

A PLAIN and EASY INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
*PRINCIPLES*  
OF  
NATURAL and REVEALED  
RELIGION;  
WITH A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW  
OF THE  
REASONABLENESS and CERTAINTY  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

INTENDED FOR  
*YOUNG STUDENTS in particular ;*

And exhibiting much of the Substance of Dr. JENKIN'S learned  
Work, long out of print, on the same Subject.

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*By a Clergyman of the Church of England.*

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. I.

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**Widderminster :**

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engage and gratify their attention. But the instruction of *young* persons in particular has been sought for;— and of others, who like *them*, may be supposed to have most to *learn* concerning the principles of religious information. For *their* use principally, is this slight sketch intended, as an introduction to more voluminous, and abstruser, works upon the same subjects, or others, in connection with them.

Of performances not unlike in tendency with the following, it will be remembered, that there are many to be met with in the English Language: such as, *Addison's* “Evidences of the Christian Religion;”—*Grotius*, “on the truth of the Christian Religion;”—

Dr. *Clarke*, “on the unchangeable  
“ obligations of natural Religion,  
“ and the truth and certainty of  
“ the Christian Revelation ;” —  
Mr. *Locke*, “on the Reasonableness  
of Christianity ;—Bp. *Stillingfleet*’s  
“ *Origines Sacræ* :” —to which,  
of later works, might be added,  
Dr. *Beattie*’s “Evidences of Chris-  
“ tianity ;” —Mr. *Bryant*’s treatise  
“ on the Christian Religion ;” —  
and Dr. *Paley*’s recent publication  
upon the same subject. —But for  
purposes more *elementary* than the  
generality of these, were the fol-  
lowing pages prepared, and in part  
printed, before the last mentioned  
performance came to the Editor’s  
acquaintance :—to whom, from  
motives chiefly of a domestic nature,  
it had been made a matter of

*occupation*, during a residence in the country, to draw up the following short review of certain evidences in relation to Christianity, for the most part from Dr. *Jenkin's* learned treatise "on the truth and certainty of the Christian Religion;"—a work, long out of print, and in particular made choice of for this purpose, from the small apparent probability of a speedy republication.—To this, such preparatory considerations have been added, from other sources, as appeared likely to be most interesting and convenient to young beginners.

The utility therefore of the publication will be that chiefly of opening the way a little in these matters, and of comprising in a

smaller compass, what at present lies diffused among larger volumes: an advantage, which, to a variety of readers, and especially to the younger candidates for Holy Orders, will probably be found to be not inconsiderable.—Beyond this, the Editor trusts it is unnecessary to avail himself of any further apology, for a well-meant effort in behalf of Christianity, at a time when so many exertions are daily making to diminish and defeat its influence.

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INTRODUCTION  
TO  
*NATURAL and REVEALED*  
RELIGION.

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*PART THE FIRST.*

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SECTION I.

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*Of the EXISTENCE of GOD.*

**B**Y the word God, is to be understood a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; the creator and governor of all things; to whom the great attributes of eternity and independency, omniscience and immensity, perfect holiness and purity, perfect justice and veracity, complete happiness, glorious majesty, and su-

prême right of dominion properly belong;—to whom the highest veneration, the most profound submission and obedience are therefore due.

That there really is such a Being in the world;—entitled to such homage, and invested with such characters, is clearly to be perceived from the existence of that material world which we inhabit. For if ever there were a time when nothing did exist, it is very manifest that nothing ever could have existed. But, on the contrary, the glorious frame and constitution of the universe, its grandeur and astonishing magnificence, the various phænomena and kinds of beings, the uniformity observed in their production, with the uses and the ends for which they serve, all plainly shew that an almighty designer, a wisdom and power infinite must have contrived

these great works of Creation, and still presides over and directs them. This is the proof which the Apostle of the Gentiles refers us to;—when he informs us, that “the invisible  
 “ things of God, his eternal power  
 “ and Godhead, are clearly seen from  
 “ the world which he has formed,  
 “ being understood by the things that  
 “ are created.”

The nature of the argument is plainly this;—that design, contrivance, forecast, arrangement, creation, and preservation, all imply, what we are sure *matter* does not possess, activity of principle, reason and understanding. And seeing these to be so manifestly prevailing in what is created, we from hence infer the necessity of a divine architect and ruler of the universe.—This consideration made even the Heathen Philosopher with good reason

to conclude,\*—“that whoever thinks  
 “the wonderful order and incredible  
 “constancy of the heavenly bodies  
 “and their motions (whereon the  
 “preservation and welfare of all  
 “things do depend) is not governed  
 “and directed by an intelligent being,  
 “ought himself to be accounted void  
 “of understanding.—For shall we,  
 “when we see a piece of artificial  
 “machinery, a sphere, a dial, or any  
 “such contrivance, acknowledge at  
 “first sight, that it is the work of art  
 “and understanding; and yet, when  
 “we behold the heavens moved and  
 “whirled about with astonishing ce-  
 “lerity, uniformly performing their  
 “periodical revolutions,—make any  
 “scruple to confess, that these are the  
 “performances not only of reason,  
 “but of a certain very excellent and  
 “divine reason?”

\* Cicero, de nat. Deor.

## SECTION II.

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### *ILLUSTRATION of the ARGUMENT.*

THE argument which teaches us from works created to infer the necessity of a Creator, is of a kind adapted to the capacity and understanding of all men. It brings GOD down to our senses, as it were; and carries its own conviction with it.—And though it be not necessary for us here to pursue the evidences of the Creator into his works, to seek for instances to prove to us his existence, by endeavouring either to trace him amidst his greater operations, or to discover him in his lesser ones (where to us indeed he may perhaps appear *maximus in minimis*, though to infinite power all is equally easy in performance); yet it

will afford a pleasing illustration of this argument to contemplate the lofty and elegant mode of treating it by a learned modern; while at the same time we confess, that for grandeur and sublimity of conception, nothing can exceed the language of the holy writings in particular allusions to the Creator's handy-works.

“ To prove to any one” says a learned writer,\* “ the grandness of  
 “ the fabric of the world, as the work  
 “ of an almighty architect, one need  
 “ only bid him to consider the Sun,  
 “ with that insupportable glory and  
 “ lustre that surrounds it;—demon-  
 “ strate to him the vast distance,  
 “ magnitude and heat of it;—represent  
 “ to him the chorus of planets mov-  
 “ ing periodically by uniform laws  
 “ in their respective orbits around it,

\* Woollaston Rel. of Nature.

“ affording a regular variety of aspects ;  
 “ guarded some of them by secondary  
 “ planets, and as it were, emulating  
 “ the state of the Sun, and probably  
 “ all possessed by proper inhabitants ;  
 “ —remind him of those surprising  
 “ visits the comets make us ; the  
 “ large trains and uncommon splen-  
 “ dour that attends them ; the far  
 “ country they come from, and the  
 “ curiosity and horror they excite,  
 “ not only among us, but in the  
 “ inhabitants of other planets, who  
 “ also may be up to see the entry and  
 “ the progress of these ministers of  
 “ fate ;—direct his eye and contem-  
 “ plation through those azure fields,  
 “ and vast regions above him, up to  
 “ the fixed stars, that radiant num-  
 “ berless host of heaven ;—and make  
 “ him understand how improbable a  
 “ thing it is, that they should be  
 “ placed there only to bespangle and



“ adorn a canopy over our heads ;—  
 “ convince him that they are rather  
 “ so many other suns, with their  
 “ several regions and sets of planets  
 “ about them ;—shew him by the  
 “ help of glasses, still more and more  
 “ of these fixed lights, and beget  
 “ in him an apprehension of their  
 “ unaccountable numbers, and of  
 “ those immense spaces which lie  
 “ retired beyond our utmost reach,  
 “ and even imagination ;—I say,  
 “ one need but to do this, and ex-  
 “ plain to him such things as are now  
 “ almost known to every body, and  
 “ by it to shew him that if the world  
 “ be not infinite, it is *infinito similis*,  
 “ and therefore sure a magnificent  
 “ structure, and the work of an infi-  
 “ nitely wise and powerful Creator.

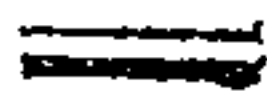
“ In like manner, who can observe  
 “ the vapours to ascend, especially

“ from the sea, meet above in clouds,  
 “ and fall again after condensation,  
 “ and not perceive this to be a kind  
 “ of distillation to clear the water of  
 “ its grosser salts, and then, by rains  
 “ or dews, to supply the fountains and  
 “ rivers with fresh and wholesome  
 “ liquor; to nourish the vegetables  
 “ below by showers, which descend  
 “ in drops, as from a watering pot,  
 “ upon a garden?—Who can view  
 “ the structure of a plant or animal;  
 “ the indefinite number of their fibres  
 “ and fine vessels, the formations of  
 “ larger vessels, and the several mem-  
 “ bers out of them, with the fitting  
 “ disposition of all these; the way  
 “ laid out for the reception and  
 “ distribution of nourishment; the  
 “ effect this nutriment has in extend-  
 “ ing the vessels, bringing the vege-  
 “ table or animal to its true growth  
 “ and expansion, continuing the mo-

“ tion of the several fluids, repairing  
 “ the decays of the body, and pre-  
 “ serving life?—Who can take notice  
 “ of the several faculties of animals,  
 “ their arts of saving and providing  
 “ for themselves, or the ways in which  
 “ they are provided for; the uses of  
 “ plants to animals, and of some  
 “ animals to others, particularly to  
 “ mankind; the care taken that the  
 “ several species should be propagated  
 “ out of their proper seeds, the strong  
 “ inclination of animals for that pur-  
 “ pose, their love of their young, and  
 “ the like?—I say, who can do this,  
 “ and not see a design in such regu-  
 “ lar pieces, so nicely wrought, and so  
 “ excellently preserved?—Since then  
 “ we cannot suppose that the parts of  
 “ matter at first contrived this won-  
 “ derful form of a *world* among  
 “ themselves, and then by agreement  
 “ took their respective posts, and

“ pursued constant ends by certain  
“ methods and measures concerted  
“ (because these are acts of which  
“ they are not capable), there *must be*  
“ some other Being, whose wisdom  
“ and power are equal to such a  
“ mighty work, as is the structure  
“ and preservation of the universe.  
“ There must be some ALMIGHTY  
“ MIND, who models and adorns it;  
“ who lays the causes so deep; pre-  
“ scribes to them such uniform and  
“ steady laws; destines and adapts  
“ them to certain purposes, and  
“ makes one thing to answer to, and  
“ fit another.”

### SECTION III.



*Of the NATURE and ATTRIBUTES  
of GOD.*

**W**HAT the nature and essence of the ALMIGHTY is, we must not imagine ourselves able, after the strictest inquiry and application, to apprehend: this being a matter absolutely impossible, from the infinite disproportion between our faculty of apprehension, and the object itself to be conceived.— Our minds being finite, they cannot without a manifest contradiction comprehend what is truly infinite.

But though we must for ever despair of “finding out the ALMIGHTY to “perfection,” yet we ought not to give over our disquisitions and enqui-

ries after Him ; since the pleasure and advantages they are rewarded with, are much more than a compensation for all the pains of our attention and researches.

For these reasons we are not only permitted, but encouraged, to make the nature of God the subject of our contemplation. And though the redundant lustre of his deity prevents him from being directly looked upon, yet we may behold it by reflection ; and from considering our own souls, which are said to be framed after the “ image of God,” we may raise some tolerable idea of his infinite perfections.—We perceive, for instance, what thought is ;—but at the same time, we perceive likewise the advantage of such an easy thought as arises without any effort, exertion or trouble on our part ; such, as by the sense of

hearing or seeing is produced in us :— we perceive also in our minds a love of truth ;—and we are sensible that we act most perfectly, when we act upon the clearest views, and in most strict pursuance of them.—Now out of all this we may easily raise in our imaginations the idea of a MIND which sees all things by a clear and perfect intuition, without the possibility of being mistaken ;—which always acts in that light, upon the surest prospect, and with the most perfect reason ; which rejoices therefore in every thing that it does, and has a constant perception of all truths before its eyes.—This idea so naturally arises from what we perceive both of the perfections and imperfections of our own minds, that a very little reflection will enable us to form it, to a very *high* degree.

The first step therefore, in order to do justice in our thoughts to GOD, and to form right apprehensions of him, will be to ascribe all imaginable and possible perfections to him.—Every perfection that is possible in itself, must be supposed possible to him.—We say of GOD, that he is a SPIRIT ; that is, a Being totally unlike to *body* and *matter* ; which being determined by the necessary laws of motion, are incapable of knowledge and liberty, and consequently, of wisdom and goodness. We say of him, that he is the cause of all other beings which were by him, and are always dependent on him :—that nothing is exempted from his knowledge, and power, and providence ;—that he administers all things in the way of goodness and wisdom, of justice and truth ; and therefore all things are to be referred to him as



their last end. These and all other possible perfections we are to consider the divine nature as being fully possessed of, in an infinitely higher and more excellent degree, than our finite understandings are able to comprehend.

Secondly, we are to separate and remove all manner of imperfection from him. Because, to admit of any the least shadow of defect, is to strike at the foundation, and to destroy one of the clearest and most essential notions we have of God. And above all, we must be careful in our conceptions of the Almighty, to clear him of all moral imperfections, wherein the holy Scriptures have more especially taken care to guard his honour, by removing every thing of this kind from his character.

These are some rules which may be of use to govern our opinions concerning the attributes and perfections of GOD. But we must ever remember, that *these* are not to be considered by us, as having any distinct and separate subsistence in the divine nature, but only in the manner of our conceiving them, according to their different and external operations. In ourselves indeed, because we are limited and compounded creatures; there are certain powers and faculties really distinct from one another, and from our own essence; so that what we *do* admits a separate consideration from what we *are*: but in GOD there can be no inherent powers and faculties formally distinct from one another, or from himself.— To suppose such a distinction, would be to destroy the perfect simplicity and unity of his nature, and to infer such a sort of

composition in it, as an all-perfect being is absolutely incapable of. It is therefore, from the deficiency of our understanding (which cannot conceive things in the gross), that we divide our notions, and contemplate the same infinite being under different apprehensions, which we call *attributes*. But even what we call attributes in God, must not be supposed to be of the same kind and quality with what we term properties in men, but something that must be understood in a sense infinitely more exalted and sublime. The truth is, we perceive in our own minds, pity, and compassion, love, and hatred, wisdom, knowledge, and the like; and thence we transfer them to the nature of God, and call them by the name of his Attributes. But then we are to remember that between these as they are in us, and when ascribed to God,

the difference is in reality infinite: that in *us* they are but faint shadows, and resemblances of the divine attributes;—and that these attributes are the originals, the true realities; of a nature infinitely superior to, and different from, any thing we discern in his creatures, or that can possibly be conceived by finite understandings: For “as the heavens are higher than  
 “ the earth, so are *his* ways higher than  
 “ our ways, and *his* thoughts, than  
 “ our thoughts.” Our powers and faculties do less perfectly imitate and resemble HIM, than a picture does a living man; and yet, if we reason from them by way of analogy and proportion, they are sufficient to give us such a notion of his divine perfections, as will oblige us to fear and love, to obey and serve him.

## SECTION IV.

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*Of the incommunicable ATTRIBUTES  
of G.O.D.*

AMONG the incommunicable attributes of the deity, as they are called, we reckon his *Eternity*: by which is ascribed to him an infinite duration; which never had a beginning, and will never have an end.— For what depends not upon any thing external for its existence, must always be unalterably the same; since having no other cause of its existence but the absolute necessity of its own nature, it must of necessity have existed from everlasting, without beginning, and must of necessity exist to everlasting, without end.

By the *Immensity* of God is meant that infinite greatness, whereby his being has no bounds or limits, but every where diffuses and spreads itself beyond what we can imagine.—We cannot therefore define the presence of God by any certain place, so as to say “here He is,” but “there He is not:” for he is every where present; the whole world doth not confine him, but he fills all the space beyond this world, and infinitely more than we can imagine. Nor is his glory and majesty at all diminished by supposing him to be always actually present in all, even impure, places. For as the beams of the sun are no way foiled by the matter that they shine upon; and as the purity and holiness of the divine nature is not in the least diminished by beholding all the wickedness and moral impurity that is carried on in the world, so the omnipresent essence

of GOD is not at all affected by any natural impurity of things or places whatever; because it is the superlative excellence and prerogative of his nature to act always upon all things every where, but itself to be acted upon by nothing.

By the *Immutability* of GOD is meant that He always is, and was, and to all eternity will be, the same; being subject to no changes either in his essence or perfections.

