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








A
VINDICATION
OF
CERTAIN PASSAGES
IN
A DISCOURSE,
ON OCCASION
OF THE DEATH OF DR. PRIESTLEY, &c.


BY THOMAS BELSHAM.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED
THE DISCOURSE
ON THE DEATH OF DR. PRIESTLEY.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.


BOSTON :
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY T. B. WAIT & Co.

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.....
1809.

TO THE AMERICAN READER.

SOON after the publication of Mr. Belsham's Discourse on the death of Dr. Priestley, the Rev. John Pye Smith addressed to the author a volume of Letters containing animadversions on some passages of the Discourse.

As these Letters have been lately published in this country, the public will no doubt be gratified by an opportunity of perusing the Discourse which occasioned them, and Mr. Belsham's Vindictory reply to Mr. Smith.



A VINDICATION OF CERTAIN PASSAGES

IN

A DISCOURSE,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF DR. PRIESTLEY;

AND

A DEFENCE

OF DR. PRIESTLEY'S CHARACTER AND WRITINGS,

IN

REPLY TO THE ANIMADVERSIONS

OF THE

REV. JOHN PYE SMITH.

.....

IN LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

BY THOMAS BELSHAM.

Ο Χριστός, καὶ οἱ Ἀποστολοὶ, ἡ διαλεκτικὴν ἡμῖν παρέδωκαν
τεχνην, ἔδει κενὴν ἀπάτην, ἀλλὰ γυμνὴν γνώμην, πῖσις ἐκ
καλοῖς ἐργοῖς φυλαττομένην. Socrates Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 8.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY THOMAS B. WAIT & Co.

COURT-STREET.

.....
1809.

1890-1891

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of these Letters has appeared in the Universal Theological Magazine; and at the desire of some friends, in whose judgment the author places confidence, they are now re-printed in a separate form, with some corrections, and a few additional notes and observations.

THE author was the more disposed to comply in this instance with the wishes of his friends, because, notwithstanding his extreme dislike to a personal theological controversy, he was inclined to hope, that a more general circulation of these Letters might contribute to communicate more correct ideas of the tenets, and to excite a greater abhorrence of the spirit of Calvinism, the direct tendency of which is to generate hatred both of God and man, and which represents the character of the Divine Being in a light more odious than that of the voluptuous Jupiter, of the sanguinary and ferocious Moloch, or even of its own imaginary, malignant, and mischievous, but not altogether omnipotent, and infinite, Devil.

THE author having been educated in the bosom of Calvinism, knows something of the views and feelings of a genuine Calvinist: and from his own observation and experience he is assured, that such persons are more deserving of compassion than of censure.* He has also known

* See Dr. Priestley's account of his own feelings when he was a practical Calvinist. Discourse on Occasion of Dr. Priestley's Death, p. 18, note. He there says, "I had occasionally such distress of mind, as it is not in my power to describe, and which I still look back upon with horror."

among the Calvinists many persons of great piety, and worth of character, to which, in his Discourse on the lamented death of Dr. Priestley, he was eager to bear his testimony, in order to shew, that whatever he thought of the system, he was no enemy to the persons of those who profess it. If, in the warmth of his zeal to manifest his catholicism, he has inadvertently over-stepped the limits of perfect correctness, and has appeared to magnify the talents, or the virtues, of Calvinists, beyond their due proportion, he hopes that they *will forgive him this wrong*. He can assure them, that it was not his intention to assert that Calvinists, as such, were wiser or better than others, whose theory of religion approached nearer to truth. Much less did he mean to represent the excellence of their character as owing to the peculiarities of the calvinistic system. If Calvinists are (as, no doubt, many of them are) pious towards God, and benevolent to men, it must be owing to some powerful countervailing influences which happily check the baneful tendency of their principles; and particularly to those obvious appearances of nature, and those plain declarations of the divine benevolence in the scriptures, which excite a hope, even in spite of themselves, that God is not altogether so cruel, nor their fellow-creatures quite so detestable, as their gloomy system would make them believe.

ANOTHER reason, why the author felt himself disposed to give these Letters a more extensive circulation was, that it not only afforded him an opportunity of vindicating the insulted character of Dr. Priestley, but, which he apprehends of still more importance to the public, of illustrating distinctly the nature of his new and unanswerable argument, in favour of the simple humanity of Christ, from the testimony of primitive ecclesiastical writers, as stated in his History of Early Opinions, an argument which is, generally, either misunderstood, or misrepresented.

THE author of the Letters to which these are intended as a reply, has mixed up his severe charges of ignorance, of misrepresentation, of gross error, of perfect inadvertence, and of asserting things precisely the reverse of acknowledged facts, or in other words, of palpable falsehood, with much of the forms of personal civility and respect, almost even to nausea. In this particular, the author of these Letters, indignant as he could not but occasionally feel at the groundless charges which were alleged, and at the lofty and triumphant tone in which they were often pressed, did not think it necessary to imitate his correspondent. But while he considered himself as justified in stating plainly, strongly, and pointedly, the futility of the writer's arguments, he shall regret, if he has in any instance been betrayed into expressions which may be thought inconsistent with civility and good manners. He feels no ill-will against his opponent, for whose character he entertains a sincere respect, and who must be allowed, in his animadversions, to have discovered no small portion of ability, and controversial dexterity. Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to avow, that the design of these Letters is to shew, that this gentleman has undertaken to write upon a subject which he has not sufficiently studied; that he has accumulated charges which he has not been able to substantiate; and that he has, without sufficient ground, attacked, I might say defamed, the characters of the illustrious and venerable dead. How far this design has been accomplished, the judicious and attentive reader must decide.

WHAT impression these animadversions may make upon the mind of the gentleman who gave occasion to them, it is not for the author to judge. But if that gentleman should, upon mature consideration, be convinced, that his strictures are erroneous, and his charges unfounded, he will, no doubt, feel himself bound in honour and duty to retract, and modify his publication accordingly. At any

rate, the least that can be expected from him is, that he will not, if convinced of his mistake, persist in *bearing false witness against his neighbour*. As a young writer, and a young man, it will be no disparagement to him to acknowledge an error, and to add to his other good qualities a proper degree of self-diffidence. This will induce him for the future to pause a little, and attentively to survey his ground, before he alleges unqualified charges of ignorance, and palpable misrepresentations of plain facts, against persons whose means of information, and whose character for diligence, perseverance, impartiality, and accuracy of research, are, at least, equal to his own, and who have, perhaps, devoted as great a number of years to the patient investigation of truth, as he has lived in the world.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

	Page.
Vindication of the Author's statement of the Calvinistic system.....	1

LETTER II.

Abhorrence of Calvinism, consistent with a favourable opinion of many who hold that unscriptural system.—Unjust insinuations repelled.—Concerning the personal presence of Christ with his Apostles after his ascension.....	10
--	----

LETTER III.

