
THE
BRITISH CRITIC,

For JUNE, 1803.

Ἄμεινον δικάίως κρίνεται πρὸς τοῦ καταδικασθέντος ἀξίως μὲμνηναί ἢ
ἀδίκως κρίνεται παρὰ τῆ φύσει δικάίως ψέγεσθαι. ΕΠΙCΤΕΤ.

It is better, by giving a just judgment, to be blamed by him who is deservedly censured, than, by giving an unjust judgment, to be justly censured by the fact itself.

ART. I. *Modern Geography; a Description of the Empires, Kingdoms, States, and Colonies, with the Oceans, Seas, and Isles in all Parts of the World; including the most recent Discoveries and political Alterations: digested on a new Plan, by John Pinkerton. The astronomical Introduction by the Rev. S. Vince, A. M. F. R. S. and Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy in the University of Cambridge; with numerous Maps, drawn up under the Direction, and with the latest Improvements, of Arrowsmith, and engraved by Lowry. To which are added, a Catalogue of the best Maps and Books of Voyages and Travels in all Languages, and an ample Index. Two Volumes. 4to. 4l. 4s. Cadell and Davies. 1802.*

ENGLISH literature has long required a publication of this kind, to which, in all matters of geographical investigation, there might be a secure reference and appeal. It has become peculiarly necessary of late years, when discoveries and improvements in geographical science have succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectation. That a standard book

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ART. XI. *A Plea for Religion and the sacred Writings: addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and wavering Christians of every Persuasion. With an Appendix, containing the Author's Determination to have relinquished his Charge in the Established Church, and the Reasons on which that Determination was founded. By the Rev. David Simpson, M. A. 8vo. 351pp. 6s.6d. Conder. 1802.*

IN our Review for January, 1800*, we had to notice a work of the same Mr. Simpson's, on the Trinity, which was published but a short time before his death. The present volume is posthumous, that is, its contents were never made public during the author's life; and, in a short Advertisement prefixed, we are told, that after his death his executors hesitated about the propriety of making it public at all; but the son of the author being now of age, has thought it his duty to fulfil the intentions of his father, who was on the point of publishing it when death prevented him. So far all is right. The motive, as stated in the Advertisement, is praiseworthy and creditable; though it may have led to, or encouraged, an error in judgment. For we do not hesitate to say, that the discretion of Mr. Simpson's executors, had it been suffered to operate, to the suppression of at least a great part of the present work, would have conduced more to the establishment of his reputation, than the amiable but perhaps too partial attentions of his son and successor. Not that we would wish to speak disrespectfully of the private opinions either of the worthy author, whose premature death we sincerely lament, or of the pious editor of the work before us; but that we think there are some things in the present volume, which have a tendency to promote the very evils, which the author himself would have been among the very first to deprecate and deplore. In the first Appendix, Mr. Simpson tells us himself, he is the advocate for a peaceable reform, and we believe so. That is, we firmly believe Mr. Simpson would have wished that every thing requiring reformation, could be reformed peaceably; but we think he discovers but little knowledge of the world, when, wishing this, he could hazard such expressions concerning the established clergy, as must serve, if they were believed, to expose them to general contempt and indignation. Because Mr. S. himself, after subscription, saw or imagined reasons to dissent from some of our Church Articles and Canons, he

* Vol. xv. p. 13.

therefore concludes that most of the clergy of the establishment have subscribed, and continue to subscribe, seeing things in the same light as himself. That is, that all doubt, and many absolutely disbelieve, some of the chief Articles to which they swear assent and obedience. Nay, he goes so far in some places as to affirm, that none *can*, "*ex animo*," believe what *they* profess to believe. Mr. Simpson, as he is an advocate for a peaceable reform, is a great advocate also for the freedom of private opinion; but it is not acting consistently with such a principle, to pretend to determine what others *must, ex animo*, believe or disbelieve.