In respect of the *Unity* of GOD, it is to be observed, that the scripture sometimes gives the title of *Gods* to such as are only creatures, upon account of some character or resemblance that they bear to the divine being;—such as Angels, Magistrates, and Judges. But though there be many, who upon these accounts may be called *Gods*, yet there is but ONE,

who by way of eminence is so named; that is, one eternal and infinite, one supreme and independent, one all-powerful and all-wise, one perfectly just, and merciful and good God :— one who created all things, on whom all things depend, by whom they subsist; and by whose wisdom they are directed.—This is undoubtedly the result of our reflections, as both by scripture and by reason we are instructed to employ them, upon the abstract nature of God's existence. And so fully is the *Unity* of the divine Being to be for ever acknowledged and maintained by us.—But as to what particular considerations may be esteemed compatible and consistent with this essential unity of the divine nature, we presume not to say more, than what the holy scriptures evidently teach us.—We observe in these, that though one God alone be acknow-



ledged by them, yet that a distinction in some very material respects, is as completely pointed out concerning him, as would in ordinary speech and estimation serve to separate and distinguish three *persons* from one another. And hence it is, that though the appellation “Persons” be not used in scripture for this purpose, nor yet the very term itself “Trinity” be there met with,—yet in ordinary speech, for want of adequate and more appropriate terms, we are accustomed to speak of this distinction by the use of the expression “persons:” uniting the three distinctions under the word “Trinity;” and at the same time supposing these to be reconcileable with the real existence of the “Unity;” a term likewise not to be found for this purpose in the holy Scriptures.—It is sufficient however for us to be assured that the doctrine itself is there:

a mystery, into which we could not possibly have had the smallest insight, had not the SPIRIT of HIM, who knoweth his own nature and substance best, been pleased to *reveal* it to us. —

And as to the conceiving, or the expressing, of this doctrine, as it is a matter infinitely *beyond* what we have adequate powers or terms afforded us for doing *either*, we must be contented to do *both*, in such a manner, as, upon the whole, seems to come nearest to the reality of the case before us:—to regulate our sentiments upon the subject, and to express them, as well as we are able, and there with all humility let our researches be concluded.

“ *Nescire velle, quæ MAGISTER OPTIMUS*

“ *Docere non vult, erudita inscitia est.*”

Scal.

The knowledge of a personal distinction in the divine essence is conveyed

to us by the holy writings, under the express terms of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; with a distinct agency and office] ascribed to each;—as our CREATOR, REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER. . . And it is enough for us to be persuaded that the Scriptures *do* make this distinction of “persons,” (as we speak), all equally partakers of the divine nature, and all possessing the divine perfections:—that these three “persons,” according to the same Scriptures, are but *one* GOD;—and that this Trinity in Unity, or three persons in one GOD, although a subject, which it was never designed that we should *fully* comprehend, is yet a doctrine neither contradictory in itself, nor *opposite* to our reason; but such, as upon many considerations may safely be admitted, and for the highest reasons ought to be acknowledged,—as the very basis, and foundation of Christianity.

## SECTION V.

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*Of the communicable ATTRIBUTES  
of GOD.*

THERE are also other attributes of the Deity, called communicable; because they are in a lower degree *communicated* to other inferior Beings. *Life* is one of these. GOD alone, in the strictest sense, may be said to *live*; as operating independently, and having life in himself: whereas living creatures, even those which seem to be most free and vigorous in their actions, are only agents in subordination to HIM, “in whom they live, and move, “ and have their being.”

Secondly, GOD is a *Spirit*; that is, a substance without body, parts, and passions.

This is not only a proposition of our Christian faith, and what is deducible from several declarations in the Jewish law, but a principle of religion which even the Heathens were not unacquainted with, who spake of him as “a pure Mind.”

The qualities of a Spirit may in some measure be imagined from considering the properties of matter;—being just contrary to these. A Spirit we conceive to be an immaterial, incorruptible, impassible substance; incapable of being divided, or impaired by any force whatever; an immense Mind, or Intelligence, self-active, self-moving, and wholly above the comprehension of bodily sense: free, in short, from all the imperfections of matter, and all the infirmities of corporeal beings, and of a nature far more excellent than any finite or created Spirit

whatever;—as being originally such, and therefore not improperly styled “the Father of spirits;” and “the God of the spirits of all flesh.”

Thirdly, by the *Knowledge* of God we mean that perfection or faculty, whereby he understands, and considers things absolutely, and as they are in their own natures, their powers, properties, and differences, together with all the circumstances belonging to them.—Our knowledge is very scanty and limited. Angels according to the higher perfection of their faculties comprehend still more than we do. But the knowledge of God is absolutely unlimited, and perfectly universal; infinite as his duration, and boundless as his immensity; extending to all things every where without exception, and to all the properties and powers of things, without restriction.

And as such is the Knowledge of GOD, implying a bare speculative act of the divine mind, so also, fourthly, the *Wisdom* of GOD may be considered as partaking more of a practical nature in him ; though both *one*, in his infinite essence : the latter being a full and perfect comprehension of the respects and relations of things to one another ; of their agreement and opposition, their fitness and unfitness to particular ends and purposes. This is infinite and perfect Wisdom ; to know always the best end, to see always the means that will produce that end, to understand exactly how to apply those means, and to have always a right and invariable inclination to act accordingly. — GOD therefore we consider as originally and independently wise ;—and that all created wisdom, whether of men or angels, is but, as it were, a spark of

the divine light, like that of the planets from the Sun.

Fifthly, by the *Power* of GOD, is meant that ability and strength to bring to pass whatever he pleases;—whatever his infinite wisdom can direct, or the infinite purity of his will can resolve;—provided the thing be not inconsistent with itself, and not incompatible with his divine nature and perfections.

Sixthly, the *Happiness* of GOD is no other than a fixed state of contentment and satisfaction, of pleasure and delight, self-approbation and self-complacency, arising from the secure possession of all that is good and desirable, that is, of all excellency and perfection. This we look upon as the very essence of happiness; and as such, fit to be ascribed to him;—being the most perfect and consummate felicity of his nature.



## SECTION VI.

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*Of the moral ATTRIBUTES of GOD.*

OF all the moral Attributes of GOD, that which naturally occurs first to our thoughts is *Holiness*;—that peculiar eminence of the divine nature, by which it is separate and removed at an infinite distance from all moral imperfection, that is *Sin*: by which we mean, that there is no such thing as malice, envy, hatred, revenge, imperiousness, cruelty, tyranny, injustice, falsehood, or unfaithfulness in GOD. And by his *Holiness*, we mean, that he is not only devoid of these, but that he possesses the contrary perfections to an infinite degree.

Secondly, by his *Goodness* we furnish to ourselves an idea of him, under the lovely character of the best and most beneficent, as well as the greatest and most powerful Being in the universe;—the inexhaustible fountain of grace, mercy, truth, pity, bounty, righteousness, forgiveness, patience, and long-suffering.

Thirdly, the *Justice* of God, is that eternal rectitude of the divine nature, whereby he orders and disposes all things according to the rules laid down by his infinite wisdom; and by which he governs all mankind with the utmost exactness and impartiality, with respect to the distribution of rewards and punishments. By these rules thus enacted, he sets bounds, as it were, to his own authority; so that goodness, justice, and truth are essential properties in the divine nature,

antecedent to any consideration of his will, and what he can no more alter or unsettle, than he can deny himself, or cease to be.

Fourthly, the *Veracity* of GOD is that eternal rectitude of the divine mind, whereby his ideas are exactly conformable to the truth and reality of things, and his words answerable to his ideas in whatever way they are made known to us; so as to import the utmost sincerity in his declarations, and fidelity in his promises, made at any time to the sons of men. As GOD is all-wise, he cannot be deceived; and all motives to deceive, we know, to be infinitely removed from the perfection of his divine nature.

Here then is a firm and lasting basis for our trust and confidence in GOD, in all our expectations, hopes,

and blessings, founded in his express promises and assurances:—and as justly are our fears and apprehensions to be excited, in proportion to his threatenings and denunciations.—The result obviously is, that a firm belief and assent is universally required from us, as it is also sufficiently grounded, upon these considerations, in whatever case a declaration of GOD's will is vouchsafed to mankind. Not indeed that he requires us implicitly to believe every thing that goes under the name of a divine revelation. This is a matter, that he submits to our enquiry, bidding us to use our utmost diligence in the search, that we may be able to give a reasonable account of the faith that is in us.

But after we have thus made our enquiry, and upon examination are convinced that such and such things

are for a certainty revealed to us by GOD, our belief then stands not so much upon the credibility of the things themselves, as upon the truth and veracity of HIM who has revealed them.

If therefore we receive the scriptures as the word of GOD, and are satisfied of their divine authority, we ought in all conscience to believe what is contained in them, even though there be some points of a nature to exceed our limited apprehension, and wherein our deepest researches can give us no particular satisfaction. The reason is, because we are persuaded that they are revealed by GOD who cannot lie; whose knowledge is infallible, whose word is truth, and upon whose testimony alone, if we are willing to glorify this perfection of the supreme Being, and set our seal to his

veracity, we ought to surrender our unfeigned assent.—In which sense is that expression of the apostle; “He  
 “ that believeth on the Son of God,  
 “ hath the witness of himself; he  
 “ that believeth not God, hath made  
 “ him a liar, because he believeth  
 “ not the record, which God gave  
 “ of his Son.”

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## SECTION VII.

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*Of Declarations in the SCRIPTURES  
 concerning GOD.*

**H**AVING thus given an account of what, for general use, it may be expedient to have said concerning God's existence and his attributes, as by our reason and *his Word*, we are taught concerning them, it cannot

but exalt and gratify our conceptions of Him, to see in some particular instances, with what sublimity and grandeur of expression he is made known to us, in that best and easiest way of arriving to a proper knowledge of him,—the holy Scriptures themselves.

“Canst thou,” says *Zophar*, in the book of *Job*,—“canst thou by searching find out GOD?—canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?—it is as high as heaven; what canst thou do?—deeper than hell,—what canst thou know?—the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” To *Moses* GOD declares himself by the all comprehensive name of “I AM,”—that is, the ENS,—the truly existing Being;—the Being of Beings, the sole, self-existent GOD.—And by his servant

*Moses* He himself further declares,  
 “ I, even I, am HE :—and there is  
 “ no God with ME.” By the mouth  
 of his prophet *Isaiab*, He again  
 affirms, “ There is no GOD besides  
 “ ME, a just GOD and a SAVIOUR.  
 “ There is none besides ME; for I am  
 “ GOD, and there is none else ;—I am  
 “ the FIRST, and I am the LAST ;  
 “ and I KNOW NO OTHER.”

His Eternity is thus finely repre-  
 sented by the Psalmist, —LORD, thou  
 “ hast been our refuge, from one  
 “ generation to another :—before the  
 “ mountains were brought forth, or  
 “ ever the foundation of the earth and  
 “ the world were laid, even from  
 “ everlasting to everlasting,—THOU  
 “ art GOD.” And again, to denote  
 the perpetual continuance of his  
 duration—“ THY years are throughout  
 “ all generations.—Of old THOU hast



“ laid the foundations of the earth,  
 “ and the heavens are the work of  
 “ THY hands.—They shall perish,  
 “ but THOU shalt endure : yea, all of  
 “ them shall wax old, as doth a  
 “ garment ;—and as a vesture shalt  
 “ thou change them,—and they shall  
 “ be changed :—but THOU art the  
 “ same, and THY years shall not fail.”

“ Hast thou not known,” says  
*Isaiab*,—“ hast thou not heard, that  
 “ the EVERLASTING GOD, the LORD,  
 “ the Creator of the ends of the earth,  
 “ fainteth not ?—for thus saith the  
 “ HIGH and lofty ONE that inha-  
 “ biteth eternity,—I am the FIRST,  
 “ and I am the LAST, and besides ME  
 “ there is *no* GOD.”

“ I am Alpha and Omega, the  
 “ beginning and the ending, says the  
 “ Lord :—which *Is*, and *was*, and is  
 “ to *come*.”

“ Of his Greatness and Immensity,”  
 says holy *David*, rapt into a glori-  
 ous contemplation of these attributes,  
 “ Whither shall I go then from thy  
 “ SPIRIT?—or whither shall I flee  
 “ then from thy presence?—If I  
 “ ascend up into heaven, THOU art  
 “ *there*;—If I descend to hell, THOU  
 “ art *there* also.—If I take the wings  
 “ of the morning,” dart as swiftly as  
 the morning light from one end of hea-  
 ven to another, “ and remain in the  
 “ uttermost parts of the sea, even *there*  
 “ shall THY hand lead me, and THY  
 “ right hand shall hold me.” “ I fill  
 “ heaven and earth,” saith the LORD,  
 (by his Prophet *Jeremiah*) “ and can  
 “ any one hide himself in secret places,  
 “ that I shall not see him?—though  
 “ he dig into hell, thence shall MY  
 “ hand take him;—though he climb  
 “ up to heaven, thence will I bring  
 “ him down:—and though he hide:

“ himself in the top of *Carmel*, I  
 “ will search and take him out from  
 “ thence.”

Of the Unchangeableness of his nature and properties, decrees and purposes, threats, promises, and the like, we are thus instructed;—that  
 “ the counsel of the LORD standeth  
 “ *for ever*;—and the thoughts of his  
 “ heart *to all generations* :” —that his  
 “ mercy and goodness endureth *for*  
 “ *ever*,” and that “ his righteousness  
 “ is immoveable,—like the strong  
 “ mountains.” “ His faithfulness he  
 “ will not suffer to fail; his covenant  
 “ will he not break, nor alter the  
 “ thing that is gone out of his lips.”  
 —“ I the LORD have spoken it;—  
 “ it shall come to pass;—I will do it;  
 “ —I will not go back, neither will  
 “ I spare.”—The Sun, that great,  
 most bright, and regular luminary in

the heavens,—that most constant dispenser of light, and warmth to this inferior world, may have its influence frequently varied by different motions, by clouds and shadows, or other causes,—but we are informed that with GOD, “the FATHER of LIGHTS, there is *no* variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

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## SECTION VIII.

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*Of further Descriptions of GOD's ATTRIBUTES  
in the SCRIPTURES.*

THAT GOD is a *Mind*, an abstract Being, pure from all matter, and distinguished from whatever is passible, or capable of suffering, was a sentiment concerning GOD, which even

some Heathens had attained to.—  
 That GOD is a SPIRIT, is expressly  
 told us in the Scriptures,—and “that  
 “ He is to be worshipped accord-  
 “ ingly, in Spirit and in truth.”  
 From whence it follows, that to put  
 a religious character upon any image,  
 formed by the corrupt imagination of  
 Man as a representation of the invi-  
 sible and spiritual Deity, is to think the  
 “ Godhead to be like silver, or gold,  
 “ or stone, graven by art or man’s  
 “ device.”—“ Have ye not known?  
 “ —have ye not heard?—hath it not  
 “ been told you from the beginning,”  
 (saith the Prophet *Isaiab*)—“ It is  
 “ GOD that sitteth upon the circle of  
 “ the earth, and the inhabitants  
 “ thereof are but as grasshoppers?—  
 “ that stretcheth out the heavens as a  
 “ curtain, and spreadeth them out as a  
 “ tent to dwell in; that bringeth  
 “ princes to nothing, and maketh the:

“ judges of the earth as vanity.—To  
 “ what then will ye liken ME ? and to  
 “ whom will ye make ME equal,  
 “ faith the HOLY ONE ?”

The general description of his  
 Knowledge, is,—that the SPIRIT of  
 GOD knoweth the *deep things* of GOD.  
 —“Known unto HIM are all his works  
 “ from the beginning of the world: nor  
 “ is there any creature that is not mani-  
 “ fested in his sight.” “Hell and destruc-  
 “ tion are before him ;” and “there  
 “ is no darkness or shadow of death,  
 “ where the workers of iniquity may  
 “ hide themselves.” “The ways of  
 “ man are before the eyes of the Lord,  
 “ and HE pondereth all his goings.”—  
 “There is not a word in their tongue,  
 “ but HE knoweth it altogether.”  
 “He that planted the ear, shall  
 “ HE not hear ?—He that formed the  
 “ eye, shall HE not see ? He that

“ teacheth man knowledge, shall HE  
 “ not understand ?” “ Who hath  
 “ put wisdom into the inward parts ?  
 “ —or who hath given understanding  
 “ to the heart ?” —but HE, “ to whom  
 “ the works of man are as the Sun  
 “ before him ;—to whom darknes  
 “ is no darknes at all ;—but the  
 “ night is as clear as the day, the  
 “ darknes and light are both alike.”

“ Where shall Wisdom be found ?”  
 (says *Job*) “ or where is the place of  
 “ Understanding ?—God understand-  
 “ eth the way, and knoweth the  
 “ place thereof ;—for he looketh to  
 “ the ends of the earth, and seeth the  
 “ whole heaven, —to make the weight  
 “ for the winds, to weigh the waters  
 “ by measure, to make a decree for  
 “ the rain, and a way for the lightning  
 “ of the thunder.” “ Who hath  
 “ measured the waters in the hollow

“ of his hand ? who hath meted out  
 “ the heaven with a span ;—compre-  
 “ hended the dust of the earth in a  
 “ measure ;—weighed the mountains  
 “ in scales, and the hills in a balance ?  
 “ —Who hath directed the SPIRIT  
 “ of the LORD, or, being his coun-  
 “ seler hath taught him ?—With  
 “ whom took HE counsel ?—Who  
 “ instructed him in the path of  
 “ judgement, and taught him know-  
 “ ledge, and shewed to him the way  
 “ of understanding ?”