Origen's character defended.—Review of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley.—Tertullian's unequivocal testimony to the Unitarianism of the great body of unlearned Christians.....	25
---	----

LETTER IV.

Charge of inadvertency and gross misrepresentation repelled.—Progress of error concerning the person of Christ stated.—Misrepresentation of Dr. Priestley's sentiments corrected.....	40
---	----

LETTER V.

The charge against Dr. Priestley's character stated and repelled.—Dr. Priestley and his accuser equally mistaken in a passage from Chrysostom.—The nature and conduct of Dr. Priestley's argument represented and vindicated.—Conclusion.....	59
---	----

CONTENTS.

APPENDIX.

Containing an Extract from a publication of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, which expresses the judgment of that learned writer, concerning the issue of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley, and concerning the importance of Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ... 74

POSTSCRIPT.

Remarks upon the alterations and concessions in the second edition of the Letters to Mr. B..... 79

A VINDICATION, &c.

LETTER I.

Vindication of the Author's statement of the Calvinistic system.

DEAR SIR,

THE Rev. John Pye Smith, one of the Tutors of the respectable Academical Institution at Homerton, has lately addressed to me a volume of Letters, containing animadversions upon some passages in my late Discourse upon the lamented Death of Dr. Priestley; written upon the whole with much personal civility, and perhaps with as much candour as the spirit of his theological system will admit. The truth or falsehood of that system I am not now disposed to contest; but some of the author's observations appear to require a cursory notice: especially as they are delivered with a tone of authority, an air of triumph, and a parade of learning, which has a tendency to impose upon ignorant and superficial readers.

THIS gentleman distinctly charges me with misrepresenting the calvinistic system: His words are, "I never yet heard of the Calvinist who would adopt

“ your statement as his own creed*.” And again,
 “ Such men as Voltaire and Paine, or even charac-
 “ ters of far more estimable fame, can, with all the
 “ ease imaginable, by the combined aid of miscon-
 “ ception, perverse mis-statement, and sparkling
 “ witticisms, so twist and entangle a metaphysical or
 “ moral subject, and that in a few words, or sentences,
 “ as to require many pages of accurate writing, and
 “ much labour of patient reading, to unravel the
 “ crossing perplexities. This appears to me to be
 “ *precisely the case* with your picture of Calvinism †.”
 The reader will smile to see to what expressions
 this pompous description applies. My words are,
 “ The doctrine which the apostle taught was the
 “ gospel of the grace of God. Very remote indeed
 “ from that system which in modern times has been
 “ dignified with the title of Gospel Doctrine; a
 “ system which teaches that all mankind are doomed
 “ to eternal misery for Adam’s sin, with the excep-
 “ tion of a few who are chosen by mere good plea-
 “ sure to everlasting life †.” The reason why my
 name is introduced in connection with those of
 Voltaire and Paine, is sufficiently obvious to all who
 are versed in the arts of theological controversy;
 but it would require no small portion of intellectual
 perspicacity to discern the *precise* resemblance be-
 tween the plain and brief statement which I have
 made of calvinistic doctrine, almost in the words
 of its own symbols, and *the misconception, perverse*
mis-statement, and sparkling witticisms, with which

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 16.

† Ibid. p. 13, 14.

† Funeral Discourse for Dr. Priestley, p. 26.

these champions of infidelity are said to *twist and entangle a moral or metaphysical subject*.

My generous accuser, however, exculpates me from the "charge of intentional misrepresentation," and very charitably insinuates, that what he calls my *caricature* of Calvinism is the result of mere ignorance. Unfortunately, I cannot avail myself of this obliging apology. Having been educated a Calvinist, in the midst of Calvinists, and having been fully instructed in the creeds and catechisms, and modes of worship of this "straitest sect of our religion," I cannot plead ignorance of the doctrines which I and hundreds more were taught, and believed.

THE worthy Remarker next proceeds to correct my supposed *misconception*, by stating, in form, and as one having authority, in his second Letter, what those "sentiments are, which in their aggregate" he is pleased to call "Calvinism," and in which, he professes "to glory*." And truly, Sir, I must acknowledge that I was not a little surprised at the perusal of this singular, prolix, and mysterious confession. Yet if this reverend gentleman, who does not appear to be deficient either in understanding or learning, can, at this time of day, seriously believe all that he sets down to be believed, he has my free consent, and much may it contribute to his edification. Far be it from me to wish to abridge him of a single article of his capacious faith, or to deprive him of one particle of his *glory*. The only question between us is, whether this faith be truly calvinistic.

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 16.

And to this the worthy author himself has supplied the proper answer. "It is acknowledged," says he, "that this view of the subject is different from that which *most* calvinistic writers have given*." This concession is sufficient, and precludes all further observation upon the subject.

Now, Sir, as this gentleman has been pleased to state that doctrine as Calvinism, which the majority of Calvinists do not approve, I will proceed to exhibit that Calvinism which Calvinists do approve, and the belief of which is regarded by most of them as essential to salvation. And in order to this I shall not, like my learned correspondent, have recourse to the writings of the Greek or the Roman classics; nor shall I inquire whether the great philosophers and moralists of antiquity, had they been now living, would or would not have been the disciples of John Calvin†. I shall not even make my principal appeal to the Institutes of the celebrated reformer himself, nor yet to the still more authentic documents of the venerable Synod of Dort‡. For the sake of brevity, I shall bring my proofs from that well-known, and highly approved symbol of the calvinistic faith, the Assembly's Catechism, which, as a summary of doctrine, is a model of simplicity, perspicuity, and

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 22. Note.

† See Letters, p. 33, 34. Whether these great men would, as my Correspondent imagines, have been *charmed* with the Calvinistic system, I cannot pretend to say; that they would have been *astounded* at it, I most certainly believe.

‡ This famous Synod was assembled A. D. 1619, for the express purpose of deciding the celebrated quinquarticular controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians, which at that time raged in Holland. It was attended by deputies from most of the reformed churches.

precision; and which used formerly, and I presume still continues, to be taught with great assiduity, to children and young persons in the calvinistic churches. To this might also be added, if necessary, the Hymns and Spiritual Songs of Dr. Watts, the crude and injudicious compositions of his juvenile years, the publication of which, it is well known, was the subject of deep regret in maturer life, but which are to this day used in the public devotions of many calvinistic churches, and admired as the standard of sound doctrine and of a devotional spirit: and which in fact have done more to fix the taint of Calvinism in young and impressible minds, than all the controversial treatises that ever were written. I believe that the gentleman who has done me the favour to animadvert upon my Sermon, will not object to the authorities to which I appeal. If he does, I will tell him plainly, that what I mean by Calvinism is not a system of abstruse subtleties, which may be maintained by a few speculative men, and which *most* Calvinists never heard of, but that code of doctrine which thousands and tens of thousands collect from the catechisms which they learn, and from the hymns which they sing, and which they naturally suppose to be the sincere opinions of those who instruct them in these symbols, and who guide them in their devotions.

