. 3, 4. Where the
 clause, *for it was very great*, namely,
 the stone at the door of the sepulchre,
 does not relate to what immediately
 precedes it, and must be considered
 parenthetically, but to the remote
 member—*They said among themselves,*
Who shall roll us away the stone from
the door of the sepulchre? (and when
they looked, they saw the stone rolled
away)—for it was very great.

I cannot help here observing, once
 more, that when in any writer we meet
 with absurdities so glaring and palpa-
 ble as this and others imputed to the
 Evangelists, it is but doing him com-
 mon justice, whoever he be, to take it
 for

for granted that, by some means or other, we misapprehend his meaning; and mere candour should induce us, instead of cavilling and squabbling, gladly to accept of any fair and equitable interpretation of his words, that may serve to clear them of such supposed absurdity, and to set him right in our opinion.

LET.
XVII.



P. 41. Our Saviour is scoffed at, for having affirmed, “that wheat does “not produce fruit, except it *die*.”

A grain of corn, when laid in the earth, swells, putrifies, suffers a dissolution of it's parts, shoots it's fibres, and disappears. This is a *death* and *resurrection* sufficient to answer all the purposes for which the illustration is adduced by our Lord and St. Paul.

P. 42. “John the Baptist being “asked if he were Elias, answered I

T

“ am

L E T. “ am not ; but Jesus affirms the con-
 XVII. “ trary.”



He was Elias *in spirit and in power* ; but he was not the personal Elias, or Elijah, whom the people erroneously expected, and the priests meant, when they asked him, “ Art thou Elias ? ”

P. 43. “ Out of forty Gospels we
 “ receive four as canonical — Why do
 “ we receive them, and not the rest ? ”

For the best reasons in the world, assigned at large by Dr. Lardner in his *Credibility* * &c. a work which these gentlemen should answer, or for ever hold their peace upon this subject. The true Gospels are shewn by proper evidence to have been written at the time when they are said to have been written, and by the persons

* See the review of his work in the **xii**th volume.

whose

whose names they bear. It matters not how many others were written, if upon their appearance, after due examination, they were found to be spurious, and rejected as such.

LET.
XVII.
~~~~~

P. 43. The primitive Christians are complained of, for “preventing the arguments against their religion from being exposed to view.”

I hope there is no ground for any such complaint now. There is no argument yet devised against Christianity, we may presume, which has not been proposed in public; and there is none, we may affirm, which has not received it's answer.

The few remaining pages of this pamphlet are spent in enumerating some particulars in the history of our Lord's passion and resurrection, which are differently related by the four



LET. Evangelists. But how many times  
 XVII. have these objections been considered,  
 and replied to? Have the infidels the  
 modesty or the conscience to expect,  
 that we are to draw up a new harmony  
 of the Gospels, as often as any one of  
 them shall think proper to ask a few  
 old questions over again? If any  
 Christian find himself perplexed by  
 difficulties of this sort, let him care-  
 fully peruse the Gospels as they lie in  
 Macknight's Harmony and Commen-  
 tary, and weigh well the solutions of  
 such difficulties with which that book  
 will furnish him.

These gentlemen tell us in plain  
 terms, P. 46. that "the event of  
 " Christ's resurrection bears every  
 " mark of a forgery;" and speak of  
 the apostles as men "engaged in the  
 " attempt of forming a sect or party;"  
 that

that is, as men who had projected a plan (and thought themselves able to execute it) of persuading the world that their master was risen from the dead, when he was not risen, and of propagating over the earth a new religion, upon the strength of that persuasion. We can know no more of the apostles than the Gospel history with great simplicity and evident sincerity informs us. Let any man duly consider their characters and qualifications as there described; let him then stand forth, lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that he can possibly bring himself, for a single moment, to believe, they could ever have entertained the thought of projecting and executing such a plan. I should be glad to see that man. I would subscribe handsomely towards

LET.  
XVII.  
~~~~~

T 3 erecting

LET. erecting a statue to his memory. For,
 XVII. take him either as a fool, or a knave,
 he is at the top of his profession.