So again, of his Power ;—“ Wise  
 “ is HE in heart, and mighty in  
 “ strength.—Who hath hardened  
 “ himself against HIM and prospered ?  
 “ HE removeth the mountains, and  
 “ they know it not ; HE overturneth  
 “ them in his anger ; HE shaketh the  
 “ earth out of her place, and the  
 “ pillars thereof tremble ; HE com-



“ mandeth the Sun, and it riseth not ;  
 “ —HE fealeth up the stars.” —“ Yea  
 “ before the day was, I am HE :—  
 “ and there is none that can deliver  
 “ you out of my hand.” “ I am the  
 “ Lord, your HOLY ONE ; the Creator  
 “ of *Israel*, YOUR KING.” I am HE  
 “ who maketh all things ; who  
 “ stretcheth forth the heavens alone ;  
 “ who spreadeth abroad the earth by  
 “ MYSELF ; who frustrateth the tokens  
 “ of the liars, and maketh diviners  
 “ mad ; who turneth wise men back-  
 “ ward, and maketh their knowledge  
 “ foolish ; who saith to the deep “ be  
 “ dry ; and I will dry up thy rivers.”  
 “ I form the light, and I create  
 “ darknes ; I make peace, and create  
 “ evil ;—I the LORD do all these  
 “ things.” Well then might the  
 Psalmist say, “ The LORD is my rock,  
 “ and my fortrefs, and my deliverer ;  
 “ my GOD, my strength, in whom I

“ will trust.—The LORD is my light  
 “ and my Salvation;—whom then  
 “ shall I fear?—The LORD is the  
 “ strength of my life; of whom  
 “ then shall I be afraid?—Though  
 “ an host encamp against me, my  
 “ heart shall not fear;—though war  
 “ should rise against me, in this will I  
 “ be confident.”—And justly might  
 he, when the great controller of the  
 universe had given him this assurance,  
 ‘ Because thou hast made the LORD,  
 ‘ even THE MOST HIGH, thy habita-  
 ‘ tion, there shall no evil befall thee,  
 ‘ neither shall any plague come nigh  
 ‘ thy dwelling.’ For as *Job* ele-  
 gantly expresses it, “ HE shall deliver  
 “ thee in six troubles; yea, in seven  
 “ there shall no evil touch thee; in  
 “ famine HE shall redeem thee from  
 “ death; and in war from the power  
 “ of the sword.—At destruction and  
 “ famine thou shalt laugh; neither

“ shalt thou be afraid of the beasts  
 “ of the earth. For thou shalt be in  
 “ league with the stones of the field,  
 “ and the beasts of the field shall be  
 “ at peace with thee.”

As to Holiness, if we look into  
 the Scriptures, we find there no title  
 so frequently given to GOD, as this of  
 his holiness. How often do we find  
 him called “ *the HOLY ONE ;*” “ the  
 “ *HOLY ONE of Israel ;*” “ the *HOLY*  
 “ *ONE of Jacob ?*—A GOD who takes  
 “ no pleasure in wickedness ; neither  
 “ shall any evil dwell with him :  
 “ of purer eyes than to behold  
 “ iniquity.”

Of the divine Benevolence, we read,  
 that “ the earth is full of his Goodness,  
 “ that GOD’s delights are with the  
 “ sons of men, giving to all liberally,  
 “ making his sun to rise upon the evil

“ and upon the good, sending rain  
 “ upon the just and upon the unjust ;  
 “ being in short good to all ; and  
 “ having his tender mercies over all  
 “ his works.”

To give us a sensible idea of his  
 Compassion, the scriptures compare  
 his dispositions of this kind with the  
 tenderest affections among men ; “ as  
 “ a father pitieth his children, even so  
 “ the LORD pitieth them that fear  
 “ him.”—“ Can a woman forget her  
 “ sucking child ; that she should not  
 “ have compassion on the son of her  
 “ womb ?—Yea, she may forget :”  
 —it is possible, though very unlikely :  
 but though a mother may become  
 unnatural, yet GOD cannot prove  
 unmerciful ; “ Behold, I have graven  
 “ thee upon the palms of my hands ;  
 “ —I will not forget thee.”

## SECTION IX.

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### *Of GOD's essential JUSTICE.*

**B**UT while thus reflecting upon God's milder and more lovely attributes, we are tempted like the Psalmist to exclaim with him, "Why  
" art thou so vexed, O my Soul, and  
" why art thou so disquieted within  
" me?—Put thy trust in God,—for I  
" will yet give him thanks" for his abundant goodness, his gracious promises, his sure mercies, "who is the  
" health of my countenance and my  
" God," yet must we not at the same time neglect also to consider that eternal rectitude of his nature, whereby, ordering and disposing all things according to the

rules of his all-perfect wisdom, he is obliged by the very condition of things, to observe the utmost exactness and *impartiality* in the distribution of rewards and punishments.—And if the scriptures describe him as the “Father of us all,” as “loving all things that are, and hating nothing that he has made,” yet, must we also remember that He, who perfectly knows the rule of equity, and necessarily judges of things as they are,—has complete power to execute justice according to that knowledge;—that he can neither be imposed on by deceit, nor moved by any bias either in the dispensing of rewards among the virtuous, or the inflicting of punishments among the wicked. “Far is it from GOD, that He should do wickedly, and from the ALMIGHTY, that He should pervert judgment.”—No surely;—“the work of a man will he render

“ unto him, and cause every man to  
 “ find, according to his ways.”

The consideration of GOD's Justice therefore may well alarm us, while his mercy also may serve to inspire us with consolation, and due caution in our proceedings.—And accordingly the prophet *Isaiab* sets forth the Justice of GOD and the astonishment of sinners in very lively colours; when he represents the LORD of HOSTS as lifting up his banners, mustering all his forces, and preparing the weapons of indignation to avenge himself on his adversaries. “ Howl ye, for the day of the  
 “ LORD is at hand; it shall come as  
 “ a destruction from the ALMIGHTY.  
 “ Therefore shall all hands be faint,  
 “ and every man's heart shall melt,  
 “ and they shall be afraid; pangs and  
 “ sorrows shall take hold upon them,  
 “ as upon a woman in travail; they

“ shall be amazed at one another ;  
 “ and I will punish the world for their  
 “ evil, and the wicked for their  
 “ iniquity: the arrogance of the proud  
 “ I will cause to cease, and will lay  
 “ low the haughtiness of the terrible.”

Every word in this magnificent description breathes awe and terror.—

Howling and destruction, fainting of  
 hands, and melting of hearts, pangs  
 and sorrows, the throes of a woman  
 in labour, and pains of a hard travail,  
 amazement and confusion, desolation  
 and final excision, are the several  
 images which, put together by the  
 prophet, make up in one exquisite  
 piece the tremendous scene of “ the  
 “ great and terrible day of the Lord.”

--But on the other hand, see, con-  
 template, and rejoice in the blessed  
 effects of a good life! That *same*  
 Justice which looks so angrily upon  
 the wicked, puts on another aspect,



when it regards the righteous;—and like “the pillar of the cloud,” sheds a friendly light upon the one, while to the other it portends nothing but darkness and despair. “The Lord “is King,” is an exclamation of the Psalmist (full of joy)—“the earth “may be glad thereof; yea, the “multitude of the isles may be “glad thereof.” “Righteousness and “judgment are the habitation of his “seat.”—And indeed in all afflictions and oppressions that can befall men, what can be a greater consolation to such as are true of heart, than to consider that “the LORD *is* KING;” whose justice calls upon him to regard, and whose power enables him to redress their greivances; who is seated on a throne from whence he can behold the wrongs they suffer, and can stretch out his arm to protect their persons and vindicate their cause?—

Wherefore the same prophet who just now represented to us the *terrors* of the Lord, to restrain us from impiety, instructs us likewise in his gracious *promises*, to succour us in our distresses, if we faithfully adhere to HIM, and to our duty. “Fear not thou” (saith the Lord) “for I am with thee:—  
 “be not dismayed, for I am thy  
 “GOD.—I will strengthen thee, I  
 “will help thee; yea, I will uphold  
 “thee with the right hand of my  
 “righteousness.—I will help thee  
 “saith the LORD, and thy REDEEMER,  
 “the HOLY ONE of *Israel*.”—Enough surely, to alleviate all the sorrows that can befall us here, and to furnish us with an “hope full of immortality  
 “hereafter.”

## SECTION X.

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*Concluding REFLECTIONS upon the  
ATTRIBUTES of GOD.*

HAVING thus indulged ourselves in a general view of the divine Attributes, a few words in conclusion upon this subject, will serve to bring home to our minds a welcome apprehension of the whole, as applied particularly to our present condition; inhabitants as we are of this world, dependent upon God *alone* for our well being here, and expectants of his promised blessings in the world to come. And if we take even the slightest survey of the works of providence and creation, we cannot but perceive in them the plainest characters of all God's essential attributes, setting forth at once *his*

glory, and the happiness of his creatures.—The sun, the moon and other luminaries in heaven, whether planetary or fixed, with their different orders and revolutions; the air, and other bodies that occupy the space between heaven and earth; the wonderful balancing of the winds, and gentle falling of the clouds in useful rain and showers; the frame and situation of the earth; with the great variety of plants and trees, of rivers and fountains, men and other creatures that stock and adorn it; the subterraneous world, wherein are repositied metals and minerals, salts, sulphurs and stones, both precious and common, for the use and ornament of mankind; the wide and great deep also, stored as it is with treasures, and fitted for the commerce of the different inhabitants of the world;—all these, or the least individual of them,

if carefully enquired into, will abundantly proclaim the glory of God, and discover the wisdom of his providence for the fons of men, as well as the power and greatness of their CREATOR; as the holy writers, in the loftiest strains of eloquence have endeavoured to express it. “ HE  
 “ spreadeth out the heavens, and  
 “ treadeth upon the waves of the sea;  
 “ HE maketh *Arcturus, Orion,* and  
 “ *Pleiades,* and the chambers of the  
 “ south; HE doeth great things, past  
 “ finding out; yea, and wonders  
 “ without number.—HE stretcheth  
 “ out the north over the empty space,  
 “ and hangeth the earth upon nothing:  
 “ HE bindeth up the waters in the  
 “ thick clouds, and the cloud is not  
 “ rent under them; HE hath com-  
 “ passed the waters with bounds,  
 “ until the day and night come to an  
 “ end. The pillars of heaven trem-

“ ble, and are astonished at his  
 “ reproof; HE divideth the sea by his  
 “ power; by his SPIRIT HE hath gar-  
 “ nished the heavens.—Lo, these are  
 “ parts indeed of his ways!—but how  
 “ little a portion is heard of him?—  
 “ and the thunder of his power; who  
 “ can understand?”—But if (as some  
 have done) we suppose other worlds  
 besides this, furnished with creatures  
 whose fabric and motions, and con-  
 sequently their properties and opera-  
 tions, differ from what we see in us,  
 how must this increase our ideas of  
 God’s power and wisdom both in  
 framing and governing such a variety  
 of different worlds! For if to keep  
*one* complicated machine in order be  
 accounted a work of no small skill,  
 how extremely astonishing must it be  
 to consider what wisdom and provi-  
 dence is requisite to guide and over-  
 rule so many *millions* of engines (as

we may call them) and many of these endowed with liberty of will, in such a manner as to make them all subservient to his wise purposes, and decrees!

“ O Lord, how manifold are thy  
 “ works, in Wisdom hast thou made  
 “ them all ;—the earth is FULL of thy  
 “ Goodness.”

But if we consider, secondly, the work of Man's REDEMPTION, we shall there find a further and much more interesting display of God's best attributes.—MAN had sinned, and by his offence had stopped the effusions of goodness, and opened a wide passage for divine wrath to fall upon him : —but how to save this creature, lost and undone by his own choice, the invention of men and angels could not devise. Nay, heaven itself seemed to be divided. *Mercy* inclined to save : but *Justice* required a satis-

*faction*: and the difficulty was, how to answer the demands of the *one*, and not to deny the requests of the *other*.—In this exigence divine Mercy excited the divine Wisdom to interpose as an arbiter; which, in the treasure of its incomprehensible light, found out an admirable expedient to save MAN, without prejudice to God's other perfections.—And *that* was, by constituting a proper MEDIATOR between the guilty creature and the Creator, that by transferring the punishment on the *surety*, God might punish sin as *justice* demanded, and yet pardon the sinner as *mercy* desired.

Here then have we a full display of all the most beloved Attributes of the Deity in our behalf; in God's taking occasion from sin, and the fall of Man, to magnify his own glory, and exalt his creature to a more excellent



state ; in ordaining *such* a MEDIATOR as was qualified to reconcile God to man, by making expiation, and man to God, by making intercession, for him ;—in causing to all appearance, such opposite means to accomplish such glorious effects ; and in laying the design of the GOSPEL in such a manner, as both provides for the *comfort*, and at the same time promotes the *beliefs* of mankind.

Thus, which way soever we cast our eyes, whether above us or beneath us, within us, or without us, we find ourselves surrounded with the blessed effects of God's eternal goodness, power, and greatness.—That we are MEN, and not mere worms ;—that we are not stones and clods of earth, utterly insensible of all good, and incapable of all felicity ; that we are inspired with IMMORTAL MINDS, and

endowed with vast capacities of happiness; that we have so many sensible organs, capable of such variety of pleasures; and so many pleasures to suit and entertain them; that we have life and motion; health and vigour, sense and perception, reason and understanding, to guide and govern them:—that we are provided for the other world, as well as this, with an happiness far above our largest comprehension, wishes, and desires, and that we have the whole DIVINE ESSENCE in its respective characters, parts, and agencies—the SACRED TRINITY, employed and exercised in contriving, preparing, and accomplishing our everlasting felicity,—well may we exclaim, “ Oh the depth of the riches,  
 “ of the goodness and bounty of  
 “ God! how unsearchable are his  
 “ designs of kindness; and his ways  
 “ of beneficence past finding out!”—

“ Bless therefore the Lord, O my  
 “ soul,—and forget not all his  
 “ benefits!”—but be mindful always  
 what strong motives they ought to be  
 of love and imitation, faith and con-  
 fidence, repentance and all holy living;  
 —and in a devout and full sense of  
*this*, “ fear the LORD, and serve him  
 “ truly with all thine heart;—for  
 “ consider what GREAT THINGS He  
 “ hath done for thee.”

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## SECTION XI.

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### *Of ATHEISM.*

**T**HUS have we considered some  
 of the chief attributes of God, in  
 order to raise up in our minds great  
 and worthy apprehensions of him,

and to beget in our hearts holy affections fuitable to our condition and daily dependence on him.—That there should be any persons so blind and weak, as for a moment, even in thought, either to deny his Being, or to exclude his superintending providence from the universe, may well excite our pity, astonishment, and concern.

That the substance of which the world is framed, existed from eternity, and that all the parts of it being in motion, after innumerable trials, so hampered themselves together at last, as to fall into the happy order, in which we see things now;—that men first sprung, like mushrooms, out of the mud and slime of the earth; that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call the soul, are only the various actions and repercussions of small particles of matter; that the whole

system of the world, and every being therein, is nothing but mere matter and motion;—*matter* dividing itself into particles of such and such a figure, and *motion* directing itself into such and such tracts and turnings and deviations; that they dance and frisk about as they think fit, and yet keep every thing in due regularity, while either there is *no* God at all to superintend them; or while the drowsy God sits *sleeping* in heaven, never taking part in these concerns,—these are some of the wild extravagant opinions of deluded spirits, the very mentioning of which, it may be hoped will be sufficient to confute them.

For will any one seriously pretend that the great and curious structure of the world was made by accident?—As well might he pretend that once upon a time; a certain quantity of

stone, and timber, iron, lead, and other materials, met happily together by chance at *St. Paul's*, and there fell to work; the stones carving themselves, the timber hewing itself, the iron and lead getting into their proper places, and so finishing that famous cathedral without the help of any architect.—And yet alas! what comparison is there between the largest and most curious building in the world, and the immense fabric of the universe!—Beyond all credulity therefore, is the credulousness of the atheist, whose imagination is so absurdly strong, as to believe that CHANCE could make a world, when it cannot build an house; that CHANCE could produce all plants, when it cannot paint a landscape;—that CHANCE could form all animals, when it cannot so much as make a watch, or any other inanimate machine.

There may however be those, who contenting themselves with *words*, are for ascribing the formation of the world to FATE OR NATURE, rather than CHANCE.—They do right in objecting to the latter, as a *cause* of the world's existence. For in fact CHANCE seems only to be a term, by which we express our ignorance of the cause of any thing: it is in truth *nothing*;—nor can chance ever produce any thing of itself.—And yet as to FATE, *that* is nothing but a series of events, and declares nothing concerning the *cause* of that connection, nor why it is.—And as to NATURE, whatever may be meant by it, the *laws* of Nature must necessarily imply some LEGISLATOR, and are consequently posterior to that which constituted them;—or if it be used to imply natural or second causes, still these are nothing but either the inanimate motions of senseless matter, or

the voluntary motions of dependent creatures ;—one, the direct operation, and the other, the free permission of *Him* who ruleth over all.—So that to *HIM* we must at last be carried, in all our meditations and disquisitions upon this subject.

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## SECTION XII.

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*REFLECTION concerning ATHEISM.*

**W**ERE the belief of GOD's existence a matter of speculation only and of little real importance, a man might trifle with it and amuse himself with his *motion* and his *atoms*, as long as he pleased : but since it is made a fundamental point of his SALVATION, he seems to run too great a hazard, who,



for the bare gratification of a foolish singularity adventures to deny it. For, besides that he throws away the main comfort of his life, resigns the satisfaction of a good conscience, and quits the hope of a blessed eternity, he runs the risque also of being for ever wretched in the world to come, and exposes himself naked to the unquenchable indignation of an everlasting God.—And for what end?—only to enjoy the pleasures of a riotous and tumultuary life for a short period, the gratifications of sin but for a season.—If however when he comes to conclude the scene, he should find himself mistaken in his atheistical confidence, and all things perfectly unlike to what he had stated and determined them in this world; if, instead of his beloved *sleep* and insensibility, he should find his soul still subsisting after his body, only removed into a

new and strange place, amidst a world of spirits, and entered upon an everlasting and unchangeable state of things; himself summoned to the tribunal of that God, whose being and authority he had so peremptorily affronted and denied, and thence transmitted to a painful eternity, there to languish without end in unpitied woes, and fruitless lamentations,—how sadly would he be disappointed, and surprisèd with terrors on every side, to find himself thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a state of ruin and desperation!