THE Assembly's Catechism teaches, in answer to the seventh question, that, "the decrees of God
" are his eternal purpose according to the counsel
" of his will, whereby for his own glory he hath
" fore-ordained *whatsoever* comes to pass."

FROM this it evidently follows, that the fall of man is one of those events which was ordained for the glory of God.

WE are further taught, in reply to the sixteenth question, “that the covenant being made with Adam, “not only for himself, but for his posterity; ALL “mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first “transgression.” Thus, for the glory of God all mankind were predestinated to sin in Adam, and to fall with him.

THIS celebrated symbol of the true calvinistic faith proceeds to teach us, in answer to the two succeeding questions, “that the fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery:” also, that “the sinfulness of that estate, whereunto man fell, “consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want “of original righteousness, and the corruption of “the whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions “which flow from it.” Hence it follows, that God, for his own glory, has fore-ordained that all mankind shall be *guilty* of Adam’s first sin, together with all actual transgressions that flow from it.

Now comes the *bonne bouche*. The question next proposed is, “What is the *misery* of that estate, “whereinto man fell?” And the answer to it is in these memorable words: “ALL mankind by the fall “lost communion with God, are under HIS WRATH “AND CURSE, and so made liable to all the miseries “of this life, to death itself, and to the *PAINS OF “HELL FOR EVER.”*”

THAT is, God having from all eternity fore-ordained for his own glory that all mankind shall be guilty of Adam's first sin, for his own glory he hath further fore-ordained, that by this fall they shall lie under his WRATH and CURSE, and be made liable to the pains of hell for EVER !!!

To add to the horror of the picture, and to accumulate insult upon injury, it is further asked in the twentieth question, "Did God leave *all* mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?" To which the answer subjoined is, that "God out of *mere* good pleasure, from all eternity, elected *SOME* to everlasting life."

WHAT then is God? It is truly replied, in one of the most concise and comprehensive definitions which was ever given, in answer to the fourth question of this Catechism: "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

BUT what is the God of Calvinism? A gloomy arbitrary tyrant, a malignant omnipotent demon.

THEREFORE the God of Calvinism is not the TRUE GOD, is not the God of Christians, is not the God and Father of Jesus, is not that God whose name is LOVE.

THIS, Sir, is the system that I am accused of having *caricatured*. It is the system concerning which I have pronounced, and I now solemnly repeat the charge, that it is "a tremendous doctrine, which, had it really been taught by Christ and his apostles, their gospel might truly have been denominated, not the doctrine of peace and good

“ will, but a message of wrath and injustice, of “ terror and despair.” I have spoken of it, and while life and breath and intellect remain, I shall ever speak of it as “ a rigorous, a gloomy, and a “ pernicious system,” as “ full of horror, as the very “ extravagance of error,” and as “ a mischievous “ compound of impiety and idolatry.”

PREDESTINATION, absolute arbitrary predestination, the predestination of *some* to eternal life, and of the *many* to eternal misery, from mere good pleasure, and for the glory of God, is the very soul of Calvinism. To affect to evade the horror of the doctrine, by pretending that the non-elect were only *left*, and not *doomed*, to perish; or, that they were predestinated to punishment, because they were predestinated to sin; or, that being the descendants of a fallen pair, they were born, that is, in other words, that God made them with corrupt natures, and therefore under his wrath and curse; or lastly, but not least remarkable, that sin, like darkness, is a mere defect*, that is, a nonentity, and therefore meritorious of eternal punishment; all this is trifling and puerile in the extreme. The daring and vigorous mind of the reformer of Geneva disdained such pitiful evasions; and contends, in the most explicit language, for the doctrine of absolute reprobation†.

* “ All positive existence must be the object of the creating and sustaining power of God, the framer of all things, and by whom all things consist. “ Sin is precisely the reverse of this,—it is a fault, a defect, a failure, an “ imperfection.” See a Sermon on the Divine Glory displayed in the Permission of Sin, page 6, by the Author of the Letters to Mr. B.

† Si non possumus rationem assignare cur suos misericordia dignetur nisi quoniam ita illi placet, neque etiam in aliis reprobandis aliud habebimus quam ejus voluntatem. Calvin, Inst. lib. iii. cap. xxii. sec. 11.

A man, therefore, who denies arbitrary predestination, may, notwithstanding, be a wise man, a learned man, a good man, and a true Christian; but, it is most certain, that he has no right to call himself a Calvinist.

IN my next Letter I shall proceed to justify the charges which I have alleged against the calvinistic system, and likewise to notice some other observations of my reverend opponent.

In the mean time I am,

Dear Sir, &c. &c.

LETTER II.

Abhorrence of Calvinism, consistent with a favourable opinion of many who hold that unscriptural system.—Unjust insinuations repelled.—Concerning the personal presence of Christ with his Apostles after his ascension.

DEAR SIR,

I FLATTER myself that I stand completely exonerated from the charge of having either intentionally, or ignorantly, misrepresented the calvinistic system. Calvinism is not a term of indefinite signification, like the cant phrase *evangelical*, which commonly means nothing, but the opinions of the men who use it. Calvinism expresses a system clearly defined, and accurately exhibited in the Institutes of Calvin, in the Decrees of the Synod of Dort, and in this country, in the Assembly's Catechism, in which the children of Calvinists are generally instructed, and the sense of which is sufficiently ascertained.

CALVINISM teaches that the great Creator, by an arbitrary decree, and for his own glory, dooms millions of his creatures to eternal misery for Adam's sin. This, if true, would unquestionably have been a message of wrath and injustice, of terror and despair.—The fundamental principle of Calvinism is, that God is a tyrant. This is impious.—Calvinism teaches that God would not save the number, which

from mere good pleasure he had elected to everlasting life, till a person equal to himself in power and glory, had satisfied his justice by bearing his wrath. This is polytheism and absurdity.—Calvinism, consistently indeed with itself, renders to this supposed second person, a homage equal to the first. This is idolatry; it is worshipping as God, a mere creature of the imagination.—Calvinism is a system replete with horror: for the chance against every individual is, that he is in the number of those who, for Adam's sin, are doomed to the eternal, inevitable, wrath and curse of the Almighty.—Calvinism therefore is a very pernicious system. The natural and direct tendency of Calvinism, is to lead men to think of their Maker with indignation and abhorrence, and to curse their existence: it often generates presumption, arrogance, and malignity, in those who fancy themselves the elect favourites of God: It excites much causeless anxiety and painful apprehension in the minds of many who are sincerely virtuous, and embitters their lives with tormenting terrors. In some cases it has driven men to despair, and distraction, and, probably, even to suicide.—Calvinism, therefore, may be justly represented as extravagant and erroneous in the extreme.

THAT professed Calvinists should approve of this representation of their favourite system, is not to be expected. If they saw it in the light in which it is here stated, they would, no doubt, renounce it with abhorrence. To them it seems "these sentiments appear the voice of God, and the perfection of rea-

“son, harmony, and moral beauty*.” Let the impartial reader judge between us.