We shall not follow Mr. S. through his long string of objections to our church establishment; but shall only stop to lament that he should have suffered his indignation on account of some too manifest abuses, to hurry him into expressions so strong and so intemperate, that scarcely any thing could serve more to inflame the unthinking multitude, who are always too ready to listen to railing accusations. Mr. S. disapproved the establishment upon principle: like a man of honour and sentiment, and as his son expresses himself in his Advertisement, of "*sterling integrity*," "*manly fortitude*," and "*noble attachment to principle*," he relinquished, or had made up his mind to relinquish, all that he held under an establishment, which he disapproved. He was sincere we are certain, at least we have not the smallest reason to dispute it; but valuing his own sincerity, and attachment to principle so highly, he should undoubtedly have been more tender of accusing others of a want of both. Nor can he appear consistent in what he says; for while he professes to believe that there are some things to which the established clergy subscribe, which it is impossible for any wise or good man, *ex animo*, to believe, he holds up many of the Bishops and other clergy of the establishment, as patterns of both wisdom and virtue. He "*esteems them all very highly, in love*," he tells us, "*for their office sake*" (p. xx. Advertisement); because he is persuaded it is of divine appointment; and yet he treats them more irreverently in some places, than the boldest intruder into Christ's fold could well deserve. That abuses do exist, it is not safe to deny, respecting any human society; that our ecclesiastical establishment might possibly be ameliorated, if men could set temperately about it, we are not disposed very hastily to dispute; but the reformation Mr. S. proposes, would tend, we are sure, in the present state of the world, not only to degrade the priesthood in the eyes of the common people, but to introduce the utmost confusion and disturbance. We are not fond of calling names, and therefore we shall not insist upon Mr. S.'s principles favouring of enthusiasm; but

we must repel from the church we belong to, the accusation of lukewarmness; while we profess our attachment to that sobriety of doctrine and conduct, which may not tend to encourage either ungrounded expectations or apprehensions, inflame the passions, or delude the imaginations of the people. We love and reverence the Bible; we hold no other book in any comparative estimation; yet we are not for excluding the clergy from every study not strictly theological. We do not see why the studious and learned expounder of God's word is to be driven from his closet and his library, to become an unlettered itinerant preacher of it; and yet such is the plan which Mr. S. in no obscure terms, proposes to the bishops and clergy of the establishment.

Having said thus much upon the objectionable and too intemperate parts of Mr. S.'s book, we most cordially give him credit for the good design of the work in general, of which we shall now proceed to give a more particular account. It may be divided into distinct sections, in which the great truths of Revelation are ably vindicated and confirmed, infidels exposed, and religion inculcated in every possible manner; by exhortation and warning, precept and argument, and, above all, by example, in a detail of remarkable circumstances attending the last moments of some of the most conspicuous characters, both for virtue and vice, that history supplies. Books of great weight and credit (some, however, not altogether unexceptionable in our opinion) are recommended to the perusal of unbelievers; and they are justly admonished to consider, that nothing less than demonstration should weigh with them to reject one tenet of the Christian doctrine. The presumptuous ignorance, and blasphemous sneers of modern philosophers (or as Mr. S. with some ingenuity calls them) philosophers (for so we apprehend it should be read) are treated as they richly merit; their rude invectives, and glaring falsehoods exposed, and the baleful effects of their impious tenets traced to their final issue in the dereliction of all principle, and the tormenting agonies of a death-bed repentance.

The first portion of Mr. S.'s work is entitled "*Examples of dying Infidels;*" in which we have an account of the last moments of Mr. Hobbes, Servin (from Sully's Memoirs), the Hon. F. Newport, Emerson the mathematician, Voltaire, David Hume, Altamont (from Young), and Rousseau. We have, secondly, "*Examples of Persons recovered from their Infidelity;*" such as Gildon, Lord Lyttelton, Mr. West, Sir John Pringle, Soame Jenyns, Lord Rochester, and many others. Thirdly, "*Examples of dying Christians who had*
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lived in the Spirit of the World;" among whom, we find Grotius, Salmafius, Johnson, Haller, &c. And, fourthly, "*Examples of Persons living and dying, either with Confidence, or in the full Assurance of Faith;*" Addison, Dr. John Leland, Pascal, Selden, &c. A long list is then given of those eminent and conspicuous characters who have, from time to time, borne testimony to the truth of the Gospel, and these are confronted with Paine and other modern infidels. Mr. S. then passes to a consideration of our church establishment; upon which we must again observe; that the whole of his objections have a tendency to such an equalization of the church revenue, such an alienation of existing property, such visionary plans of reformation in many respects, that, though we might allow the propriety of them in some particular instances, we are nevertheless fully of opinion, that they are very incautiously and unjustifiably urged against the establishment, which, not pretending to be absolutely perfect, is yet calculated to obviate many evils which Mr. S.'s zeal and ignorance of mankind (as we presume) prevented him from seeing in their proper light.