And thus it may happen for any thing he knows to the contrary:—for, as we cannot by our conceits and fancies call things into being, so neither can we unmake them, or make them vanish into nothing, by the stubborn confidence of our imagination.—What

is it then that makes him thus fool-hardy, and tempts him to this dangerous risque and venture? He will tell you it is to set the world free from the prejudices of vulgar errors, and the slavery of that bug-bear, conscience.—Ah wretched freedom! which to deliver us from one imaginary evil, brings upon us a thousand real mischiefs; degrades the dignity of human nature, saps the foundation of all societies, opens a passage to all kinds of wickedness, and takes away from man his *only* comfort in distress.—For since of himself he is infinitely insufficient for his own happiness, is liable to unnumbered ills which he can neither prevent nor remedy; is full of wants which he cannot supply; surrounded with infirmities, which he cannot remove; subject to dangers, which he can by no method escape,—whither can he turn himself without a

GOD,—or where repose his anxious thoughts, but in the DIVINE PROVIDENCE?—In the day of adversity especially, when all other friends are apt to leave him, how dark and gloomy must every thing appear about him, without GOD!—An unhappy mortal deep sunk in misery and misfortune, struggling with innumerable afflictions here on earth, and at the same time destitute of a friend in heaven, is in a condition not to be imagined without horror.—But now, even in this melancholy state of things, when any one lifts up his eyes to heaven, he will find vast and inconceivable comforts flowing in upon him; when he considers that Omnipotence, directed by unerring wisdom, and incited by unbounded goodness, is engaged in his favour, and *under covenant* to succour and relieve him. Supported by this persuasion, he can

patiently suffer all things, with a cheerful resignation to the divine will, having a secret spring of spiritual joy, and the continual feast of a good conscience within, that forbid him to be miserable.—For it is God, “our MAKER,” (as one of the speakers in *Job* expresses it), “who giveth “songs in the night,”—the night of affliction, and in the gloominess of human despair.

## PART THE SECOND.

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### SECTION I.

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*Of GOD as the moral GOVERNOR  
of the UNIVERSE.*

**T**HE creation of the world necessarily brings with it the consideration of a divine providence to support and to preserve it, in the intended purposes of its being. And as this is continually to be seen in the material parts of the universe, so also does it as constantly follow in the moral government thereof.

And accordingly we find abundant evidences of such a superintendance.

If we consider man in a social capacity, we find the corruption of his nature to be such, some spirits so fiery, and others possessed with such a settled malignity of disposition, as would make those of a different temper in the world very unhappy, did not God constantly reserve to himself a power of interposing. The world would soon become a field of blood; and fraud and violence the principal actors in it, were it once abandoned by the divine providence.—That therefore it is kept in such good order as to make it even a tolerable habitation for the time we are to continue here;—that the wicked have not always their will, and that the innocent fall not universally a prey to the oppressor, is entirely owing to that divine wisdom which disappointeth the devices of the one, and to that divine goodness which

takes the other under its protection, and to those that have no might; encreaseth strength:—for “God preserveth those that love him, and scattereth abroad all the ungodly.”

And if we consider man in a more private capacity, the operations of a providence to conduct and to direct him are no less manifestly conspicuous. The many accidents of life, especially those of infancy, expose him to so great and continual dangers, that, to human appearance, it is scarcely possible he should avoid them all with safety, if a particular providence (however invisible the methods of it may be, and past our finding out) should not interfere to protect and to deliver him.

Still further;—if we consider man as a religious creature, capable of



worshipping and doing honour to God, how reasonable soever this capacity may be of itself, yet, without the belief of a providential moral government in the universe, it would be of little or no use. For, as the Roman orator\* well expresses it, if

“ the Gods do not extend their care  
 “ and their inspection to the affairs of  
 “ human life, what piety, what holi-  
 “ nefs, what religion will there be in  
 “ the world? If they cannot, or if  
 “ they will not, concern themselves  
 “ with our necessities, to aid and suc-  
 “ cour us, if they take no notice of  
 “ our actions, what advantage is it to  
 “ honour them, to build temples and  
 “ pray to them? And if, by a just  
 “ consequence, we thus take all reli-  
 “ gion out of the world, there will be  
 “ nothing left among men but disor-

\* Cicero, de nat. Deor.

“ ders, troubles, and confusions; and  
 “ all sincerity, security, and society  
 “ will be banished from the earth.”  
 Such are the conclusions that our very  
 reason dictates, if we acknowledge  
 not a providence watching over every  
 thing that happens in the world, and  
 directing all events to their proper and  
 respective ends.

And, as the constant preservation  
 of the world, so the strange and won-  
 derful occurrences that sometimes  
 happen in it, are a convincing proof  
 of a divine providence ruling over it.  
 In a natural and ordinary way God  
 cures diseases, and sends rain or dry  
 weather, feeds the hungry, and pu-  
 nishes the wicked by famine, and by  
 pestilence. But sometimes he alters  
 these ordinary methods;—to signalize  
 his mercy or his judgments:—as

when CHRIST fed so many thousands in the wilderness; and when GOD rained down fire upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, by a particular and miraculous dispensation.—For miracles are God's wonderful works, when he interposes in an extraordinary manner, and deviates from the method usually prescribed to himself in the common course of events. And we must either flatly deny all human testimony, and condemn the records of every age for cheats and impostures, or we must allow that there have been fundry miracles performed in the world;—any one of which, among those many that have been so well attested, being acknowledged to be true, *that one* is a sufficient argument of an over-ruling providence.

The proofs of such an existing agency in the moral regulation of the

universe, which way soever we turn our observation, come strong upon us: and whether we look up to God and his attributes, or to ourselves, and our capacities;—into the sense of scripture, or the suggestions of reason, the constant course of nature, or the miraculous interruptions of it, the common and ordinary events, or the great and wonderful occurrences that happen in the world; we have sufficient grounds to conclude, that this is a principle wherein all mankind are agreed; and that no nation was ever yet so barbarous, if their notions and practices were sufficiently enquired into, as not to be persuaded that the world was governed by some excellent and superior Being; their prayers and invocations, their oblations and sacrifices being all direct acknowledgements of a providence; shewing that, with the same eyes, wherewith they saw GOD

in his works, they could perceive him there directing every thing, and encompassing every thing with the immense extent of his superintending power and wisdom.

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## SECTION II.

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*Of the Groundwork of a REVELATION.*

**F**ROM a Being of a nature infinitely perfect, must proceed all things that are besides, with their perfections; among which, those of wisdom, justice, mercy, and truth, must be derived from him, as the author of all those perfections, of which the creatures are capable. And it is absurd to imagine that the creator of the world, and the righteous governor of

it, who is infinitely more just, more good, and wise, and holy, than any creature can be, will not at last reward the good, and punish the wicked. Is it to be supposed that the wise and good God would create men only to abuse themselves and one another? to live a while in sin and folly here, and some of them in the most extravagant and brutal wickedness, and then go down to the grave, and so there should be an end of them for ever? What is there worthy of the infinite wisdom of God, in so poor a design as this! Doth not the voice of nature itself teach us, and has it not been the general belief and expectation of all ages and nations, that sinners must suffer in another world for what they have done amiss in this? and, that all is not to pass away with us in sport, extravagance, laughter, noise, riot, violence, and

cruelty, as some men are willing to believe, and gladly would teach others?

It appears moreover from the common belief and experience of mankind, that as there is a God of all goodness and holiness; so there are wicked and malicious spirits, which are ever contriving the mischief and ruin of men. For besides the evidence of this from scripture, which we must be allowed to alledge here at least in the way of an history, it is folly to imagine that there was no ground nor foundation for such a belief, as has prevailed in all nations and ages of the world, and for the customs and practices which followed thereupon,—that there are *Dæmons*, or spirits, of an evil and malicious disposition and power. We need instance only in the unnatural cruelties, which the heathen world, even the *Greeks* and *Romans* themselves, were

continually incited to perform by the instigation of these malicious and wicked spirits. For it is well known that they offered up multitudes of innocent men and women, and even their own children, in sacrifice to their false Gods ;—which seems to imply something so much beyond mere *ignorance* and *superstition*, as can hardly be accounted for on any other supposition, but that of the existence of evil spirits, and their baneful influence upon the minds of men.—The dominion of *Satan* is now indeed restrained by the over-ruling power of the Gospel :—but we have still as great evidence from all *history*, that there are such beings as Devils, as we have for any other matter of fact whatever. And if “the Devil,” after so much human blood as he has caused to be spilt in his sacrifices, and after so many



false oracles and impostures, can yet persuade some men that there is no such being as himself, this is one of his most subtle stratagems of all, and proves what influence, though in a different kind and manner, he still retains over the minds of men.

Since therefore it is most certain, that there is a Being of infinite power and wisdom, justice and goodness; and that there is likewise a malicious cruel spirit, ever watchful and industrious to mislead and to destroy mankind: it is highly reasonable to believe, that a Being of such perfections, after he had created man, would communicate himself to him, would set him a rule by which he ought to live, and prescribe him laws, whereby he might attain that happiness which he was made capable of and designed for by his maker. We cannot suppose that

the God of all goodness and wisdom would create man, and then leave him to himself, to follow his own inventions, and to live at random, without any law or direction whereby to regulate his actions; exposed in the mean while to all the assaults of an implacable subtle enemy, without any caution and instruction given him, or any help and assistance afforded for his defence.

Man even in his innocence, was not thus to be left to himself. And we have all the reason in the world to believe, even though we had not the express word of scripture for it, that the God of infinite goodness would not disregard the universal corruptness of mankind; but would use some means to reclaim them from the error of their ways, to bring them to a knowledge of themselves, and of

the divine majesty, to inform them of their duty, and direct them to happiness.

How Man became so prone to evil as we are sensible he is, we can know only by revelation; but to suppose him placed in this condition, without all help or remedy, is to entertain a very unworthy sentiment of our Creator;—to charge him foolishly, if not wickedly. It is evident that man is, of himself, in a miserable and helpless condition; and considering the great ignorance and wickedness, which have been, from the fall of our first parents, continually visible in the world, and still reign in it;—considering, the *notorious* wickedness and *gross* ignorance of men, which, from the earliest records of antiquity, have continued down to our own times, nothing is more reasonable than to think, that a

Being of infinite perfection would take some care to rectify the mistakes, and reform the manners of his creatures. For can we believe it consistent with infinite truth, never to manifest itself in the world, but to suffer all sorts of men, of all nations, to be exposed to all the designs and delusions of impostors, and of seducing and apostate spirits, without any sufficient means afforded them to undeceive and rescue themselves? Can we suppose that a God of infinite majesty and power, a "Jealous God," one who will not "give his honour to another," should suffer the world to be guilty of idolatry, to make themselves Gods of wood and stone? nay, to offer their sons and daughters to devils, and to commit all manner of wickedness in the worship of their false Gods; to make murder, and adultery, and the worst of vices, not

only their practice but their religion? Can we imagine, that the true God would behold all this, for so many ages, among so many people, and yet not concern himself to put a stop to so much wickedness, to vindicate his own honour, and restore the sense and practice of virtue upon earth?

To own the Being of a God, and yet to deny a providence, is so great an absurdity, that none of the philosophers, but *Epicurus*, were guilty of it; and this was looked upon, in him, as amounting to the denial of the divine existence. But to grant both the being and the providence of God, and yet to confine the divine care and providence to the bodies only, and outward condition of men; and to imagine that the spiritual and immortal part of Man is disregarded or neglected by him, is no less an absur-

dity than wholly to deny his providence or his existence ; because *this* is to deny the most considerable and inestimable part of providence, that which concerns our souls, and our eternal welfare ; and therefore it is, by consequence, to deny the attributes of God, and to represent him not as he is in himself, but as unwise, unmerciful, and unholy.—To say that there is *no such thing* as a DIVINE REVELATION, is no better, in effect, than ATHEISM : for whoever can be of this opinion, must believe only the being of such Gods as *Epicurus* owned, who never concerned themselves with the affairs of men :—which was, in other words, to say that they were no Gods at all.

### SECTION III.

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*Of RELIGION in general; and its  
DIVISIONS.*

**R**ELIGION we regard as founded in the consideration of the SUPREME BEING, and ourselves; of his nature and our own; and of that mutual relation which subsists between them. —But more especially to *us*, in the general application of the term, it is the obligation of rational creatures to render unto GOD such acts of worship, homage, and obedience, as are suitable to the excellence of *his* nature, and the manner of *our* dependence on him. —And without doubt, if we contemplate him, as our creator, the author of our nature, and of all the faculties belonging to it;—ourselves

as created by him, the issue of his power, the workmanship of his hands;—him as our protector, governor, and master;—ourselves as his dependents, subjects, and servants;—him as our benefactor, and the author of our happiness; ourselves as obliged and indebted to him for every thing which we enjoy; we cannot but perceive that not only all the outward acts of worship, such as adoration and invocation of him, thanksgiving and acknowledgement to him, but all those inward acts of religion also, such as faith and hope, love and fear, trust, reliance and obedience, with whatever else results from a due exercise of our reason, and a full consideration of his attributes, become matter of necessary and indispensable duty to us.

Such being the nature and origin of religion in general; if we regard it



under its primary division, it is to be considered by us as partly natural, and partly revealed. The *natural* part of it is that, which we come to the knowledge of, by the principles of reason only, in the contemplation of the works, the nature, and providence of God.—The *revealed* is that, which in some points we could not have known at all; and in all, not near so clearly, had it not been God's pleasure to declare it to us. In the former is required a due exercise of our intellectual faculties;—in the latter, besides this, a firm dependence on the authority of God, and a due submission to whatever has the evidence of his attestation; whether it be altogether commensurate with our finite understanding, or whether, from its own nature, it be infinitely exceeding it.

As to “the light of nature,” we seem to attribute the utmost that can

in reason be ascribed to it, even if we take into our view the whole amount of *all* that has been collectively suggested, or thought *probable* concerning it, by the wisest Heathens,—if we say, that it discovers to us the Being of a God, and the infinite perfections of the divine nature; particularly his Goodness, which inclines him to reward those that diligently obey and serve him; and his Justice, which requires him to punish those that disobey him:—and that, seeing these things do not regularly take place in this world, we consequently infer, there is a part of man, which will subsist hereafter, of a nature capable of receiving these rewards or punishments:—which therefore leads us to the immortality of the soul, as a matter of high *probability* and *conjecture*.—And this system of principles; with a suitable mode of practice following them, it is, which

we call *natural* Religion;—to distinguish it from *supernatural* REVELATION, which we call *revealed* Religion.

The great difference between the objects of natural REASON and REVELATION, that is, of *human* knowledge and *divine*, is, that in the former, there is a spacious field for *new* acquisitions and improvements.—Experience, observation, and industry make fresh discoveries in those things which are the proper subjects of them; penetration into one effect or cause helps to explain another, as in the case of arts, sciences, and natural philology; the progress also of one age in real learning, is of great benefit to succeeding ages: and, while the mind busies itself in inquiries after useful wisdom, it will by reflection, demonstration, experiments, and historical observations, *add* to its former store; and by having

larger views, more objects, and ideas, and consequently more truths, to speculate and reason upon, greatly extend its comprehension and knowledge.

But in respect to *divine*, invisible objects, it is far otherwise.—The boundary is there *fixed*; our enquiries limited to what is *revealed*, and all further search is vain, and unlawful. These things are *above* the discovery of Reason; it has no principles from which it can regularly deduce them by any *natural* use of its faculties; and without *supernatural* instruction, it can never gain the least knowledge or probability concerning them. It is impossible for any idea, notion, or apprehension of them to enter the mind, but by the mediation of some *external* agency. So that all we *do* know, or can *hope* to know, concerning

them in *this* world, is from REVELATION. Reason indeed, or the workings of an inquisitive sagacious mind, may improve *itself*, but not the subject: it may discover variety of arguments to explain the beauties, and shew the necessity of supernatural truths; but it cannot add *one* to the original stock; nor speak a word concerning their essence, or their nature, beyond what Revelation teaches. So that “REVELATION (in Mr. *Locke*’s words) is nothing but natural Reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries, communicated immediately by GOD;—which Reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proof it gives, that they come from GOD.

## SECTION IV.



*Of a REVELATION from GOD,  
as possible, probable, and necessary.*

**T**HAT a supernatural method of revealing to mankind God's will, is *possible*, seems to be very evident from considering the nature of God, and the capacities of men.—An infinite Being, that created our souls capable of knowing and loving him, can never be supposed to want power to communicate greater light to our understandings, and to make known to us farther discoveries of his will and pleasure. And man, thus made after *his* image, can at all times use those faculties he is endowed with, both in receiving, and delivering, the matter of the revelation, when it is set before

him in a manner properly adapted to those faculties.