IN my discourse upon the death of Dr. Priestley, I have remarked, that it had been the happiness of that eminently great and good man, to meet among Christians of the calvinistic denomination, “with some of the wisest and best characters that he had ever known.” From hence my worthy Correspondent infers, that a system approved by such persons “must be presumed to have, at least, some inviting colours of evidence and truth,” and that it would be “strange indeed, if what they held should be the extravagance of error†.” But this is an objection of little weight. Nothing is more common than for men, in other respects eminently learned and wise, to entertain theological opinions, the most extravagant and absurd. Pascal, and Fenelon, were greatly distinguished, both for their talents and their virtues; and yet, they were both zealous for popery in its grossest forms. The great reformer Luther, was a warm advocate for the real presence of Christ in the consecrated elements, in the absurdity of which doctrine, there is but a shade of difference from that of transubstantiation itself. Lælius and Faustus Socinus, and the other Polish Unitarians, whose names rank high amongst the learned and the liberal expositors of the scriptures, believed that a mere human being, a man like

* Letters, p. 28. My Correspondent applies these epithets to his own hypothesis. The Assembly of Divines had the same good opinion, no doubt, of their system, which is true Calvinism.

† Letters, p. 31. 32.

themselves, was exalted to a supremacy over angels and arch-angels; that the government of the universe was delegated to him, and that he was entitled to religious worship as the representative of God himself; a notion so irrational and unscriptural, that as Dr. Price justly observes, “Athanasianism itself “contains nothing that is more extravagant*.” Nor do we need to have recourse to former times for examples of this kind. Who doubts the talents or the learning of the present Bishop of St. Asaph? Yet he gravely teaches us, in a Discourse which he has lately published, that hell is a subterraneous region divided into two apartments. That one of these apartments is indeed a place of torment for wicked spirits: but that the other, which though a *prison*, is also called a *paradise*, is the receptacle of pious souls, who are there in *safe keeping* till the resurrection. This learned prelate further informs us, that Jesus, after he had been crucified, descended into hell; not, as we have lately been informed, from very high authority, *to shew himself there body and soul, in order to terrify the devils, and the damned* †, but that he might comfort the souls of the antediluvian penitents, who, though already in paradise, “had peculiar apprehensions of themselves

* Price's Sermons, p. 150, 151.

† See Freylinghausen's Abstract of the Christian Religion, p. 56. This curious Tract, edited, as it is rumoured, by a distinguished prelate, is asserted by the editor, to stand very high in the good opinion of the first female personage in the kingdom, by whose order it was translated into English for the use of her illustrious daughters.

as marked victims of divine vengeance*." What can be more extravagant than such suppositions as these, or more inconsistent with the scripture doctrine of the state of the dead? It follows then that men may be very wise, very learned, and very good, and yet, in their theological opinions they may fall into the very extravagance of error.

THE reason of this is sufficiently obvious. The human intellect is too limited to comprehend every thing: and men who are the best informed upon subjects to which they have directed their attention, may be as ignorant as children upon other questions: and in no case are men more liable to err, than in their theological opinions. There are many who regard religion as a mystery beyond the province of reason: there are many who are content with taking every thing upon trust: there are many who have neither opportunity nor inclination to inquire: there are many who are speculative but not practical believers, who assent to a form of words but without examining the ideas: there are many whose interest it is to profess the popular system of belief, and whose judgments may be more influenced by this consideration than they are themselves aware; there are many who think it criminal to doubt or to inquire at all; and there are many whose prejudices are so firmly rivetted, that the most demonstrative arguments can make no impression upon their understandings.

* Bishop of St. Asaph's Sermon on the Descent of Christ into Hell. Which of the two learned prelates has the best information upon this mysterious subject, does not appear.

I AM not however one of those who hold, that error is a matter of indifference. I readily admit, that great errors may be consistent with great goodness of heart; that the mischievous tendency of particular errors may be in a great degree counteracted by good principles and virtuous habits; that speculative error, like speculative truth, may sometimes lose its proper effect, by practical inattention to it: and that, sometimes, one error may counteract the baneful influence of another. Nevertheless, error, upon subjects of great importance, in proportion as it prevails and becomes a practical principle, contaminates the mind, and is productive of pernicious consequences. This is evident in the case of persecutors, who often act under the influence of erroneous principles and a misguided conscience; and it is surely sufficiently obvious, that the calvinistic system has a very dangerous tendency. A thorough practical Calvinist, if he be not malignant, must inevitably be unhappy. It is therefore the indispensable duty of the friends of truth and virtue and pure Christianity, to enter their grave and firm protest against pernicious errors, and to contend earnestly for the purity of the christian faith.

I HAVE said, that to an early education in the rigid sect of Calvinists, Dr. Priestley was indebted for some of his best principles, and his most valuable and permanent religious impressions. Here my worthy correspondent triumphs in my supposed inconsistency, as if I had maintained that to an early education in the extravagance of error, in a mis-

chievous compound of impiety and idolatry, my revered friend was indebted for some of his best principles*. If indeed I had maintained that Dr. Priestley owed his best principles and impressions to an early education in the *peculiar doctrines* of Calvinism, the triumph might have been just; but as the case stands, had this gentleman allowed himself to reflect, that the *doctrine* of a sect is one thing, and its *discipline* another, and that all sects hold many important *practical principles* in connection with their own peculiar tenets, he would have seen that he needed not to have felt the anxiety which he expresses, for the credit and consistency of the author of the *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*†. Dr. Priestley, educated among serious Calvinists, was instructed in many valuable religious principles, and formed to many virtuous habits; and to this may be ascribed, in a considerable degree, the distinguished excellence of his moral character. All this may be true, and yet the peculiar tenets of the calvinistic system may be erroneous in the extreme.

HAVING thus, I trust, sufficiently justified both my censures of the doctrines, and my concessions to the talents and virtues of those who maintain the gloomy creed of the Geneva reformer; I shall now proceed briefly to notice, what appears to me parti-

* Letters, p. 53, 54.

† "To the author of *Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind*, I speak with deference; but I confess there appears to me such a want of compatibility in the terms of this proposition, as totally to destroy assent." Letters, p. 54.

cularly worthy of remark, in the remaining strictures of my respectable correspondent.