After this, Mr. S. in opposition to Paine, more particularly, sums up all the coincidences between our Saviour's life and doctrine and our ancient prophecies, under 109 different heads. He then enters into an examination of the prophecies supposed to be fulfilling at the time he wrote, and the French Revolution is particularly enlarged upon. He next passes to the consideration of many popular objections to revelation, to all of which he gives short, but very satisfactory answers; and, though both the objections and answers have appeared many times before, yet they are well managed in this work. The rest of the book is taken up with earnest exhortations to infidels of all descriptions, to study the word of God, and secure their own salvation. To the whole are subjoined, two Appendixes, containing Mr. S.'s determination to quit the established church, and the reasons for his so doing; in which, undoubtedly, he evinces his sincerity, as well as the pain it must have occasioned him to come to such a resolution, in terms very forcible and affecting. We shall conclude our review with some extracts, which may serve to show, that however incautious some parts of the book appear to us, Mr. S. was no fomentor of civil disturbances, but, on the contrary, a real friend to peaceable reform, a warm admirer of our admirable constitution, and a loyal subject to his King. After dwelling at length upon what he conceives to be "crying sins," in our system of church government, he observes, "but great tenderness ought to be exercised towards our governors, both in church

and state, upon this delicate subject, because, whenever a King succeeds to the throne of these lands, he swears to maintain the church in its present state, and because all important changes are attended with serious danger to the very existence of society; witness the Revolution in France." P. 88, note. We cannot forbear remarking, that this was written previous to the late question that has been agitated, in regard to the coronation oath. Observe, in the following instance, his question and reply.

"Can you say that Thomas Paine has not brought many very heavy charges against the writings both of the Old and New Testaments, and such as cannot easily be answered?"

"We grant this objection in all its force. He is a man of shrewd abilities, and has a method of setting difficulties in a strong point of view. But, if you yourself are a person of any discernment, you cannot help seeing, that he discovers great pride of understanding, much rancour and malignity of heart, and most invincible ignorance of the subject upon which he writes. His intention in his Rights of Man was plainly to subvert, as far as in him lay, the civil government of this country; and, in his Age of Reason, he meant no other than to convert the common people of England to a state of Infidelity, and so to overturn the religious government of the country; and, in both, he evidently meant no other than to involve us as a nation in civil and religious destruction. To men of sense, moderation, and information, there is no danger, either from his political or religious efforts; but there is danger to every reader of his writings, who is not possessed of these qualifications. Bishop Watson's Apology may perfectly satisfy any man that Thomas Paine is by no means qualified to write against the Bible. Any fool, indeed, may sneer, revile, abuse, and ridicule, the most valuable objects in nature. The late atheistical King of Prussia has had the impudence to treat the *Deity* himself in this manner. But what shall the end be of them that know not *God*, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*?"

"If the audacity of this scurrilous Infidel were not equal to his ignorance, he never would have attacked the Clergy on the score of literature, as he does, when he insinuates they are acquainted with little more than *a b*, *ab*, *e b*, *eb*, and *bic*, *bæc*, *hoc*. Where does he find, in any period or country of the world, men of more deep, various, and extensive learning, than are large numbers of the Clergy, among the several denominations of Christians? Abundance of names are to be found, with whom he is no more fit to be compared, than a dwarf with a giant. One does not wonder, indeed, to hear him explode an acquaintance with languages, when, according to his own confession, he is a stranger to all but the English. To see such an *Ignoramus* prate about the science of astronomy, and the properties of triangles, is enough to sicken any man, of a smattering of knowledge. Let this empty and vain glorious boaster call to mind a small number even of Priests, who have been an honour to human nature, in point of mathematical, philosophical, and literary attainments, at least,—and then let him blush; if he is capable of blushing, at his own vile perversions

of Scripture, and misrepresentations of the characters of the friends of Religion. Whatever faults some of the Clergy may have been guilty of, or whatever defects there may be in the *Ecclesiastical constitution* of this, or any other country, a large number of *clerical* names will be handed down with honour, as the benefactors of mankind, while his shall be *damned to fame*, as a base calumniator of the *Sacred Writings*, and the characters of men much better than himself. What shall we say, when such scholars as Barrow, Cudworth, Wilkins, Pearson, Derham, Flamsteed, Hales, Bentley, Bochart, Desaguliers, Mede, Baxter, Chillingworth, Clarke, Berkley, Butler, Warburton, Watts, Doddridge, Lowman, Jortin, Lardner, Witherspoon, Robertson, and a thousand others, both living and dead, are involved in the censure of this scurrilous *Sciolist*?" P. 204.