That a revelation of God's will should be esteemed *probable*, is very justly to be inferred from that great ignorance, and universal corruption of human nature, which *we* indeed know how to account for; but which was manifest to, and acknowledged by, even those of old, who were nevertheless unacquainted with its cause and origin.—We speak here of mankind as it is found *in fact* (setting aside the advantages of revelation), wicked, and propense to wickedness,—in the “ snares of the devil,—taken captive “ by him at his will,”—and unable to “ work out their own salvation.” And that this has at all times been the case is undeniable.—But if human nature *alone* has been sufficient for the entire purposes of restoration to

its own original integrity, and lost perfection, why has this *always* been the condition of mankind?—Alas! this is the very aggravation of our misery,—that we *are* naturally thus wretched, and that we *cannot* help it. —That extraordinary means of recovery, therefore, should be vouchsafed by God, is strongly to be expected from his infinite and acknowledged goodness: his providence not only extending its concern and care to the bodies of men, and to their outward conditions in this world, but chiefly to their immortal souls, and to their happiness in the world to come: on which account, rational creatures, plunged in misery, become, in a particular degree, fit objects of the divine care and compassion.—For though *natural* light convinces us of the existence of a Deity, and shews us how reasonable it is to pay our adorations



to that power which created, and still preserves us, yet it does not sufficiently direct us in the way and manner of performing it: though it may give us some *hopes* of pardon upon our repentance, from the general notion of God's goodness, yet it prescribes to us no *certain* method for the obtaining our reconciliation. Revelation therefore appears absolutely *necessary*, both to relieve the wants of men in a state of nature, and to recover the lustre and brightness of their original principles, impaired and sullied by the degeneracy of mankind; to add also such further improvements as may be perfective of human nature, to instruct men in the method of appeasing an offended Deity, and of obtaining for themselves the full and perfect ends of their creation.

It appears therefore that additional means of information besides the mere

discoveries of unaided reason, are certainly within the *reach* of an all-powerful God to give ;—that the want of them to a sunk and degraded race of reasonable beings, upon the score of his unbounded Goodness, makes it highly *probable* that God should, in such a manner as he sees most fitting, graciously vouchsafe to grant the same ; while the absolute impossibility of man's being able to recover his *lost* nature by his own exertions *only*, makes it *necessary* that from God should come his help and remedy in his weakness.

It is plain then, that, though we had never heard a of such a thing as a Miracle, or a Prophecy, or of *revealed* Religion ; yet from the consideration of the state of the world, and the great ignorance and corruption of human nature, it would be reasonable to

*expect* that God should *some way* make known his will to mankind; and we cannot reconcile it to his attributes, nor conceive how it should be consistent with them, for him to be an unconcerned spectator of so much folly and wickedness, without taking any care to remedy it. God indeed cannot be obliged to *force* men to obey his commandments, and comply with his will; he must rather leave it to their own *option*, whether they will be happy or miserable: but it was necessary to *propose* the terms of Salvation to them, to offer them their free choice;—to set before them life and death, blessings and cursings, and so,—to make the obstinate without excuse.

## SECTION V.



*Of the possible MEANS of affording a  
REVELATION.*

THE methods by which an extraordinary discovery of God's will may be made to men, appear to be but two;—either an immediate revelation, by inspiration or otherwise, to each individual separately;—or else, a commission, with indisputable credentials, bestowed on *some*, to convince *others*, that they come from God, to instruct them in what he has revealed either by himself, or by the communication of Angels.

But it cannot seem requisite that God should immediately inspire, or make a direct revelation to every

particular person in the world: For either he must so powerfully influence their minds and affections, as to take away their choice and freedom of acting (which would be to offer violence to human nature); or else men would, for the most part, have gone on in their wicked courses still, and have denied God in their lives, though their understandings were ever so clearly and fully convinced of his will and commandments, as well as of his “eternal power and God-head.” For, as *St. Paul* testifies, the Heathens themselves were not ignorant of the being of God; but “when they *knew* God, they glorified him *not* as God.”—No man can be more certain of any inspiration he can receive, than he is of the Being of that God from whom he receives it; and therefore he who denies the being of God, must by consequence

deny the truth of any such inspiration; unless it have that powerful impulse upon his mind, as both to convince him, and *force* him to an acknowledgement at once of the being of God, and of the operation of the divine Spirit upon his soul. And it is hard to conceive how any inspiration, which doth not over-rule the will and affections, as well as convince the understanding, should be of more efficacy upon the minds and lives of such men, than the notion of “a God” is. For if men can so stifle the notion of a GOD within their minds, as to doubt whether there be any such BEING or no, or at least to act as if there were *none*; no reason can be given why they might not as well act against *any* conviction, which they might receive by inspiration, or any other way of immediate revelation (unless it had an irresistible effect upon

them), and either take it all for fancy and delusion; or else so harden themselves against it, as not to be reclaimed by it. But above all, profane persons, and obstinate unbelievers can have least reason to expect that God would vouchsafe to *them* an immediate revelation. It being in the general dispensations of his providence, to “give  
 “over such persons to a reprobate  
 “mind, to their own hearts lust,”  
 —to abandon them to the tyranny of their sins, since they will take no notice of his works, nor “abide his  
 “counsels.” His “SPIRIT will not  
 “always *strive* with man;” he withdraws his ordinary grace from those who abuse it;—and it can never be presumed he would confer higher favours upon them.

But even if God were willing to vouchsafe some immediate revelation

of himself to these insolent offenders, and blasphemers of his name and authority, how can we be assured that they would be converted? Would they not rather find out some pretence to persuade themselves that it was no *real* revelation, but the effect of natural agents, or of melancholy, and a disturbed imagination?

They might be terrified perhaps for the present, but it is much to be apprehended, from what we all know of the infirmity and depravity of mankind, that they would soon stifle their apprehensions with their accustomed arguments for Atheism and Infidelity.

But besides being ineffectual, and never to be expected by such as this conceit must be calculated for; the supposition of immediate revelations to every man in particular, would fill



the world with continual impostures and delusions. For if every one had a revelation made to himself, every one might pretend to others what he pleased; and one man might be deluded by the pretence of a revelation made to another, against an express revelation made to himself; which we may conclude would often happen, from what we every day experience: for if men can be perverted by the arts and insinuations of others, against their own Reason and Judgment, they might as well be prevailed upon to act against a revelation made to them; though Revelations were things as common and familiar amongst men, as Reason itself is.

So that immediate revelations to every particular man would have been needless and superfluous; they would have been unsuitable to the majesty

and honour of God; and they would have been ineffectual to the ends for which they must be supposed to be designed, and would have given many more pretences to impostures than there are now in the world.

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## SECTION VI.

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*Of the METHOD actually ADOPTED;—  
PROPHECY, and MIRACLES.*

THE method, however, actually made use of by Almighty God for the revelation of his will, both in times past, and in these later days, wherein he has spoken to us by his SON, has been that before-mentioned, of qualifying certain persons to declare his will to others, by infallible signs

and evidences of his authority and commission. For which purpose no means are so proper and convincing as those supernatural gifts and powers ordinarily understood by the terms PROPHECY, and MIRACLES.

That *Prophecies* and *Miracles* are the most fitting and proper means for God to use in revealing himself to the world, is evident from their not being subject to any of those inconveniences, which immediate revelations to each person, would unavoidably be exposed to.—There is no Prophecy, nor Miracle, which has not the designed effect upon many persons: the honour and majesty of God is not subject to the scorn of every profane and obstinate offender; and there is as effectual care taken to prevent impostures, as possibly there could have been. And as Prophecies and Miracles

have none of the inconveniences of immediate revelations, so have they manifestly all the advantage and utility, which it can be supposed such revelations would have had, in being granted to every person in particular. They prove the *immediate*, action and authority of GOD,—which is the only effect designed by any mode of revelation whatever.

True Prophecies are of such a nature, that none but GOD omniscient could be the author of them; and these, in their accomplishment, must carry an indisputable evidence of divine revelation along with them.—Such are the predictions of things to be fulfilled many ages afterwards, which in the fulfilling, depend upon the counsels and determinations of *free* agents; and predictions of the *sins* of men, which they could not be deter-

mined to, but by their own choice.— It is above the capacity of human understanding, to conceive how it is possible, that things should be foreseen so long before either the actions or the agents themselves have any existence; or how *contingencies* can be the object of infallible prescience: and therefore for God to *foretel* things of this nature by his Prophets, is a most proper and certain way of revelation; because it is above the power of any finite being to do the like. It is the prerogative of HIM that “formeth the  
“ mountains, and createth the wind,  
“ to declare unto man what is his  
“ thought: the LORD, the God of  
“ Hosts, is his name.”—As for those things which, having been foretold, come to pass by chance, or which it may be imagined evil spirits may be able to foretel, when they are in agitation, and perhaps just ready for

action ; or probable guesses from the various accidental circumstances of the world, we say nothing of them here ;—being well assured, from the consideration of the divine attributes of goodness and truth, that God will not suffer *false* religions to be imposed upon the world under his *own* name, by diabolical predictions, without affording to mankind the means of *discovering* them to be such.

But considering the true Prophecies,—those which are avowedly esteemed, and have been proved to *be* so, we can safely say, that when such are delivered by *many* Prophets, in *divers* ages, and different places, all teaching the *same* doctrine, all tending to the *same* end and design, in their several revelations, and *that* end the discouragement of all wickedness, with the maintenance of all virtue and true

religion,—*these* prophecies have *all* the evidence that can be requisite to assure us that they are from God : and God, by suffering them to be fulfilled, and to pass so long in the world under his own name, with all the characters of his authority upon them, gives us all possible assurance that they are *his* ; and engages us hereby, in honour to his divine attributes, to believe that they are really founded in, and supported by, *his* authority.

And, the certainty of Prophecies being thus grounded upon the divine attributes, besides the direct evidence which they afford to whatever is delivered by them, they add also an undeniable confirmation to those Miracles which have been foretold, and are wrought at the time, and in the manner, and by persons, foretold by the Prophets. And the Prophecies

likewise receive as great a confirmation from such Miracles. For Prophecies and Miracles, which are *singly* a sufficient evidence of divine revelation, do *mutually* support and confirm each other; so that we have hereby all the assurance that can be expected of any divine revelation. And therefore, as *Prophecy* is in itself a most fitting and proper way of revelation; so, in conjunction with *Miracles*, it is the most certain method that can be desired, for making known the will of God to Man.



## SECTION VII.



### *Of MIRACLES.*

**T**HE fitness and efficacy of *Miracles* to give proof of a divine revelation, seem to be very evident upon the slightest consideration of the subject; according to the ordinary acceptation of the term. For it would be an extravagant thing to imagine that God should exclude *himself* from the works of his own creation; or, that he should establish them upon such inviolable laws, as not to be capable of being altered upon some occasions, when he foresaw it would be requisite to alter them. For unless the course of nature had been thus alterable, it would have been defective in regard to one great end, for which it

was designed; that is, it would have failed of being serviceable to the designs of Providence upon *all* occasions.

We cannot scruple therefore to believe that the same infinite wisdom which contrived laws for the order and course of nature, contrived them so, as to make them *alterable*, when it would be necessary for God, by suspending the powers, or interrupting the course, of nature, to manifest his *extraordinary* will and power; and that by the same decree whereby he first established them, he subjected them to such alterations, as in his wisdom he foresaw would be necessary. Nor can we any more doubt, but that HE who made the world, has the sole power and authority over it; and that nothing can be done in it, but by his direction and influence, or at least

by his permission; and that the frame and order of nature which he at first appointed, can at no time be altered, but for *great* ends and purposes. God is not given to change, as men are; and can never be disappointed in his eternal purposes and designs. When therefore any thing comes to pass above the course of nature, as we speak, and contrary to it, in confirmation of a revelation, which, for the importance and excellency of the subject of it, and in all other respects, is most *worthy* of God, we may be *sure* that this is his doing.—And there is still farther evidence of it, if this revelation were of old announced by prophets, who *foretold* that it should be confirmed by Miracles.—Thus when men born blind, received their sight; when others were cured of the most desperate diseases, by a touch, or at a distance; when the dead were

raised, and devils cast out; these were evident signs of a divine power and presence, which gave testimony to the doctrine delivered by those, by whom such miracles were wrought, and the divine commission and authority produced, for what they did and taught.—This was giving witness and credibility to the things revealed, in a language much more powerful than any human voice; whilst God shewed forth his glory, and made known his will, by exercising his sovereignty over nature, in making the whole *creation* bow, and tremble, and *obey*.—All which was performed according to express prophecies concerning CHRIST, that there might be a visible concurrence both of prophecies and miracles in attestation of him. And this dispensation of Miracles had this particular advantage and propriety attending it, that it was

admirably well fitted to propagate a religion which concerned the poor, as well as the rich, the unlearned, as well the learned: being equally adapted to awaken the attention, to command and challenge the assent of men of all conditions and capacities. For miraculous effects are obvious to the most ignorant of mankind; yet such as may satisfy the wisest of them, and confute or silence the most captious and contentious.

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## SECTION VIII.

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*Of distinguishing TRUE MIRACLES  
from FALSE ONES.*

**T**HE only difficulty concerning miracles consists in knowing how to distinguish *true* from *pretended* ones; —those which have been wrought in

confirmation of the true religion, from such as have been done, or are pretended to have been done, in behalf of any false religion.

How far God may permit the devil, or his agents, to proceed in matters of this nature, we cannot comprehend. We have, however, his divine attributes engaged for our security, that he will not suffer us to be deluded by false miracles, wrought under a pretence of his own authority, without any possibility of discovering the imposture. And though, for wise ends, he may suffer wicked men to perform some things that may seem to be very wonderful, yet he always takes care to place a mark of distinction between what is done for the attestation of a lie, and the confirmation of the truth,

Let us adduce, then, a strong case upon the subject :—that of the Magi-

cians in *Egypt* attempting to support their own false Gods and worship, against the pretensions of *Moses* to a higher claim of attention than themselves.

The history informs us that they were permitted to proceed to the fullest extent and compass of their art, and that they held on with *Moses*, as long as possibly they could. The result was, that the victory obtained over them by *Moses*, confirmed too by their own confession, was more

with great facility : those of the Magicians, by the intervention of certain charms and incantations.—Had not *Moses* however been present, to overrule them by a superior power, it is very reasonable to believe that whatever they might have done by virtue of any magical or diabolical arts, God would never have permitted them to perform such things as had, at least, the appearance of true miracles, and were sufficient to deceive all indifferent beholders.—Again.



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But the great difference between them seems to have lain in this;—that the miracles of *Moses*, besides being of a nature infinitely superior to theirs, were done immediately, and

with great facility : those of the Magicians, by the intervention of certain charms and incantations.—Had not *Moses* however been present, to overrule them by a superior power, it is very reasonable to believe that whatever they might have done by virtue of any magical or diabolical arts, God would never have permitted them to perform such things as had, at least, the appearance of true miracles, and were sufficient to deceive all indifferent beholders.—Again,

*Moses* says, “ If there arise among  
 “ you a prophet, or a dreamer of  
 “ dreams, that giveth thee a sign or a  
 “ wonder, saying, let us go after  
 “ other Gods (besides the Lord), ye  
 “ shall not hearken to the words of  
 “ *that* prophet ; but shall walk after  
 “ the Lord, and keep his command-  
 “ ments, and obey his voice.” So

that, if miracles be wrought to introduce the worship of other Gods, besides HIM, whom reason, and the scripture teaches and assures us to be the only true God,—if they be done to seduce men to immoral doctrines and wicked practices;—if they be performed to contradict a religion already established by such miracles as incontestably are true;—if ever so astonishing miracles be performed for such ill designs as *these*, they are not to be regarded; but must be rejected with that constancy and firmness, which become a man acting under the just principles of natural reason and religion.—There are therefore certain tokens of distinction, either respecting the works themselves, and the manner of their being done;—or respecting the persons who perform them, which make an essential difference between *real miracles* and *lying wonders*.—In

respect of the *works*, they must, first, be possible; or at least not strictly impossible;—they must be probable also, and not such as favour of fable and romance; nor yet be below the majesty of God, the great ruler and governor of the world; nor inconsistent with his character as a gracious and good Being: they must be performed openly in the face of the world, and before many competent witnesses; readily, and without previous forms and ceremonies, favouring of magic and incantation; and upon all important occasions, to shew the permanency of the divine power by which they are performed.

In relation to the *person*, it is requisite that he be one of good report for his unblameable conduct and deportment; in the perfect exercise of his senses and understanding; constant

and uniform in the message he delivers; and that the *doctrine*, he endeavours to establish by his miracles, be consistent with the right notions and worship of God; bearing a strict conformity with the former revelations of his will; of a tendency to destroy the devil's power in the world, to recover men from their ignorance and sins, and, in short, to advance the general welfare of societies, as well as every man's particular happiness, in this life, and in his preparation for a better.—By these rules any person of a sober consideration may be enabled to discern between true and false miracles; because we are very sure, so far as God's attributes can convince us, that he will not suffer the same *degree* of evidence to concur in confirming both, without a possibility to distinguish them.

## SECTION IX.

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*Of the Impossibility of some MIRACLES  
being false ones.*

**W**ERE we to allow for once, that in some very particular cases, and for some very particular reasons, God would permit men under the influence of evil spirits to do true miracles in confirmation of any real imposture,—in order to exercise our faith, and prove us, whether we will adhere to the truth, which by mighty signs and wonders he hath already established among us,—yet that this should be done in all cases, without any means to distinguish false miracles from true ones, appears to be a thing impossible.



Some things for instance, are so great, that it is not reasonable to conceive that any created powers *can* do them; or that, if they could, God would permit them to have success. Such is the making a great and general alteration in the course of nature.—Some things are so good and beneficial to mankind, that wicked and infernal agents *will* not perform them, even though they were able to do so.—Such are the casting out of devils, the diminishing the influence of the evil one, the counteracting sin, or the discovery of moral truths.—Some things are of such a nature, that these malicious spirits *dare* not do them, from the fear of meeting severe chastisement for their presumption;—such as the directly opposing God's extraordinary messengers.—And lastly, there are some things so peculiarly appropriated to God, that no other

Being,—otherwise than as actuated by his divine power, and immediately dependent on it, can in the least intermeddle with them.—Such are the knowledge of future contingencies, the discernment of our secret thoughts and intentions, and the restoring of the dead to life;—for “I am HE,” saith the LORD, “and there is none “besides ME. I shew the things to “come; I search the *heart*, and try “the *reins*; I kill, and I make “*alive*.”