THIS gentleman judiciously* declines to press the favourite argument, of the superior sanctity of Calvinism and Calvinists, to Unitarianism and Unitarians. Had he determined otherwise, he might have been assured that I should have left him an open and unmolested course. Unitarianism stands upon the immoveable foundation of the christian scriptures, which teach us explicitly, that Jesus was "a MAN, approved of God by miracles, and "wonders, and signs," and which never even seem to represent him as a being of a superior order, except in a few detached and obscure passages, in most of which, to give plausibility to the argument, figurative expressions are interpreted in a literal sense. Here the Unitarians feel themselves upon firm ground: they have not a doubt that their faith concerning the person of their honoured master, is the same with that of Jesus himself, and of his apostles, who knew and conversed with him. All other evidence in this case they regard as trifling, and as only tending to divert the attention from the main question. To superior *saintship* they make no pretension. But they trust that their character upon the whole, will not be found unworthy of their christian principles, and that it will not suffer in comparison with that of the most sanctimonious of their accusers. And in the habitual practice of virtue and piety, though conscious of much imper-

* Letters, p. 53, 54.

fection, they humbly and cheerfully rely upon the unchangeable mercy of an infinitely wise and benevolent Creator, without any regard to the unintelligible notions of vicarious suffering, or imputed righteousness.

For the reason which I have assigned above, I feel as little inclination to follow my zealous correspondent through his triumphant argument, in the fifth letter, from the missionary zeal of the Trinitarians, in which Pharisees, Jesuits and Mahometans stand at least upon equal ground with them. It is an obvious fact, that in all ages, there have been zealots for error, as well as advocates for truth; and it has too generally happened, that the former have been more successful in perverting, than the latter in the instruction of mankind. I am, however, far from wishing to detract from the merit of those, who have exerted themselves in propagating what I judge to be a corrupt Christianity. I have no doubt that much good has been done; much valuable practical truth having been mixed with a considerable portion of speculative error. The stupendous machinery of a corrupt Christianity is far more likely to seize the imagination, and to rouse the feelings of a Greenlander or a Hottentot, than the beautiful simplicity of christian truth. Thus the wisdom of Divine Providence brings good out of evil, and gradually prepares the way for the universal prevalence of a pure and rational faith, by adapting the means of information among the converted heathen, to their growing capacity for intellectual and moral improve-

ments*. In the mean time, we enter our protest against estimating the truth of a doctrine, by the zeal which is discovered in the propagation of it.

HARD indeed is the lot of the unfortunate Unitarians! Whatever they do—whatever they omit, they are always in the wrong. They are always either too hot, or too cold: benumbed in the frigid, or scorching in the torrid zone of Christianity. If they are active in defending or propagating what they believe to be truth, their proselyte zeal exposes them to the scorn of the infidel, the censure of the timid and the *prudent*, and to the fury of the bigot: if they are silent, they are reproached as indifferent and lukewarm, and as doing *nothing, nothing at all* †, to promote the christian doctrine.—“But wisdom will be justified of her children.”

My worthy opponent ‡ disapproves of what I have said, concerning the spirit of Paul when a persecutor: but I am not conscious that I have advanced any thing upon this subject stronger than the apostle's own expressions ||, that he was *exceedingly wroth* against them; or those of his faithful historian, that he *breathed out* threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord ¶.

I HAVE also presumed to suppose that the apostle James might, like Peter and Barnabas, have given

* “The impurity of mankind,” says Dr. Hartley, vol. ii. p. 372, “is too gross to unite at once with the strict purity of the gospel. The Roman empire first, and the Goths and Vandals afterwards, required, as one may say, some superstitions and idolatries to be mixed with the christian religion, else they could not have been converted at all.”

† “Unitarians with all their boast, etc. have done NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL.” Letters, p. 75.

‡ Letters, p. 61.

|| Acts xxvi. 11.

¶ Acts ix. 1.

rather too much countenance to the zealots, who are said to have gone from him*, and to have disturbed the peace of the church at Antioch: but I am informed, no doubt, upon competent authority, that the contrary is “the more reasonable conjecture †,” and I have no objection to it, for I have no quarrel with St. James.

“How feebly supported,” says my dexterous correspondent, “or rather how completely destitute of all support is any conclusion from these premises against the infallible certainty of APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE ‡.” Now the fact is, that I never did assert, or insinuate any thing against the infallible certainty of that doctrine, which the apostles were commissioned to publish, but have always maintained, that they were fully informed upon that subject, though they might err in other cases. But we polemicists are fully apprized of the use of a seasonable inuendo.

THE worthy letter-writer has exhausted a profusion of learning in the beginning of his sixth letter, to prove that the zealots who opposed Paul were jewish believers and Unitarians. The fact is so obvious, that it hardly seems to require so long and laboured a proof. That they were jewish believers, is notorious from their zeal for the ceremonial law: and that they were Unitarians is highly probable, because neither the arian, nor the trinitarian heresies had then been introduced. Besides, the only offence with which these zealots are charged by the apostle is, their insisting upon the indispensable necessity of conformity to the ceremonial law:

* Gal. ii. 11, 12.

† Letters, p. 86.

‡ Letters, p. 87.

but if they had also been guilty of infringing upon the fundamental doctrine of the unity of God, which, as Jews, they were not likely to do, there can be no doubt that the apostle would have animadverted upon them with far greater severity. But does this gentleman, who favours me with his correspondence, “or *the judicious and temperate divine,*” whose words he quotes*, really think that the modern Unitarians are “the obsequious disciples” of judaizing zealots, and answerable for all their malignant opposition to the apostle, because they agree with them, and with him, in the belief of the unity of God, and the proper humanity of Jesus Christ? What the design of these gentlemen might be, in this strange and unjust insinuation, they best can tell; but I will not affront their understandings so far as to suppose, that they could themselves give the least credit to it. As justly might the modern Baptists be made answerable for the extravagancies and crimes of John of Leyden.

PERMIT me, sir, before I conclude, to add a few strictures upon a remarkable passage at the close of this gentleman’s sixth letter. When our Lord was about to withdraw his visible, sensible presence, and to ascend, as he expresses it, to his Father and his God†, he promised, that he would be with his apostles always to the end of the world ‡; or, as I would render it, with Bishop Pearce, and Mr. Wakefield, to the end of the age||, that is, of the jewish

* Letters, p. 82.

† John xx. 17.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 20.

|| Matt. xxviii. 20, translated by Mr. Wakefield: “I will be with you continually to the end of the age.” This learned writer refers to the parallel

dispensation. Agreeably to this promise, he not only communicated to them the Holy Spirit at the day of pentecost*, but he seems upon some special occasions, more or less frequently, to have appeared visibly to them. He was seen by Stephen immediately before his martyrdom†. He appeared to Paul on his way to Damascus‡. He afterwards, probably in Arabia||, communicated to this apostle, a distinct and complete discovery of the nature and extent of the gospel dispensation, and gave him a commission to preach it to the gentiles. Either then, or at some other time, he made known to the apostle the institution of the eucharist¶. Paul likewise saw and conversed with Christ in the temple at Jerusalem††. And it seems probable that he was honoured with another interview with his master, to which he refers, in his second epistle to the Corinthians ‡‡. And in many passages in his epistles, he represents himself as acting in the concerns of his mission, under the immediate direction of Christ|||. These considerations appear to me abundantly to justify the assertion, that Jesus was generally present with the apostle, and that he occasionally appeared to him. And when Jesus was sensibly

passage in Mark xvi. 17, 19. "So then (he adds) our Lord would continue "with them in working miracles to the end of the age." If our Lord was with them in working miracles, he must be personally present, as no Being can act where he does not exist. But I doubt whether the idea of a personal presence of Christ occurred to this celebrated author. See upon this subject of the personal presence and agency of Christ during the apostolic age, the venerable Theophilus Lindsey's Sequel to his Apology, p. 72, 85.