"The world has now existed near 6000 years; and we who live in the present period are favoured with the experience of all former ages. During those ages, every kind of government has been tried. And it is found by experience, that every kind of government has its peculiar advantages and disadvantages. To guard against the inconveniences peculiar to each, the wisdom of Tacitus conceived, that a mixed form of government, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, if it were practicable, would be the most perfect; but yet he could not conceive such a government to be possible. His words are: "Cunctas nationes aut Reges, aut Primores, aut Populus rexerunt, dilecta ex his et consociata Reipublicæ forma, laudari facilius quam evenire, aut si eveniat, non diuturna esse potest." *Tacit. Ann. 1.*

"The British government, however, has long reduced this idea, by him deemed impossible, to practice. And it should really seem, not only from our own experience in this country, but from the conduct of the Americans in forming their constitution, and from the conduct of the French in forming theirs, that three estates, to act as checks one upon another, form the most perfect system of government human wisdom can contrive for the happiness of man. The Americans have two houses and a president, who is the same as our king, only called by another name. And the French have two estates, and five directors—fools that they are*!—who occupy the place of our king and his privy council. So that after all their experience, convulsions, and blood, the British government is at last the model they are constrained to follow. This consideration ought to induce us Englishmen, not only to be contented with, but to glory in our constitution, as a most finished model of human wisdom. We may change, but it is impossible we can change for the better. All that we should desire is, that every thing may be removed from it, which is inconsistent with its purity and perfection. Our present Legislature is competent to the correction of every abuse.—See a just account of the excellence of the British constitution in Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, b. 11. c. 6." P. 223.

* How much worse now that they have one *despot*.

"If,

“ If, however, after your most serious and conscientious endeavours, you are not able to find satisfactory evidence, that Christ came from God; you must allow at least, with Rousseau, he was an extraordinary man; one of the first characters that ever appeared upon earth. See then that you blaspheme not his name; treat his cause and interest in the world with respect; walk according to the best light you have; be virtuous in your own way, and do all you can—not to make converts to *Infidelity*—(because when men commence *Infidels*, they usually become immoral) but to lead your fellow-men into the paths of piety and virtue, under some denomination or other. If, indeed, you can fairly, by *sound* argument, and *solid* evidence, explode the divine authority of the Gospel, we are so far from being afraid of consequences, that we call upon you to do it. Try then what you can do. Exert all your talents. Call forth every latent power of the mind. Bring out your stores of ancient and modern lore. But—no ridicule! no laughter! no sneers! The occasion is too great and serious. Come forward, rather, in all the dignity of good sense, in all the majesty of conscious integrity, in all the zeal which the love of truth inspires, furnished with languages, knowledge, experience, observation, and either honourably overthrow the cause of the Gospel, which we assuredly deem the cause of truth; or like Jenyns and Pringle, openly acknowledge that you are convinced and conquered. This would be manly. This would be acting in a manner worthy the character of *Lovers of truth*. And on such men the God of *truth* himself would look down from heaven well pleased.” P. 278.

“ There is need, in this time of general discontent, to call the attention of all *good men* to the obligations we are under, to be *dutiful* and *loyal* subjects. The Scripture is decisive, that as we are to *fear* God, so are we to *honour* the King. But, setting *duty* aside, *self-interest*, if duly consulted, would induce every man to obey the civil government of the happy country in which we live. We have much to lose, little to gain, by any change that might take place. The ruin brought upon France may satisfy any man, how dangerous a thing it is to embark in public contentions, and disturb the regular order of things. If the experience of our neighbours will not determine us to peaceable and temperate measures among ourselves, we should do well to look back to the reign of the first Charles, when the three kingdoms were convulsed for seven years together from one end to another. Besides the many thousands of private men who fell in the bloody fray, the many millions of money that were spent, and the numerous families that were ruined, there were slain 17 Earls and Lords—45 Knights and Baronets—55 Colonels—42 Lieutenant Colonels—53 Majors—138 Captains—30 Gentlemen Volunteers—with about 30 others, who were either beheaded, or died in prison.—The spirit of the times was much the same as hath for these several years prevailed in France; nor were the clergy treated with much more humanity, 8 or 10,000 of them being turned out of their Livings. See Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, p. 198–200. And if any convulsion should take place again in this country, I do not conceive that we should be much more humane to-
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wards each other, than people have been in cases of a similar nature. He was no inexperienced man who said—*The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be medaled with.*