There being then, so many cases, wherein either the will or power of diabolical agents *must* fail, their compass of working miracles cannot be so large and extensive, as some may perhaps imagine.—But even were it more extended than it is, upon the supposition that we believe in a righteous providence, we can not imagine

that he will suffer them to usurp such a tyranny over the minds of men, as to make those things pass with the sober and inquisitive part of the world for divine miracles, which have been only counterfeits and impostures. — We may rather conclude and be assured, that if the providence of God be concerned in the discovery of *Satan's* designs, there must be some means of discovery; and those means can be supposed to be no other than some rational and satisfactory evidence, whereby we may know when strange and miraculous things are done by *Satan* to deceive men, and when, by the power of God, to confirm a testimony truly divine. — And such means we have already considered.

## SECTION X.

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### *APPLICATION of the ARGUMENT from MIRACLES.*

**I**N judging of the credibility of Miracles, it appears to be most certain, that, whatever may be the *ingenious* difficulties which some persons have conceived herein, there is no such antecedent improbability attending them, as no human testimony can surmount. The probability of their existence is at least as great, as that a revelation of infinite importance to mankind should be vouchsafed to them: that is, if it be probable that such a revelation should be made known to men at all, it is at least in the same degree to be esteemed probable, that it should be attested by

miracles;—as one of the *most* convincing methods of conveying to mankind the assurance, that it comes from GOD, and that it has HIM for its author and proposer.

Thus much in general;—as to the miracles, by which the scriptures are confirmed and authenticated, we consider them as true, because there is no preceding divine revelation which they contradict, nor any immoral doctrine which they deliver; nor is there any one circumstance belonging to them, by which they can be found *false*.—Moreover, the testimony which reports them to us is unquestionable. So that in this case, *that* which all the wit and ingenuity of man cannot prove to be ill-founded and false, must be esteemed *true*, or else God would suffer his own name and authority to be usurped and abused, and mankind

to be imposed upon, in a matter of the *highest* importance, without any possibility of discovering the imposture;—which it is contrary to the divine attributes for him to permit. But if neither the miracles themselves, nor the doctrines which are attested by them, can be discovered to have any deceit or defect in them, and be most excellent, most divine, and most worthy of God; we have then all the evidence for the truth of the miracles, and of the religion, which they were wrought to establish, that we can have for the being of God himself. For if these miracles and this religion be not from God, we must suppose either that God *cannot*, or that he *will* not, so reveal himself by miracle to the world, as to distinguish his own revelation from impostures: both which suppositions are contrary to the divine attributes; contrary to God's omnipo-

tence, because he can do all things, and therefore can exceed the power of all finite Beings; contrary to his honour, and wisdom, and goodness, because these require both that he should reveal himself to the world, and that he should do it by miracles, in such a manner as to make it evident which is his revelation. But if he both can, and will, put such a distinction between false miracles and true ones, as that men shall not, but by their own fault, be seduced by any false miracles, then, *that* religion which is confirmed by miracles, concerning which nothing can be discovered to be either impious or false, must be the true religion.

It is however always to be remembered, that though miracles are a most fit and proper means to prove the truth of religion, yet they are not

only to be considered *alone*, but in conjunction with *other* proofs; and that they must necessarily be true miracles, or miracles wrought to establish the true religion, when the religion, upon account of which they are wrought, cannot be discovered to be *false*, either by any defect in the miracles themselves, or by any other means; but has all the marks and characters of truth.—Because, God would not suffer the evidence of miracles, and all other proofs, to concur in the establishment and confirmation of a false religion, beyond all possibility of our discovering it to be so.



## SECTION XI.



### *Of SCEPTICISM.*

BY “Scepticism” is meant an unreasonable *difficulty* in believing;—a suspending of the mind’s assent, after the proper grounds of conviction have been presented to it. Such sceptics are all they, who will not be contented with those sorts of proof, which things are capable of admitting;—for instance, who will not believe things which were done before their own time, because they did not see or hear them; or because they are not proved to them by mathematical demonstration, which all historical facts whatever are, by their very nature, alike incapable of receiving.—Such also are they, who

are so *partial* in giving their assent, as to believe the histories of *Julius* and *Augustus Cæsar* without the least scruple, but are full of doubts about the history of JESUS CHRIST, though supported by evidences far more clear and numerous.—To these may well be applied, what was said by an excellent writer\* in relation to this sceptical humour; “Those who will  
 “pretend *such* kind of grounds for  
 “their disbelief of any thing, will  
 “never be able to persuade others,  
 “but that the *true* cause, why they do  
 “not give their assent, is not because  
 “they have no *reason* for it, but  
 “because they have no *mind* to it.”—

We are naturally very uneasy under a state of *suspense* about any thing, which we are really fond of, and care in earnest to pursue: and men’s willingness to continue in suspense as to

\* Dr. Wilkin’s, Nat. Rel.

the truth of a REVELATION, which comes from God, is a sure sign that it is a business, they do not *like*, nor care for. And though this be not downright infidelity, yet it makes men indifferent about all holy concerns, and unactive in the discharge of their proper duties; it takes off the *force* and *influence* of every good impression, every moral sanction, and religious obligation, almost as much as infidelity itself: and such a scepticism as *this*, concerning GOD, his PROVIDENCE, and REVELATION, would end in the scepticism of our very senses, if *these* principles were pursued in their direct and necessary consequences.

## SECTION XII.

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### Of *INFIDELITY*.

**T**HOUGH it be not in the power of any man to believe what he *pleases*, because, as things appear at this or that time to his understanding, so his belief must be ;—and we can neither be charged with guilt, nor become liable to punishments, for what we cannot help,—yet, in searching after truth, there are two things which are in our power; namely, the *use* of our faculties; and likewise, the *due* and *impartial* use of them. And if we fail of finding out the truth, or fall into error, by not using our faculties at all, or by using them unduly, we are certainly accountable to God, who

gave them, and who, as our supreme LORD, has a *right* to require a *due* use, and to punish the *abuse*, of them.

In speculative matters, which no way concern our duty or our happiness, men may be as ignorant as they please, without danger of incurring guilt;—but to be an infidel in *religion* through sloth and carelessness, for want of examining *at all*, or through a *slight* and superficial examination, makes men highly *guilty* in the sight of GOD; both as it is a neglect of using and applying the faculties, which he has given us, and as it is manifestly contrary to all the rules of reason, not to use them in a matter which so nearly concerns our safety and our interest: especially when the evidences of REVELATION lie so open to the general apprehension of mankind, and may so easily be entered into, and understood.

Nor are they less guilty in the sight of God, who, in examining the grounds of Religion, suffer their minds to be influenced by *vicious* inclinations;—or by *pride*;—or an affectation of *singularity*;—or by any immoral and indirect motive whatsoever. The experience and observation of every day convince us, how greatly the judgments and opinions of men are influenced in temporal concerns, by their own private convenience, by interest, and other considerations, which do not at all belong to the matter they are to judge of; and this may be much more suspected in the judgment they are to make of the truth of Christianity; considering how contrary its precepts are to the inordinate desires and inclinations of mankind.—This is what the apostle calls “an evil *heart* of unbelief.” And where that is the case, infidelity is a

downright infidelity, yet it makes men indifferent about all holy concerns, and unactive in the discharge of their proper duties; it takes off the *force* and *influence* of every good impression, every moral sanction, and religious obligation, almost as much as infidelity itself: and such a scepticism as *this*, concerning GOD, his PROVIDENCE, and REVELATION, would end in the scepticism of our very senses, if *these* principles were pursued in their direct and necessary consequences.

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*sin* of the *highest nature* : as it corrupts the reason and understanding which God has given us, and subjects them to base and unworthy influences ;— it degrades our nature, and carries in it an *indifference* whether we be immortal, or die like beasts ; or rather, a *desire* that we may die like them :— it is an affront to GOD, when we reject his messengers, who come with clear and evident testimonies that they are commissioned by him ; it makes HIM a *liar* ; is a manifest contempt of his great goodness in sending a revelation, and defeats his gracious designs and measures for the salvation of mankind.

From whence we may collect, that to *believe* or *not believe*, is far from being a matter of indifference and slight importance, as infidels would make it appear to be.—Others also who are in

danger of being seduced by them, may be convinced, how nearly they are concerned, before they suffer themselves to be directed by *such* guides, to give the evidences of revelation a thorough and impartial examination.—For which end, the three following “tests of sincerity” may very properly be recommended:—first, that they find their *hearts* really disposed to embrace *any* doctrine, and to follow *any* rule of life, that shall appear to come from God: secondly, that they have an inward *wish* to find a religion well founded, which provides a remedy for the corruptions of our nature, and ensures to all good men a state of happiness and immortality after this life: thirdly, that they find in themselves no evil inclination, vice, or passion, which disposes them to *wish* that such a religion may *not* be true.—Let but

men, before they enter upon their enquiry, put the *heart* under these guards, and they may safely be persuaded, there is no danger of its ever being laid hold of, and misled, by the gross delusions of “Infidelity.”

We suppose, however, here, a willingness to examine into the grounds of Revelation.—But it is possible that contempt beforehand may preclude even a willingness to examine. In such a case, all that can be said is, that “contempt previous to enquiry” is a *vice*, at least of the *understanding*, whatever share the *heart* may have in it;—and like other *vices* must be *accounted for* hereafter.

## PART THE THIRD.

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### SECTION I.

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*Of the ANTIQUITY of the  
SCRIPTURES in general.*

AS it is evident from considering the divine attributes, that God would not so wholly neglect mankind, as to take no care to discover, and make known, his will and commandments to the world; so, when there was such a necessity of divine revelation, for the happiness of mankind, both in this world and the next, it is not to be believed that he would defer the making known his will so long, as

until the date of the first antiquities amongst the Heathens.—It cannot be denied, that some books of the Scripture are by much the most ancient books of religion in the world; for it were in vain to pretend that the works in this kind (or indeed in any other) of any heathen author can be compared with the *Pentateuch*, or books of *Moses*, for antiquity.—And the antiquity of these books is one considerable circumstance, whereby we may be convinced that they are of divine revelation. For if God would not suffer the world to continue long in a state of ignorance and wickedness without a revelation, we may conclude, that he would not suffer the memory of it to be lost; and therefore, a book of this nature, which is by so much the most ancient in the world, being constantly received as a divine revelation, carries great evidence with it, that it is authentic.

The first revelation necessarily must be held to be the *criterion* of all that follow ; and God would not suffer the most ancient book of religion in the world to pass all along under the notion and title of a *revelation*, without causing some discovery to be made of the imposture, if there were any in it ; much less would he preserve it by a particular and signal providence, for so many ages.—It is a great argument for the truth of the Scriptures, that they have stood the test, and received the approbation, of so many ages, and still retain their authority ; though so many evil men, in all ages, have made it their endeavour to disprove them :—but it is still a farther evidence in behalf of them, that God has been pleased to shew so remarkable a providence in their preservation.



## SECTION II.

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*Of the KNOWLEDGE of GOD,  
as revealed to MEN.*

**I**T has been already shewn, that it is not to be expected that God should reveal himself to every man in particular; and it could not be requisite, that he should afford a constant and standing<sup>u</sup> revelation in all nations of the world. For if mankind be sufficiently provided for in the “necessaries” of salvation, this is all, that can in reason be expected from a just and good God, in his dealings with sinful and perverse man.—If men be put in the “ready way” of salvation, and have sufficient means allowed them to attain it; all beyond this is the discretionary effect of infinite goodness, and depends wholly upon the good plea-

sure of God ; being more than we could promise to ourselves from his justice, or, by reason, foresee from his mercy. His wisdom, however, so orders and disposes the effects and emanations of his mercy, as to render them consistent with his justice and his honour, as the governor and director of the universe.

And if, in the first ages of the world, revelations were frequent, and generally known amongst all mankind, till by their own fault and neglect they were withheld from them ; it was the great mercy of God, afterwards, to continue to those nations, who had despised and rejected him, an opportunity of knowing his will revealed to others : and *this* God was pleased to do, by appointing a chosen seed, and selecting to himself a peculiar people, to bear his name before the

nations ; and, by the various dispensations of his providence, he so disposed of that people, that all nations might be instructed in the things revealed and delivered to them.—Thus much may be said in general ; but it will afford a pleasing as well as interesting subject of consideration, to reflect somewhat more particularly, by what *means* God was careful to provide, that at *all* times some sense of religion should be preserved in the world ; so as that at *no* period, from the creation of the world, it could be said, that God was “ left without some witness of “ himself,” among the sons of men. —We enter not into the *effects* universally produced by the occasional revelations of his will to men ; for though it be requisite that true religion should be made known among mankind, yet it is not necessary that God should *compel* obstinate men to consider

and believe it. He is not to *force* his laws upon them ; it being only to be expected that he should discover them, and afford men *sufficient* means to know, and be improved by them.

For this purpose we must have recourse to the accounts, which the Bible gives us ; *that* being avowedly the most ancient book in the world, considered only as mere history,—from which the knowledge of Religion, in the remotest ages of mankind, can possibly be obtained.

### SECTION III.

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*Of the WILL of GOD as revealed to  
MANKIND, before the LAW.*

**WE** are informed by the holy writings, that in the beginning of the world, God was pleased to create but one man, and one woman, and to people the earth from them. Now this must have exceedingly contributed both to the preservation of order and obedience amongst men, and to the retaining of the knowledge of God, and of his ways and dealings with the first parents of mankind. Whereas if multitudes had been created, and the earth peopled at once, the natural effect of this would have been ambition and strife, confusion and ignorance. For as the inhabitants of the

world multiplied, so did all sin and wickedness increase ; though all descended from the same parents, and these parents lived to see many generations of their off-spring, and to instruct and admonish them ; which, if any thing could have done it, must have kept up a sense of God and of religion amongst men.—*Adam* himself performed the office of father, priest, and king, to his children ; and the office and authority of these three characters descended upon the heads of families, in the several generations, and successions of kingdoms amongst his posterity : for that the same person was both king and priest in the earlier ages of the world, we learn from the best antiquities of other nations ; and it was so likewise amongst the *Hebrews*, till God had appointed an order and succession of the priesthood in one tribe : and therefore *Esau* is styled a

“ profane person,”\* for selling his birth-right, because the priesthood went along with it.

By all the accounts we have of the world before the flood, we are assured that God was pleased, at first, to afford frequent communications of himself to mankind;—and even to the wicked; as to *Cain*, whose punishment it afterwards was, to be “ hid “ from the face” of the Lord, and to be driven out from “ his presence.” And when the wickedness of men had provoked God to destroy the world by a flood, he revealed this to *Noah*; and respited his judgment for an hundred years; while *Noah* during that time, made it his business to forewarn the wicked world of their approaching ruin, and to preserve the knowledge of religion, by all the

\* Heb. xii. 16.

ways and means, which a wife and good man could devise, proper for that end.

It is well known that in ancient times men lived to the age of near a thousand years. It is known also, that of the ten patriarchs before the flood, all but *Noah* lived soon enough to see *Adam* and the other patriarchs their progenitors: and *Noah* himself was old enough to know them all, but *Adam*, *Seth*, and *Enoch*. And, as for good reasons, the dispersion of *Noah's* posterity over the earth must have been gradual, and many generations must have passed before the remoter parts of it could be inhabited, so the several plantations must be supposed to have held correspondence with those, to whom they were nearest allied, and from whom they went out; they must be supposed to have owned



some sort of dependence upon them, and to have paid them such acknowledgments as colonies ever do to their mother-cities, or countries.

All which, considering the great age that men lived to in those times, must, without a very gross neglect and contempt of God, preserve a true notion of religion in the several parts of the world: for *Noah* himself lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood; his sons were not soon dispersed; their dispersion was gradual, and they held a correspondence after their separation, and lived long to educate and train up their children in that knowledge of God, which they had received and been instructed in themselves; and besides, they had little else to discourse upon, but such things as would necessarily lead them to it. The history of men's own nation and family

is that, which they are naturally most fond of; and in these ages the particulars could be but few, and those very remarkable, and almost within the memory of some yet living: and every occurrence must have brought to their remembrance what they had heard, and had been taught concerning God, and his dealings with them, and their fathers.

Moreover there was a special hand of God, and a particular over-ruling providence, in the dispersion and division of nations. For “when the  
 “ most High divided to them their  
 “ inheritance, when he separated the  
 “ sons of *Adam*, he set the bounds of  
 “ the people according to the number  
 “ of the children of *Israel*,”\* he “de-  
 “ termined the bounds of their habi-  
 “ tation, that they should seek the

\* Deut. xxxii. 8.

“ Lord, if haply they might feel  
 “ after him, and find him.”\* This  
 was the reason of the division of the  
 nations “ according to the number  
 “ of the children of *Israel*,” who are  
 styled a “ peculiar treasure, a kingdom  
 “ of priests,” and “ a holy nation.” †  
 There was a particular regard had to  
 the number of the “ chosen seed,”  
 that they might bear a fit proportion  
 to the rest of mankind, and might  
 be as it were so much leaven to the  
 whole mass ; a quickening and enli-  
 vening principle, to excite and main-  
 tain due apprehensions of God, and  
 his worship and service in the world.  
 This is the reason alledged by learned  
 men, why polygamy, which was not  
 permitted from the beginning, should  
 be allowed the *Israelites* : for indeed,  
 it was of great consequence that they  
 should multiply so as to have a due

\* Acts xvii. 27.—† Exod. xix. 5, 6.

proportion to the rest of the world; and for the same reason, the surviving brother was required to marry the widow of the deceased. Barrenness was a reproach; to die childless, a curse; and a numerous offspring, a blessing so often promised, that it is evident, that *many* dispensations of the divine providence depended on it. Again,

The better to revive and keep up a sense of religion amongst men, those, who were most eminent for piety, were employed to be God's heralds and ambassadors to the rest of the world. Thus *Abraham, Lot, Melchizedeck*, and their families, were appointed as monitors and instructors to them, in the way of goodness and divine knowledge.