* Acts ii.

† Acts vii. 54, 55.

‡ Acts ix.

|| Gal. i. 11, 12, 17.

¶ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

†† Acts xxii. 17, 21.

‡‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

||| Phil. xi. 19, 24. 1 Tim. i. 12. 1 Thess. iii. 11.

present, there could be no more impropriety in the apostle's stating to him the feelings and desires of his mind, than there was in conversing with him during his personal ministry. What there is either mysterious or ridiculous in all this, I am at a loss to conceive. My ingenious correspondent, however, holds it up as an inexplicable mystery*, and is pleased to be very jocular upon the subject. And to heighten the joke he propounds some hard questions, concerning the locomotive powers of the glorified spiritual body of Christ, and the mode of its presence and action, to puzzle the poor Unitarians†, and to raise a laugh at their expense.

For my own part, being too dull to relish a jest upon serious subjects, I cannot but think these "sparkling witticisms" egregiously misplaced, and too much in the style "of Voltaire and Paine." Least of all am I disposed to accept of ridicule in the place of argument. Upon the authority of an evangelist, I believe that Jesus promised to be with his disciples till the end of that age, and upon the testimony of Luke and Paul, I believe that this

* To get rid of the stupendous mystery of one person conversing with another, my correspondent supposes, that the *body* of Christ is in some distant and unknown region of the universe called Heaven, but that his *divine* nature is always present with his church. This, to be sure, is very intelligible and satisfactory. See Letters, p. 89, Note.

† It may be proper to observe, that the unitarian doctrine is not in the least degree compromised in the speculation concerning the occasional sensible intercourse of Jesus with his apostles, after what is called, his ascension. To the generality of Unitarians, the question I believe has seldom occurred, and they have of course formed no opinion about it. For the reasons which I have stated above, I am inclined to believe, that this personal intercourse, which all allow in the conversion of Paul, was much more frequent than is commonly apprehended. To others, a different hypothesis may possibly appear more plausible.

promise was fulfilled. Against this evidence no objection can be alleged, but that which arises from the puerile and unphilosophical conceit, that heaven is some splendid place beyond the skies, where God has a throne, and where Jesus stands at his right hand: a notion too absurd to need refutation. As to the metaphysical presence and powers of Jesus Christ in his glorified and exalted state, nothing is revealed, and therefore nothing can be known.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Origen's character defended.—Review of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley.—Tertullian's unequivocal testimony to the Unitarianism of the great body of unlearned Christians.

DEAR SIR,

IN the Memoir annexed to my Discourse upon the death of Dr. Priestley*, I have expressed my opinion, that in the controversy with Dr. Horsley, Dr. Priestley was completely victorious: and, in a note, I have particularly alluded to the manner in which the bishop evades the direct testimony of Origen, by a groundless and unqualified attack upon the veracity of that celebrated father, and disparages the distinct evidence of Tertullian to the Unitarianism of the majority of unlearned Christians, by representing *them* “as not only illiterate, but ignorant and stupid in the extreme.” At the close I remark, that “there is an end of all reasoning from the testimony of ancient writers, if, when a disputant is pressed by authorities which he cannot impugn, he is at liberty to represent men whose characters were never before impeached, as idiots and liars.”

* Page 45.

My correspondent, as might be expected, does not agree in this judgment of the case, and in his seventh Letter he states his own opinion; and, after having retailed some of the archdeacon's arguments, with as much parade as if they had never been heard of or answered before, he triumphantly concludes with great apparent self-complacency, "Such then is the COMPLETE VICTORY of Dr. Priestley." This triumph, however, I hesitate not to say, is somewhat premature.

THE question concerning the character of Origen has been so thoroughly discussed in the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley, and the charge against the character of that virtuous and learned father has been so completely repelled, that I should have no hesitation in leaving the decision to every candid and competent judge of the case, who would compare the evidence on both sides. But as few are willing to submit to this trouble, I shall take the liberty to give a brief review of the charge and the defence.

DR. PRIESTLEY* having alleged the unequivocal testimony of Origen, to prove that the jewish Christians were called Ebionites, and that they adhered to the law; Dr. Horsley, in reply, taxes Origen in this instance with "the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood†." And affirms that "whatever Origen may pretend, to serve a purpose, the majority of hebrew Christians, from the time

* Dr. Priestley's Letters to Dr. Horsley, p. 18. Origen against Celsus, lib. ii. p. 56.

† Archdeacon of St. Albans' Letters in reply to Dr. Priestley, p. 160.

“ of Adrian, forsook their laws, and lived in communion with the gentile bishops, of the new-modelled church of Jerusalem*.” Of this new-modelled church, and of the sudden conversion of the hebrew Christians, this learned divine details the history with as much confidence as if he had been a contemporary witness: and for a confirmation of his account he appeals to the authority of Mosheim, concluding with that historian’s severe and unwarrantable reflection upon Origen, that he was not to be believed even upon oath †.

NEVER was any charge more completely refuted than this attack upon the character of Origen. Dr. Priestley, in reply ‡, first proves that Mosheim had not the least authority from antiquity to countenance his improbable assertion, that upon the destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian, “ the greatest part of the Christians, who lived in Palestine, entirely abandoned the Mosaic rites:” he then shews that his learned opponent had pieced out this improbable story of Mosheim’s, with certain curious circumstances of his own invention, that were still more improbable: and lastly, he adduces the judgment of Tillemont and Fleury, in unison with the testimony of antiquity, that the church at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian, consisted of gentile Christians only. The archdeacon having likewise, without citing any authority whatever, charged Origen with having “ defended the practice of using unjustifiable means to serve a good end,” and with

* Ibid. p. 6.

† Ibid. p. 59—52.

‡ Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, Letter 4.

having “employed the art he recommended*,” Dr. Priestley allows that Jerome, in a passage to which he refers†, says, that Origen adopted the Platonic doctrine of the subserviency of truth to utility, but denies that there is any evidence whatever of his having recourse to it. Dr. Priestley concludes his reply with the remark, that unless his reverend antagonist “could make a better apology for himself than *he* could suggest, he would be considered “by every impartial person as a *falsifier of history* “and a *defamer of the character of the dead*, in “order to serve his purpose ‡.”

THE archdeacon, in reply||, pleads “the necessity of helping out the broken accounts of the ecclesiastical history of those times by conjecture, in order to make out a consistent story,” and as he might have added, one pertinent to the occasion; and though he finds that Mosheim, upon whose authority he rested, had carried him a little too far, he still continues, with more zeal than success, to advocate the existence of an orthodox church of hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian, which had abandoned the law of Moses. Apprehensive, however, that every reader might not approve of his method “of helping out a broken “story,” and convinced that the foundations of his newly erected church at Jerusalem were not sufficiently firm to support the battery which he had erected against the impregnable character of Origen,

* Archdeacon of St. Albans' Letters, p. 160.