But if no such plan by such persons were or could be concerted, then the evidence of the apostles and disciples (to 500 of whom Christ appeared at once, and among whom he walked in and out for forty days together) is as good and valid for the fact of his resurrection, as for any other fact concerning his life or his death. Nor is it true, that “God chose to
 “deprive all mankind of the proper
 “evidence of the resurrection, because
 “the Jews of that age were sinners.” Whatever evidence it had pleased God to vouchsafe to “the Jews of that
 “age,” “all mankind” besides could have received it only upon testimony; and they enjoy now, upon testimony, more and better evidence for the re-
 resurrection

urrection of Christ, than ever was produced for any one transaction that has happened, from Adam to the present hour. The descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the propagation of the Gospel by instruments otherwise totally inadequate to the work; the conversion of so many thousand Jews; the destruction of Jerusalem; and the establishment of the Christian church, in opposition to the efforts of the whole Roman empire—all these considerations, added to the original positive evidence for the fact, and the futility and absurdity of the arguments then and since employed to invalidate it, form such a moral demonstration in it's favour—the only demonstration we can have, in cases of this kind—that there must be something very wrong indeed in

LET.
XVII.
~~~~~

LET. the head, or the heart of him, who,  
 XVII. at this time of day, sets himself to  
 deny and blaspheme it. With joy and  
 pleasure I desire to risk upon the truth  
 of it every thing that is dear to me,  
 in this life, and that which is to  
 come.

P. 47. It is asked, whether God  
 expects that we should “ shew our  
 “ faith and reliance on him by mak-  
 “ ing a sacrifice of our reason, and  
 “ believing, not by an act of the un-  
 “ derstanding, but of the *will*?”

How necessary, in many cases, the  
 concurrence of the *will* is towards  
 the production of faith, daily expe-  
 rience may convince us. We see men  
 rejecting the strongest evidence, when  
 opposed by interest, prejudice, and  
 passion ; and accepting the slightest,  
 which falls in with them. The best  
 arguments

arguments in the world avail nothing on one side, when pride, pleasure, and profit are engaged on the other. Hope of what is deemed good, and fear of what is deemed evil, will find means to elude the force of all the syllogisms which the most skilful disciple of Aristotle can frame. “This man (said the rulers of the Jews) doeth many miracles.” — Acknowledge and receive him, therefore, as a man sent from God. — “No: we will apprehend and crucify him.” — For what reason? — “Because if we let him alone, all men will believe in him; and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation” — But he has raised Lazarus from the dead — “Why then, we will put Lazarus to death again” — What can be done with such people as these? Or what effect would

LET. would the appearance of Christ among  
 XVII. them after his resurrection have pro-  
 ~~~~~ duced, but that of provoking fresh  
 blasphemies, and fresh insults?

And thus you see, Dear Sir, we are come round to the point from whence we set out. Assent to proper evidence is an act of the highest reason. Such evidence for Revelation, once established, is not to be set aside, or invalidated, by any difficulties, supposed or real, which may occur in the matter of that Revelation. Malice and ignorance will always find room for objections, and *they* will never believe, who have no mind to believe. The infidels, therefore, have not ground for the surmise, that we want to “deprive them of God’s best gift.” We wish only to teach them the right use of it. Reason is not “the
 “ first


“ first and only Revelation from God;” for it is, properly speaking, no Revelation at all. Man, at his création, was not left so much as a single day to reason. It is the *eye*, not the *light*. It can with certainty know nothing concerning the things of another world, but by information from thence. To this truth the writings of the best and wisest among the heathen philosophers bear a testimony irrefragable and insurmountable. It is the faculty which enables us upon proper evidence to receive, and after due study to understand, such information. And Blessed is he, who, at the return of his Lord to judgment, shall be found to have so employed it.

The production which has thus passed under our consideration, from the low and illiberal manner in which
it


LET.

XVII.



LET. it is penned, has been by many ac-
XVII. counted to be beneath notice. But
 nothing is beneath notice, which is
calculated to deceive and seduce the
ignorant and the unwary, among
whom, though even now scarce known
in the shops, this pamphlet has been
privately spread and recommended,
as a *Chef d'œuvre*. And though the
execution be coarse and mean, the
objections, in substance, are such as
continually occur in writings of a
much higher class, which make part
of the furniture of every circulating
library through Great Britain, from
whence they pass into the hands of
our idle young people of fashion,
while under the discipline of the
friseur, in the metropolis, or at the
watering places. The answers pub-
lished by Nonnotte, Bergier, and
others,

others, to the books of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Boulanvilliers, &c. &c. have been much called for, and done eminent service, upon the continent: and it is humbly hoped the foregoing strictures may not be without their use here in England.

LET.
XVII.


THE END.