The *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* were descended from *Lot*, and therefore

it must be through their great sin and negligence, if *they* did not retain a true notion of religion : they had possession given them of the land they dwelt in by God himself,\* by whom the former inhabitants, a wicked and formidable race of giants, were destroyed before them ;—as the *Canaanites* were afterwards, before the *children of Israel*. Our Saviour was descended from *Ruth* the *Moabitess*. And the *Ammonites* are distinguished from the Heathen, by the prophet *Ezekiel*.†

As *Abraham* has the peculiar character given him of, “the friend of God,” and “the father of the faithful ;” so his power and influence was very great. He is supposed by some to have been king of *Damascus*. We know however that he was a “mighty prince among the children

\* Deut. ii. 9, 19.—† Ezek. xxv. 7.

“ of *Heth*,” and was respected as such by them.\* The Oak of *Mamre* was had in great devotion by the Heathens. The religion of the ancient *Persians* is styled in the *East*, the religion of *Abraham*, and the book, which contains it, the book of *Abraham*; and the Indian *Brahman*, or *Brabaman*, are supposed to derive their name from him. *Areus*, king of the *Lacedæmonians*, in his letter to *Onias* the high-priest,† says that it was found in writing, that the *Lacedæmonians* and the *Jews* were brethren, and that they were of the stock of *Abraham*. The *Saracens*, and other *Arabians*, were descended from *Abraham*; and circumcision, which was practised by so many nations, being a seal of the covenant, and a rite of initiation, must be supposed to have some notion of the covenant itself communicated to-

\* Gen. xxiii. 6, 10. —† i. Mac. xii. 20, 21.

gether with it. For there is no probability that circumcision, used as a religious and mysterious rite, could have any other original amongst heathen nations, than from *Abraham*.—As to its being used for other causes, *natural* or *moral*, and varied in the time of administration, it is very possible, that the *time* might happen to be changed by some unknown accident. It appears however always to have been used upon a religious account, whatever natural or moral causes might also be assigned. And such the *Jews* themselves were accustomed to assign, as well as that of religion.—It is moreover possible, that the *religious* cause of the observance might be forgotten, and the *natural* or *moral* only be retained.

Again, besides the other sons of *Abraham*, which were many, *Isaac* and

*Ismael* must have been very instrumental in propagating the true religion; and we can suppose none educated under *Abraham*, or belonging to him, but who must have been well qualified for that purpose, and must more or less retain the impressions they had received from him : this being the character which God himself gives of *Abraham*, “ I know him, that he will  
 “ command his children, and his  
 “ household after him ; and they shall  
 “ keep the way of the Lord.” — *Esau*, by his first marriages with two daughters of the *Hittites*, gave them opportunities of becoming acquainted with the religion and worship of the *Hebrews* ; and by marrying a daughter of *Ismael*, confirmed and strengthened the alliance between the true believers. He was the father of the *Edomites*, who, with the *Micabites* and *Ammonites*, were put into possession of *their*



country by the same divine power, by which the *Israelites* became possessed of the land of *Canaan*; and the children of *Israel* were commanded  
 “ not to meddle with them,—no not  
 “ so much as the treading of the sole  
 “ of the foot.” \*

*Jacob* being sent to *Padan-Aram* to take a wife of the daughters of *Laban*, abode with him twenty years: during which time, all that he took in hand so prospered, that *Laban* was sensible of it, and confessed the visible power and blessing of God in it.

*Isaac*, to answer the purposes of God, was *not* permitted to leave the land of *Canaan*, and was forbidden to remove to *Egypt*, when there was a famine in the land;—nor was he upon any account to return into *Chaldæa*,

• Deut. ii. 5.

or to go out of *Canaan*;—*Jacob*, on the contrary, *did* depart from it, when there were enough of *Abraham's* house besides, to keep up a sense of the true religion among the people of *Canaan*.

Afterwards God manifested himself to the *Egyptians*, by a great and wonderful providence: for the sojourning of the children of *Israel*, who dwelt in *Egypt*, was two hundred and ten years, at least: till at last, by signs and wonders, and dreadful judgments; by judgments upon their first-born, and upon “their Gods,”\* they were brought out from thence; and “the nations heard the fame” of it, and “all the earth was filled with “the glory of the Lord.” †

\* See Mr. *Bryant's* late learned publication upon this very curious subject.

† Num. xiv. 15, 21.

## SECTION IV.

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### *AMOUNT of this EVIDENCE.*

THUS it appears, that *Chaldæa* and *Egypt*, the most famous and flourishing countries in those ages of the world, had the true religion brought home to them by the patriarchs, who were sent from place to place to sojourn, to be a pattern and example to the rest of mankind. And men who travelled so far, and conversed with so many nations, and were so zealous for God's honour, and had such frequent revelations, and the immediate direction of God himself in most of the actions of their lives, and who were so great and powerful, and so numerous, must needs mightily

propagate religion wherever they came, and leave the idolaters without excuse: and it cannot be doubted, but that they had great success in all places; for even out of *Egypt*, where they endured the greatest hardship, and were in such contempt and hatred, yet “a mixed multitude went up also with them,” besides the native *Israelites*.\*

And as *Chaldæa* and *Egypt* were famous for learning and commerce, and proper places, by their situation, from whence notions of religion might be propagated both towards the East and West, and other parts of the world; so it may again be observed, that God's mercy was particularly manifested towards the *Canaanites*, before their destruction. The example of *Melchizedeck*, who reigned among

\* Exod. xii. 38.

them, and the sojournings of *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, not to mention *Ishmael* and *Esau*, with their numerous families, afforded them continual invitations, and admonitions for their instruction and amendment; especially the judgment upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the miraculous deliverance of *Lot*, was enough to strike an awe and terror into the most obdurate. But when they would not make due use of these mercies,—when they persisted still in their impieties and proceeded in them till they had filled up the measure of their iniquities;—God made them an example to others, after they would take no warning themselves; yet still

“ executing his judgments upon them  
 “ by little and little, he gave them  
 “ place of repentance, not being  
 “ ignorant that they were a naughty  
 “ generation, and that their malice was

“ bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed.”\*

How much the true religion prevailed by these dispensations of providence, among other nations besides the *Hebrews*, we have an *illustrious* instance in *Job* and his friends, who were princes in their several dominions. They had knowledge of the fall of the Angels ; † and of the original corruption of man, which is expressed with this *emphasis*, that he cannot be “ clean,” or righteous, who “ is born of a woman,” because by *Eve’s* transgression, sin came into the world. ‡ *Adam* is mentioned, § the resurrection is described, || and it appears that revelations were vouchsafed to these nations. ¶ It is plain therefore that the fundamentals of religion.

\* Wisdom xii. 10. — † Job iv. 18.

‡ Job xiv. 1. xv. 14. — § xxxi. 33.

|| Job xiv. 12. — ¶ xxxiii. 15.

were known doctrines amongst them, and are therefore mentioned both by *Job* himself, and by his friends, in as plain terms as may be, and as fully as can be expected in a book which is poetical; the nature whereof requires that known things should be alluded to, but not so particularly related as in history. And there is no doubt but the propagation of religion in other parts of the world would be as evident, if the scriptures had, not occasionally only, and in the accidental course of other things, but of set purpose treated of this matter;—as we may gather from the traces to be yet found in heathen authors, of what the scriptures deliver to us; and from the several allusions and representations, in the rites and ceremonies of their religions, expressing, though obscurely and confusedly, the chief points of the scripture-story, as has been shewn by many learned writers.

## SECTION V.

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*Sufficient MEANS of knowing GOD,  
after the LAW.*

**I**N succeeding ages, after the giving of the LAW, when the *Jews* by their religion and government may seem to have been wholly separated from the rest of the world, and the divine Revelations confined to *one* nation, there still were sufficient means, and frequent opportunities, afforded for *all* nations to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The law of *Moses* did particularly provide for the instruction of *other* nations in the revealed religion; and the scriptures give frequent commandment and encouragement concerning



11.—If any “Strangers” would be circumcised, and undertake the observance of the whole law, they were at full liberty to do it.

And as *Strangers* or *Profelytes* were thus joined, in the very design and institution of the law, with the native *Israelites* themselves, as to all the acts and privileges of religious worship, when once they had received circumcision, though they were not obliged to be circumcised (but were left at liberty, not under any obligation but to worship the true God, and observe the precepts of *Noah*); so, God had a particular regard to them in their civil statutes and ordinances, to free them from oppression and every thing that might give strangers any discouragement from living amongst the *Israelites*, and becoming partakers of their religion with them.

They were equally capable of all the privileges and advantages in the Jewish worship, as the *Jews* themselves were; and were debarred of very little in their civil rights: all encouragement imaginable was given to *strangers* to come and dwell amongst the *Jews*. The law joins them together with the natural *Israelite*, both in the curses it denounces, and in the blessings it promises; it severely threatens all that should oppress or defraud them; it commands the same charity towards *them*, as towards the “fatherless” and “widow,” the *greatest* objects of human compassion, and of the merciful care and providence of God. And the prophets, with the utmost severity, rebuke the *Jews* for any oppression or abuse of them. The *Profelytes* were not excluded from their sacrifices, their prayers, and sacraments; and if they refused to

take upon them the observance of the *whole* law, yet they had free leave and great encouragement to live amongst them, believing only in the true God, and obeying those precepts which were given to all the race of mankind after the flood. They might share in all the rites of their religious worship, and were invited to do it; but if they would not submit to this, yet ~~they were~~ not therefore rejected, but might partake of their civil privileges, and live under the protection of their government. And it is observable, that where the same laws are repeated in several places of scripture, the “stranger” is no-where omitted; but what relates to *him*, is constantly repeated with the rest, as a necessary and *essential* part of the LAW. So that never any government had so particular a regard for “strangers,” or was so peculiarly contrived for their encouragement to live under it.

## SECTION VI.

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*Of the Intercourse with the JEWS, as  
serving to instruct other NATIONS.*

THE providence of God so ordered and disposed of the *Jews*, in all their affairs, as to afford *other* nations frequent opportunities of becoming instructed in the true religion; and multitudes of *Profelytes* were made out of all nations. *Moses* dwelt in *Midian* forty years, and there married an *Æthiopian* woman; his wife's father, *Jethro*, the priest of *Midian*, and his family became converted; and\* after he had met *Moses* in the wilderness, he returned to make *Profelytes* in his *own* country. And the

\* Targ. Jonath. Exod. xviii. 27.

deliverance of the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt* magnified the power of God in all countries, whither the report came of a thing so wonderful and so notorious. The miraculous victories also which the *Israelites* gained over the *Canaanites*, wherever they came, struck a mighty terror into all those nations; as we see by the fear of *Balak*,\* and from the speech of *Rahab*,† and of the *Gibeonites*,‡ who were glad to make use of any pretence as an expedient to save themselves.

After the death of *Joshua* the *Israelites* were in subjection to the king of *Mesopotamia* eight years; to the king of *Moab* eighteen years; to *Jabin* king of *Canaan* twenty years; to the *Midianites* seven years; to the *Philistines* forty years. And when

\* Num. xxii.—† Josh. ii: 9.

‡ Josh. ix. 9, 10.

they were so often and for so long a time subdued by their enemies round about them, for their idolatries, and other transgressions; and then again, upon their repentance, were rescued from their oppression by *Gideon*, and *Jephtha*, and *Sampson*, all raised up for that purpose; this must give great occasion and opportunity to all the bordering nations to know and consider *that* religion, the observance or neglect of which had such visible effects upon its professors: for under their affliction, and in the time of their repentance, they used to declare the cause of all their misery, and make known the power of their *own* God, together with the vanity and sinfulness of idolatry.--So that their being so often and so long under the oppression of their several enemies, was a merciful lesson of almighty providence to the nations who had them in subjection, as

well as intended for the punishment and amendment of the *Israelites* themselves.

What good use the nations made of all these methods of divine providence, doth not fully appear to us from the holy writings; but that many would be much influenced and benefited hereby, cannot reasonably be doubted, whatever might be the case with others.

The *Philistines*, it is well known, were in a wonderful consternation, when they understood that the ark of God was brought into the camp.—And when it was taken by them, it was more terrible to them than the enemy could have been, if he had conquered them: they were tormented with diseases and plagues wheresoever the ark was carried; and their God, *Dagon*, was so little able to help them, that he fell down before it, and was broken in

pieces. And these were judgments of so remarkable a nature, that those people must have been left without excuse, who did not forsake their idolatries, and turn to the *living* God, who thus manifested himself among them.

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## SECTION VII.

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*Of the further SUGGESSES of the ISRAELITES,  
to the same End.*

THE miraculous victories of *Saul*, and *Jonathan*, and *David*; and *David's* stay with *Achish*, king of the *Philistines*, at *Gath*, with the favour and confidence he obtained from that king, gave the *Canaanites* still repeated opportunities and motives to conversion and repentance.—*David* extended his



conquests far and near; “ and the  
 “ fame of *David* went out into all  
 “ lands, and the Lord brought the  
 “ fear of him upon all nations.”  
 Wherefore he declares, “ I will give  
 “ thanks to thee, O LORD, among  
 “ the *Heathen*; and sing praises unto  
 “ thy name.”—“ Let men say among  
 “ the *Nations*, the LORD reigneth.”  
 He knew it to be the design of God,  
 in the dispensations of his providence,  
 that he should proclaim his power  
 and greatness. And accordingly he  
 did this with so good effect, that in  
 the beginning of *Solomon's* reign, the  
*Strangers* or *Profelytes* in the land were  
 found to be “ an hundred and fifty  
 “ thousand, and three thousand and  
 “ six hundred ;” \*—who were all men  
 fit to be employed in the building of  
 the Temple; and the rest must be  
 supposed very much to exceed that

\* ii. Chron. ii. 17.

number, reckoning both sexes, of all ages.

In *Solomon's* reign, the kingdom of *Israel* became yet more famous and flourishing; *Hiram* king of *Tyre* held great correspondence with him; and, as is supposed on good authority,\* gave cities to *Solomon* in his own land, who placed *Israelites* in them; and he, in like manner gave cities to *Hiram*, in *Galilee*,† in confirmation of the league between them.—*Hiram* is said to have blessed “the Lord God of *Israel*, that made heaven and earth.”—*Tyre* was a place of great trade and commerce: there was no place of greater traffic, nor any that sent out more or greater colonies, or into more distant parts of the world; and therefore none could be more proper to establish a correspondence with, from whence religion might be better pro-

\* Kimchi, and Lightfoot.—† i. Kings ix. 13.

pagated. The Queen of *Sheba* came to see the glory of *Solomon's* kingdom, and blessed the LORD his GOD.\*— She, according to *Josephus*, was queen both of *Egypt* and *Ethiopia*. His wisdom was every where magnified :  
 “ And there came of all people to  
 “ hear the wisdom of *Solomon*, from  
 “ all kings of the earth, which had  
 “ heard of his wisdom.” “ All the  
 “ earth sought to *Solomon* to hear his  
 “ wisdom, which God had put in his  
 “ heart.” His dominions were exceeding great : “ He reigned over all  
 “ the kings from the river *Euphrates*,  
 “ even unto the land of the *Philistines*,  
 “ and to the border of *Egypt*.”

The trade and correspondence of the *Israelites* with foreign nations was greatly advanced in his time ; their trade extending as far as *Tarshish* and

\* i. Kings x. 9.

*Ophir*. *Tarshish* is translated *Carthage*, in the *Septuagint*; by some it is supposed to be *Tartessus* in *Spain*; others place it in the *Indies*, beyond the *Ganges*.—And as to *Ophir*, whether it be imagined to be *Zephala*, or *Cephala*, in *Africa*, toward the *Cape of Good-Hope*, or *Ceylon*, or *Sumatra*, or even in *America*, as some have been of opinion, all agree that it must have been in some very distant part of the world; and wherever it was, the traffic and dealings which the *Israelites* had there, afforded a great opportunity to the *Heathens* to become instructed in the knowledge of *God* and of true *Religion*.

## SECTION VIII.

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*The like Effects from the SEPARATION of  
the TEN TRIBES.*

THE division of the ten tribes, after the death of *Solomon*, and the erection of the kingdom of *Israel*; distinct from that of *Judah*, with the many leagues and wars which these two mighty kingdoms had with the kings of *Egypt*, and *Syria*, and *Babylon*, and with other nations, could not but exceedingly conduce to the divulging of the true religion in the world, and give opportunity to the prophets to declare their prophecies, and work their miracles among the *Heathen*; as we find in many instances, they did. And the captivity of the *Jews*, for seventy years in *Babylon*, made their

religion to be almost as well known there, as in *Jerusalem* itself.