† Epist. ad Pammach. Opp. V. I. p. 496.

‡ Priestley's Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans' Letter, p. 47.

|| Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's Second Letters, p. 39.

though this was the only ground from which the assault was originally made, this dexterous polemic artfully changes his position, and endeavours to make good his charge, by pretended self-contradictions produced from Origen's own writings. With what success, let the impartial reader judge.

ORIGEN, in his reply to Celsus*, who wrote against the Christians, under the assumed character of a Jew, says, "He who pretends to know every
 " thing, does not know what belongs to the pro-
 " sopopœia. For what does he say to the Jewish
 " believers? That they have left the customs of
 " their ancestors, having been ridiculously deceived
 " by Jesus, and have gone over to another name,
 " and another mode of life: not considering that
 " those Jews who have believed in Jesus, have not
 " deserted the customs of their ancestors; for they
 " live according to them, having a name agreeing
 " with the poverty of their legal observances. For
 " the word Ebion, in the Jewish language, signifies
 " poor, and those of the Jews who believe Jesus to
 " be the Christ are called Ebionites."

THREE pages afterwards Origen adds†, "How
 " confusedly does Celsus's Jew speak upon this sub-
 " ject, when he might have said more PLAUSIBLY:
 " *Some* of you have relinquished the old customs,
 " upon pretence of expositions and allegories; *some*
 " again, expounding, as you call it, spiritually, never-
 " theless observe the institutions of our ancestors.

* Origen contra Celsum, p. 56. Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions. v. iii p. 159.

† Origen contra Celsum, p. 59.

“ But *some*, not admitting these expositions, are
 “ willing to receive Jesus as the person foretold by
 “ the prophets, and to observe the law of Moses
 “ according to the ancient customs, as having in the
 “ letter the whole meaning of the spirit*.”

ALL that the learned father here maintains is, that as the hebrew Christians, in general, adhered to the Mosaic law, Celsus’s Jew would have argued more *plausibly*, if he had charged only a *part* of them with having deserted the customs of their ancestors, while the *majority* remained attached to them. To discover inconsistency in these passages; and still more to detect in them any thing like wilful and deliberate falsehood, would puzzle a consistory of logicians.

THE archdeacon, however, contends that Origen confesses, in contradiction to his former assertion, that “ he knew of three sorts of Jews professing
 “ Christianity; one sort of whom had relinquished
 “ the observance of the literal precept.” And my worthy correspondent†, willing to co-operate with his learned predecessor, in the generous design of fixing a stigma upon the character of this great man, and being no mean proficient in the useful art of helping out a broken story, improves the slender notices which antiquity supplies concerning the history and character of Celsus; first, by *supposing* that Celsus spent some part of his life in Syria; next by *asserting*, that he was unquestionably well acquainted

* Archdeacon of St. Albans’ Remarks upon Dr. P. p. 26. To preclude objections, I have given Dr. Horsley’s translation of the passage from Origen.

† Letters, p. 104, 105

both with Judaism and Christianity, and with the persons who adhered to them : Further, *not perceiving* the motive he could have for inventing the assertion, that the Jews who believed had abandoned the law of their fathers, he *substitutes* a fiction which would have better answered his purpose : and then, as if all these improbable and unauthorised assumptions had been established facts, he draws the peremptory conclusion :—“ Celsus *was* there—
 “ fore an early witness ; he *had* sufficient opportuni-
 “ ties of information ; he *could* have no inducement
 “ to falsehood in this instance ; he *must* have been
 “ a fool as well as a knave to have ventured upon
 “ this untruth.” Such a mode of reasoning may puzzle the ignorant, and mislead the unwary, but to the reflecting reader it requires no comment, and needs no reply.

PRESUMING likewise upon the unproved assertion of Jerome, that Origen had adopted the principle of sacrificing truth to victory, my correspondent* first maintains that Origen, “ though nothing could
 “ have been more easy than to have shewn the
 “ inconclusiveness of Celsus’s argument,” chose rather to reply to it by the assertion of a palpable untruth, thus preferring falsehood for falsehood’s sake ; and then, that a few pages afterwards, as a
 “ salvo to his own conscience,” and “ as a hint only
 “ to the initiated reader,” he “ *plainly contradicts*” all that has been said : a supposition which would make this renowned advocate of the christian cause,

* Letters, p. 19L

not only a liar unfit to be believed on oath, which is the aspersion of Mosheim and Dr. Horsley, but chargeable with a degree of fatuity bordering upon idiocy, of which he was never suspected before*.

THE next passage which the archdeacon produces to impeach the veracity of Origen, immediately succeeds what he had cited before. "How should Celsus," he says, "make clear distinctions upon this point, who, in the sequel of his work, mentions impious heresies altogether alienated from Christ; and others which have renounced the Creator? and has not noticed (or knew not of) Israelites believing in Jesus, and not relinquishing the law of their fathers." In order to *help out* his argument from this passage, the learned writer is obliged to conjecture that Celsus, professing to give a catalogue of heresies amongst Christians, is condemned by his opponent for neglecting to in-

* Let no inadvertent reader, however, apprehend that my worthy correspondent means any thing uncharitable to this venerable father and confessor of the primitive church. Though Origen, according to his account, was so addicted to lying, as to love it for its own sake, and to be undeserving of credit, even upon oath; yet we are assured, p. 108, that "his mind was worthy and generally upright." And I am persuaded that my correspondent's humility and candour would hesitate as much "in forming an opinion on the future state" of Origen, as of that great sinner, Dr. Priestley, upon whose critical case he gravely observes, p. 40, "What presumptuous mortal would forbid the hope, that a most unexpected and momentous change of views and reliance might take place, in the few minutes of solemn meditation which immediately preceded his dissolution?"—Exalted charity! By parity of reason, we may also hope that Origen himself might be converted in his last moments, and may now be a glorified saint in heaven, though he was a notorious liar all his life. Happy Calvinism! which so liberally provides for the salvation of the elect, and which so easily finds both faith and righteousness for those who have so little of their own. Who would not wish this generous system to be true? Who will henceforth presume to pronounce it, the extravagance of error, or a message of wrath?

clude the Israelites who believed in Jesus, without laying aside the law of their ancestors. But as this conjecture is perfectly gratuitous, we are at liberty to regard the conclusion as equally such, though the learned writer, whose intrepidity in assertion seems to bear an inverse ratio to the cogency of his argument, concludes the paragraph with the repetition of Mosheim's calumny, that he would not believe such a witness, even upon oath*. Dr. Priestley maintains, at least with equal plausibility, that "the most natural construction of the passage is, "that Origen says, "It is no wonder that Celsus "should be ignorant of what he was treating, when "he classed the Gnostics along with Christians, and "did not even know, that there were Israelites who "professed Christianity, and adhered to the laws of "Moses†."