“When the Almighty intends to punish us effectually, he will deprive us of wisdom, and set us at loggerheads one with another. The consequence will be, ruin to the present race of Englishmen. If with the above two dreadful examples before us, we suffer a party spirit to drive us to extremities, we shall deserve all we can suffer. See the seventh chapter of Ezekiel. Were we united and religious we might defy the world.” P. 288.

We feel compelled, in justice to Mr. S. to conclude with an extract from his last Appendix, in which he most feelingly sets forth the struggles of his mind when he had to decide upon the great question of abandoning his charge under the established church,

“If I am mistaken, it is my very great misfortune. My judgment has not been biased by interest, by connections, by inclination, or by any human considerations whatever. I have thought much upon the subject; read on both sides of the question whatever has fallen in my way; conversed with various persons for the sake of information; suffered the matter to rest upon my mind for some years undetermined; have never made my fears, suspicions, and dissatisfaction known to any man; and now, when I bring near to myself the thought of quitting one of the most commodious churches in the kingdom, erected on purpose for my own ministrations; leaving interred by it many a precious deposit, who will, I trust, be *my joy and crown* in the great day of the Lord Jesus, besides a *mother, a wife, two children, and a sister*; and giving up various *kind friends, whom I love as my own soul*, together with a large body of people, that, *if it were possible, would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to me*:—What shall I say?—All that is affectionate within me recoils. I am torn with conflicting passions; and am ready to say with the Apostle, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my friends and brethren, whom I love in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

“But then, various passages of Scripture—(*ill understood, some will say*)—urge me, on the most momentous considerations, to renounce a situation, which I cannot any longer retain with peace of mind. Perhaps it is my own fault; certainly it is my very heavy misfortune. I bewail it exceedingly. I have received no affront; conceived no disgust; formed no plans; made no connections; consulted no friends; experience no weariness of the ministerial office; the ways of religion are still pleasant; I have been glad when duty called me to the house of God; his *Word* hath been delightful; the pulpit has been awfully pleasing; the table of the Lord hath been the joy of my heart; and now that Providence calleth me away, with some degree of reluctance it is that I say, Lord, here I am. Do with me what seemeth thee good. Let me stay where I am. I gladly stay. Send me where thou

thou wilt. I will endeavour to submit. Only go with me, and thy pleasure shall be mine.

“ I argue not
Against Heav'n's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward.” P. 350.

ART. XII. *The Asiatic Annual Register; or, a View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce, and Literature of Asia, for the Year 1801.* 8vo. 10s. 6d. Debrett. 1802.

THE arrangement and judicious division of the volumes of this work, under the respective heads of *General History, Chronicle of Asiatic Events, State Papers relating to India, Parliamentary and India-House Debates, &c. &c.* have been noticed by us, in our review of the two preceding volumes*. To the present, a new division is added, occupying nearly 40 pages, which is not so generally interesting or important, though to the immediate servants of the Company it may be peculiarly gratifying, a list of *Civil and Military Promotions* in our different settlements in that region. The lateless of its appearance is apologized for in the Preface, and some commendable alterations in the plan are announced. They consist in a reduction of the former enormous size of the volume, an extension of the historical department, and a contraction of other less important divisions within a more limited scale. On the whole, the compilers, as we hinted they would, have improved the work considerably as they have proceeded, especially in those divisions that contain the *Characters, Miscellaneous Tracts, and Review of Oriental Publications.*

The division which discusses the historical events of the empire at large is drawn up with judgment, from apparently accurate sources; and is in sufficient detail for the general purposes for which it was intended. The first transactions of the English nation with India, and the gradual progress of the Company's factories in the different regions in which they established themselves, are given at greater length, and evince in the writer of that department both diligence and discernment. What he has remarked, concerning the vast armies which the Mogul Emperors of India affected to maintain, the

* See Review for December, 1801, vol. xviii. p. 631.