During the captivity, *Jehoiakim* was reconciled to the king of *Babylon*, and in great favour with him. “His  
 “ throne was set *above* the throne of  
 “ the kings that were with him in  
 “ *Babylon.*” The *Jews* were commanded to take wives for them, and for their sons, that they might be  
 “ increased there, and not diminished;” and they were not only considerable for their number, but were in great esteem, and in places of great honour and trust; and their religion was *extolled* and recommended by public edicts to all under that vast empire. The almighty power of God was manifested by *Miracles*, and by the *interpretation* of *Dreams* and *Prophecies*; his name, his majesty, and honour were acknowledged, and pro-

claimed, in the most public and solemn manner, throughout all the *Babylonian* empire, at the command of princes who were idolaters, and who were compelled to do so by the convictions of their own consciences, wrought in them by the irresistible power of God.\*

*Daniel* had acquainted *Cyrus* (as *Josephus* says) with the prophecy of *Isaiab*, in which he was, so long before, mentioned *by name*. However, the Lord stirred up the spirit of *Cyrus*, by this, or by some other means, to accomplish the prophecy, which he had made both by *Isaiab* and *Jeremich* concerning the restoration of the *Jews*, after a captivity of seventy years : and *Cyrus* sent forth his proclamation, declaring that he had received his kingdom from God, with a charge

\* Dan. ii. iii. iv. &c.

to rebuild the temple at *Jerusalem*. And this decree of *Cyrus* was reinforced by *Darius* and *Artaxerxes*.\* Now so many several decrees put forth in favour of the religion of the *Jews*, with the miraculous power and wisdom which gave occasion to them; —the advancement of *Daniel* and others, with the long life and continuance of *Daniel* in that power and esteem, must leave all the Eastern parts of the world without excuse, that were not converted to the knowledge and worship of the true God.

\* *Ezra* vi. vii.



## SECTION IX.

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*The same Effects from the RESTORATION,  
after the CAPTIVITY.*

AS the ten tribes were carried away captive before the others; so, upon the restoration of the tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, all but a few, in comparison of the other tribes, remained in the places of their captivity:—and many of those two tribes also chose rather to continue in *Babylon*, than forsake the possessions which they enjoyed there. It is supposed that not much more than half of them returned: and there were afterwards three celebrated universities of the *Jews* in the *Babylonish* territories, besides several other places, famous for

learning.—The *Jews* relate, that the ten tribes were carried away not only into *Media* and *Persia*, but into the northern countries beyond the *Bosphorus*; and by some authors they are found even in *Tartary*. The *Odomantes*, a people of *Thrace*, were circumcised, and the scholiast of *Aristophanes*\* says, that they were reported to be *Jews*. In process of time they went as far as *China*.

The conquests of *Cyrus* opened a great correspondence between the nations of the world: and his particular favour to the *Jews* made them to be much taken notice of by other nations. It is observable, that after the captivity the *Jews* were never given to idolatry. And though they were before too much addicted to it, yet this

\* *Acharnens*. Act i. Scen. 4.

gave occasion to PROPHECIES and MIRACLES, to withdraw them from it:—which, with the judgments of God that befel them for their iniquities, gave continual manifestations to the world of the truth of their religion.

When the ten tribes were carried from *Samaria*, and strange nations were transplanted thither in their room, God still would not suffer his name and worship to be quite neglected and forgotten amongst them, and they were compelled to send for a priest back again, to teach them the fear of the Lord.\*

And after the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the death of *Gedaliah*, who was set over them that were left behind in the land of *Judah*, all the people that were not before

\* ii. Kings xvii.

carried to *Babylon*, fled into *Egypt*; *Jeremiah* being forced along with them; who there prophesied against *Egypt*, foretelling its destruction by the *Babylonians*,\* and at last suffered martyrdom.—Their going into *Egypt* at all was indeed contrary to the word of the Lord by *Jeremiah*; but the providence of God so ordered things, that *Jeremiah* should be carried thither with the rest, to bear witness against their wickedness and obstinacy; and to denounce severe judgments upon them and the *Egyptians*, in whom they placed their confidence, rather than in the living God; and then to die in testimony of the truth of what he had delivered.

So well known was the God of *Israel* and his worship among the nations, that *Cyrus* and *Darius* desired

\* Jer. xliii.

the prayers and sacrifices of the *Jews*, in behalf of themselves and of their kingdoms. *Alexander the Great, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Augustus, Tiberius, and Vitellius* sent victims to be sacrificed at the temple of *Jerusalem*.\* The *Jews* constantly offered sacrifices and prayers for the kings and emperors under whom they lived, and for their allies and confederates; and it was moreover expected of them:—for the omission of this, contrary to their known and approved custom in all former times, was the thing which hastened their final destruction by the *Romans*.

\* Philo and Josephus.

## SECTION X.



*Concluding PARTICULARS as to the  
CONDITION of the JEWS.*

**T**HE favour shewn to the *Jews*, and the honours paid to their religion, among the greatest and most illustrious characters of the world, were very remarkable. But the hand of providence was conspicuously displayed in every thing which concerned them: and, without doubt, they were made use of as *instruments* of GOD'S *designs* and purposes, for the promotion of his name among the Heathen; and for the advancement of that great scheme of man's SALVATION, which in due time was to be announced to the world.—To this end the military dispositions and achievements of the

greatest conquerors were made subservient ; and the transactions of mighty EMPIRES had a like necessary connection with the people of God.

The course of *Alexander's* victories was so unexpected, so sudden, and every way so wonderful, that it alarmed the world : and no man can believe that this was designed by providence only to gratify the ambition and vanity of a rash youth ; but rather to open a way of communication between the several parts of the earth, to the benefit of mankind, in the improvement of all useful knowledge. And when this work was *done*, he was no longer the same person he had been before, but soon resigned his conquests with his life.

It is observable, that *Alexander* was exceedingly addicted to learning, that

he had philosophers with him, and designed to introduce the *Greek* tongue by his conquests, and establish it, as the universal language.—When he left the mother and children of *Darius* at *Susa*, he took care to appoint them instructors in *this* tongue. He erected above seventy cities among the barbarous nations, mixing *Greeks* with the natives ; and ordered thirty thousands boys to be educated in the *Greek* learning.—A happy preparation this—for the rapid furtherance of religious knowledge, by means of *that* language, into which the scriptures were soon after to be translated.

*Alexander* is reported to have gone to the temple at *Jerusalem*, and offered sacrifice ; and to have been mightily encouraged in his enterprise against *Persia*, by the prophecy of *Daniel* : he remitted the tribute of every seventh



year, in which, by their law, they were obliged not to sow their ground; which was afterwards remitted to them likewise by the *Romans*: he granted to the *Jews*, who in great numbers enlisted themselves in his army, the free exercise of their religion;—and those of *Sanballat's* faction, who followed him into *Egypt*, he placed in that part of *Egypt* called *Thebais*.

When *Ptolemy*, the son of *Lagus*, took *Jerusalem*, he transplanted the *Jews* into *Egypt*, putting many of them into his garrison, and allowing them equal privileges with the *Macedonians*; by which encouragement, many, besides those whom he transported, voluntarily went to dwell there. And beyond the signal favours and honours bestowed upon the *Jews*, by *Ptolemy Philadelphus* (who likewise

caused the holy scriptures to be translated into the *Greek* tongue), *Seleucus Nicanor* granted them the freedom of *Antioch*, and of the cities which he had founded in *Asia*, and the *Lower Syria*; and these privileges remained to them till the time of *Josephus*, after all that they had done to deserve being deprived of them.

*Antiochus the Great* sent forth his letters and edicts, which are to be seen in *Josephus*, in favour of the *Jews*, more especially in what related to their religious worship. And *Seleucus*, son to this *Antiochus*, after his father's example, out of his own revenues, bore the cost belonging to the sacrifices.\* *Antiochus Epiphanes* himself at last, under the avenging hand of God upon him for all his impious cruelties, acknowledged himself punished for

\* ii. Macc. iii. 3.

his sacrilege, and other mischiefs committed at *Jerusalem*.\*

*Antiochus Pius*, when he besieged *Jerusalem*, not only granted a truce for seven days, during the “feast of Tabernacles,” but sent rich and noble presents for sacrifices; and a peace being concluded upon honourable conditions, with regard particularly to religion, *Johannes Hyrcanus* accompanied *Antiochus* in his *Parthian* expedition; and the “feast of Pentecost” falling the day after the sabbath, *Antiochus* stopped his army those two days, for the sake of the *Jews*.

The sufferings and martyrdoms under the *Maccabees*, and the resolution and constancy which they shewed upon all occasions, in defence of their

\* i. Macc. vi. 12, 13. and ii. Macc. ix. 17.

religion, rendered the *Jews* renowned over all nations: and besides, their conquests were very considerable, and the advantages very great, which accrued to religion by reason of them.

The temple built by *Sanballat* for *Manasses*, who had married his daughter, was an occasion of the *Samaritans* leaving their false Gods.—The zeal too of the Scribes and Pharisees, though they were hypocrites, exceedingly conduced to the extension of their religion; for they “compassed sea and land to make one profelyte.” They taught the necessary points of doctrine, though in hypocrisy, and with the mixtures of superstition.—In short, the *Jews* were dispersed over all the world; but chiefly seated themselves in *Rome*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*, the three principal cities of the empire; in all which they had great and peculiar privileges; and in *Alexandria* they

had magistrates of their own, and lived under a peculiar government by themselves.—Never had any other nation such a variety of changes and revolutions to mix them with the rest of the world; and never were any people so industrious, zealous, and successful in the propagation of their religion.

They had their *Proseuchæ*, and their synagogues for divine worship, and for reading and explaining the scriptures; which men of all religions were admitted to hear, in all places wherever they dwelt; and in *Egypt* they had a temple like that at *Jerusalem*, built by *Onias*, which drew mighty numbers of *Jews* thither, and continued for the space of three hundred and forty-three years, till the destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*; and in the synagogues the scriptures were read in the *Greek* tongue, which

was the most universal language then in the world.—Some have affirmed, that as much of the scriptures as was written in *Solomon's* time, was then translated into the *Syriac* tongue; and there is little doubt but that at least part of the bible was translated into *Greek*, before the time of *Alexander the Great*: but the version of the *Septuagint* became soon dispersed into all hands, which was made at the command of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*; to whom likewise, and his father, *Aristobulus* dedicated an exposition of the law of *Moses*.

By all these means vast multitudes of Profelytes were made to the *Jewish* religion in all parts of the world. What numbers there were at *Rome* of this religion, we know from the Roman poets and historians, and we have as good evidence of its extending itself in other places. Not to mention

particular persons of the greatest note and eminence, nor particular cities, as *Damascus*, where it more especially prevailed; it is evident what numbers of persons in all nations professed this religion, from the incredible treasures found by *Crassus* in the temple of *Jerusalem*; being ten thousand talents: equal to above two millions of our money, amassed there by the sums of gold sent from all places by the *Jews*, and such as became profelytes to their religion. In short, the *Jews* were every where dispersed, and every where gained men over to their religion; another proof of which may be had from the great numbers assembled at their Passovers, and at the feast of Pentecost “out of every nation under heaven.”

Thus mightily prevailed the religion of the *Hebrews*, till their city

and temple, by a divine vengeance, as *Josephus* often confesses, was destroyed; and the law itself, with the utensils of the temple, was carried away by *Titus* among the spoil in triumph. And when the *Jewish* religion had its full period and accomplishment, the *Christian Religion*, which succeeded in the room of it, and was prefigured by it, soon spread itself into all corners of the earth, and is at this day preached among all nations.

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## SECTION XI.

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*Of Memorials, and Remembrances, of TRUE RELIGION among the HEATHEN.*

IT may gratify the purposes of curiosity and enquiry, as well as supply useful evidences in support of the holy Scriptures, to consider some



of the memorials of *true* religion; as, by one means or other, they have made their way into the traditions of the Heathen, and still appear upon their records.—This is a subject which might be carried to a great extent, and accordingly has been considered very copiously, by many able writers.\* A few particulars may here be noticed:—as that, the formation of the earth out of a chaos, is mentioned by the most ancient Phœnician, Egyptian, Indian and Greek Historians; the very names of *Adam* and *Eve* by *Sanchoniathon* and others; the longevity of the Antediluvians by *Berosus*, *Manetho*, and others: *Maimonides* takes notice that the history of *Adam*, of *Eve*, of the Tree, and of the Serpent were extant among the idolatrous *Indians* in his time. In the

\* See in particular Mr. *Bryant's* great work, his "Mythology."

Greek and Latin historians we almost every where meet with the savage life of the Giants, mentioned by *Moses*: and it is remarkable, that the memory of almost all nations ends in the history of the Deluge. The flood of *Noah*, with the Ark and the Dove were generally taken notice of by Heathen historians. Two of every kind of animals entering into the ark, are mentioned by *Lucian* himself, as a tradition of the ancient Grecians. The account of the flood of *Deucalion* was plainly transcribed from that of *Noah*.—Under the history of the first and fabulous ship *Argo*, appears to be concealed the real history of the Ark. —The building of *Babel* is noticed by *Abydenus*; the burning of *Sodom* by *Diodorus Siculus* and others; several particulars of the history of the family of *Abraham*, and the rest of the Patriarchs, by *Berosus*, and others.

Many particulars also of the life of *Moses* appear in several ancient writers; divers actions of *David* and *Solomon* in the Phœnician annals; some of *Elijah's* are preserved by *Menander*, and confessed by *Julian* himself. To which may be added, that the word *Jove* is a plain depravation of the term *Jehovah*.—*Moses* is said to have received his laws from the God *Jao*, which is another variation from the same, or from *Jah*, a word often used in the old Testament.—The term *Eleleu*, frequently to be met with in songs and acclamations by the ancients, has a plain reference to the Hebrew *Alleluia*, especially with the addition of *Jou*, probably the same as *Jah*, after it. The Septuagint retains the Hebrew word *Elloulim* for *Songs* or *Hymns*.—It appears also that there was a general observation amongst the *Heathen* of one day in seven; though length

of time and corruption of manners had greatly obscured or quite blotted out the remembrance of the original institution: *Josephus* holds it probable, that the ancient and most known example of *Abraham*, gave occasion to the payment of tythes by the *Greeks*, and *Romans*, and *Carthaginians*, as well as by the *Phœnicians* and *Arabians*. In *Arabia Felix* the merchants were obliged to carry their frankincense to *Sabota*, the capital city, and there to offer the tythe of it to their God *Sabas*, and they were permitted to sell none till this was done. *Sabas* probably was a corruption from *Saboth*, an usual attribute of the true God.—It has been proved by several, and is generally agreed by learned men, that many of the rites among the *Egyptians*, were the same with those appointed by the law of *Moses*, or very like them. And there

can be no reasonable account given of the agreement of so many other nations with the *Jews*, in their rites and customs, but that these nations, probably in the days of *Solomon*, or some time after, during the flourishing state of the kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel*, or perhaps after the captivity, and since the dispersion of the *Hebrews*, had conformed themselves to them.

A tradition of the manner of the passage of the *Israelites* through the *Red Sea*, was retained among the people of *Heliopolis*. Pretended *Miracles* were sometimes wrought among the *Heathen*, by the invocation of the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; and these and other Hebrew names, as *Sabaoth*, and *Adonai*, were commonly used by the *Gentiles* in their incantations and exorcisms, which they retained by tradition, though they knew

not the meaning nor original of them. The names of *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, of *Michael*, and *Gabriel*, were also used to the like purposes, as *Pfellus* says in his expositions of *Zoroaster's* oracles. On the coast of *Guinea* there is a kind of trial by a bitter water,\* like the trial of jealousy enjoined by the law of *Moses*, and seemingly a remainder of it.—In the adjacent countries, they circumcise their children, and rest one day in seven; † though without any sense of God, or of his worship.—In the kingdom of *Kachemire* ‡ are several marks of judaism. §—One who relates that circumcision, the water of jealousy, and other rites, are in use with the inhabitants of the gold coast of *Guinea*, says that several *Europeans* assert, that the *Negroes* still retain

\* Dampier's Voyage. v. 2.

† Varenus. de divers. Gent. Rel.

‡ Bern. memoir, tom. 4.

§ Bosman. lett. 10, 11, 12.

many laws and customs which favour of *Judaism*, and acknowledges that there are divers other usages among them which seem the same in effect, as well as in name, with such as occur in the old Testament:—among the rest, the practice of marrying the deceased brother's wife, according to the well-known custom in the Jewish Law.

Those who first travelled into *China*, found *Hebrews* there, who called themselves *Israelites*, but knew not the name of *Jews*. They were dispersed in divers provinces, and read the Pentateuch in the Hebrew tongue, without points.—The observation of *New Moons*, years of *Jubilee*, and *Circumcision*, was found among the *Americans*, and an infinite number of ceremonies and customs (says *Acosta*) which resembled the ancient law of *Moses*. They had likewise a

tradition of *Noah's* flood. *Hornius* acknowledges that the name of *Joseph* was in use among the *Americans*, and that they frequently mentioned the word *Alleluia* in their songs, and used circumcision; and he shews, that in their several languages they have many words from the *Phœnician* or *Hebrew* tongue. The people of *Bengal* retained the name of *Adam*; and in *Madagascar* they had the names of *Adam*, *Eve*, and *Noah*.—So that there is no nation but has still had some memorials of revealed Religion. And it has been shewn by both ancient and modern authors, that the Philosophers had generally some knowledge of the religion of the *Hebrews*, that the *Brachmans* also of *India* were not unacquainted with it, and that the laws of the wisest *Heathen* nations were taken from the laws of *Moses*.—All which would have appeared in many



more and plainer instances, if the *Greeks* had been more ingenuous and sincere; if it had not been their custom to derive the names of places from some story of their own invention; if plagiarism had not been so general a practice among them; and if in their histories they had not changed the names of persons and places to conceal their thefts.\*

\* See likewise concerning the oriental Trinities, in Mr. *Maurice's* Indian antiquities, now publishing.

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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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