THE reverend dignitary‡ further charges Origen with what he calls a strange instance of prevarication in the first book of his Reply to Celsus||. The word *Alma*, he says, which the LXX have translated into the *παρθενος* [a virgin,] but other interpreters into the *νεανις* [a young woman] is put too, AS THEY SAY, in Deuteronomy, for a virgin. Deut. xxii. 23, 24. Where is the prevarication here? In the first place, we are told, that the compiler of the Hexapla might have known, if he would, what the true reading was.—Agreed.—But, secondly, that Origen probably did know, that the true reading was different

* Archdeacon of St. Albans' Remarks, p. 27, 28. Bishop of St. David's Supplemental Disquisitions. No. 5. p. 483.

† Dr. Priestley's Letters to the Archdeacon, p. 13.

‡ Remarks, p. 29.

|| Origen cont. Celsum, p. 27.

from what he here insinuates it to have been.—Why?—Because the word *Alma* is not found in any copies which are now extant : from which it is concluded, that it was not the reading of Origen's copy, although that copy must have been many centuries older than any which we possess*. How slender a foundation upon which to form an attack upon so fair and venerable a character ; and yet, so confident is the learned writer in his conclusion, that he again declares, he would not credit such a testimony even upon oath.

THIS is all the evidence produced by the now right reverend antagonist of Dr. Priestley, in support of his attack upon the character of one of the most learned and respectable of the ancient ecclesiastical writers ; how far he has made good his charge, and exculpated himself from the counter-accusation of Dr. Priestley, as a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the dead, must be left to the decision of the reader. But if the question which my correspondent puts in his usual flourishing and triumphant manner †, should still be proposed ; “ Will it be again said, that Dr. Horsley's strictures are a groundless and unqualified attack upon “ the veracity of that celebrated father ? ” I answer, without hesitation, YES. It will be said by every honest, candid, and unprejudiced person, who is qualified to form a judgment in the case.

My correspondent adds, “ You further *argue* “ from the assumption, that his character was

* Disquisitions, p. 485.

† Letters, p. 103.

“ never before impeached. Never before impeach-
 “ ed! My dear Sir, your own references would in-
 “ form you that Dr. Horsley had only trod in the
 “ steps of Mosheim*.” Now, Sir, to tell the truth,
 my references did inform me amply upon this head.
 Nor did I ever argue from the *date*, but from the
falsehood of the charge against Origen; nor do the
 words alluded to contain any argument at all, but
 simply a general observation, equally applicable to
 Mosheim, who first called this venerable father a
 wilful liar, and to Dr. Horsley, who is the first chris-
 tian bishop upon record that has represented the
 majority of believers as idiots. My words are these:
 “ There is an end of all reasoning from the testi-
 “ mony of ancient writers, if, when a disputant is
 “ pressed by authorities which he cannot impugn,
 “ he is at liberty to represent men, whose charac-
 “ ters were never before impeached, as idiots and
 “ liars.” After all, the use of language would bear
 me out in the expression, that Origen’s character
 was never before impeached; when the fact is, that
 it had stood the test of fifteen centuries, and that no
 aspersion had been cast upon it, till within the last
 fifty years.

BUT it seems I am to be overwhelmed with the
 authority of Jerome, who, in a passage to which
 Dr. Priestley refers†, and which my correspondent
 cites pretty much at large, says, What!—That
 Origen is a wilful liar, not to be believed upon his
 oath?—No such thing—But “ that Origen had

* Letters, p. 106.

† Ibid. 107.

“ adopted the Platonic doctrine of the subserviency
 “ of truth to utility :” and that he and others “ hav-
 “ ing written many thousand lines against Celsus
 “ and Porphyry, because they are sometimes forced
 “ to it in answer to the objections of the heathen,
 “ they say, not what they think, but what the case
 “ requires.” Now, it is a possible case that this
 holy father, who avows and justifies the pious prac-
 tice of lying for the truth, might think that his own
 case required the sanction of Origen’s great name
 and example ; and might choose upon this occasion
 to say, not what he thought, but what he wished
 others to think. And is the fair character of Ori-
 gen to be blasted by such an imputation as this ? an
 imputation unsupported even by the pretence of
 proof ? No, no. Dr. Priestley’s learned antagonist
 was too wary to appeal to such authority, even when
 it was suggested to him. And they who can give
 credit in such a case, to such evidence, must, to say
 the least, be very willing believers*.

* My worthy correspondent, p. 105, desires me to “ *recollect* that Dr.
 “ Priestley himself, on the authority of Jerome, *admits* that Origen adapted
 “ the Platonic doctrine of the subserviency of truth to utility, as with respect
 “ to deceiving enemies.” etc. But this ingenious gentleman’s *own references*
would inform him, that Dr. Priestley *admits* no such thing. He only men-
 tions, Lett. part ii. p. 46. that Jerome, in his Epistle to Pammachius, Opera.
 v. i. p. 496, says, that Origen adopted this doctrine ; which, surely, is very far
 from admitting it as a fact, though he might reason upon it as a supposition.
 My correspondent is very severe upon Dr. Priestley, for adding, in his Letter
 to Dr. Horsley, “ Jerome was far from saying, that Origen reduced his theory
 “ to practice ; he mentions no instance whatever of his having recourse to it.”
 Dr. Priestley’s mistake, if any, is very immaterial ; Jerome does in general
 terms allege the fact, with respect to Origen, as well as others : but
 he produces no specific proof whatever. My correspondent can account for
 this inadvertence “ in no other way, than by supposing that the Dr. some-
 “ times borrowed references, and in the haste of writing, did not interrupt

BUT at any rate, does not Jerome's allegation prove that "Mosheim was not the first to impeach "the character of Origen?" I answer, that bare assertion, unsupported by evidence, is not to impeach, but to calumniate; and in this honourable distinction, Jerome may, perhaps, be allowed to take the precedence of Mosheim. At the same time, it must be remembered, that the good father professes to mention the circumstance to Origen's praise; a plea, which will at least acquit him from the malignity of the charge.

As to the celebrated passage from Tertullian, I am willing to leave it to the judgment of the impartial and well-informed reader, with all the liberal expositions of Dr. Horsley,* "the candid and "learned investigation of Dr. Jamieson," and the authoritative judgment of my correspondent upon its head, without any apprehension of its being misunderstood by any, who are not interested to maintain that *black is white*. Words have no meaning, if Tertullian does not aver, that the majority of unlearned Christians were adverse to the then novel, and philosophical notion, of a Trinity in the godhead. As my learned correspondent has pronounced Dr. Priestley's translation of the passage to be *inaccurate* and *mutilated*†, but has, at the same time, prudently abstained from giving us a *complete* and *correct* trans-

"himself to examine them." This censure comes with an ill grace from a gentleman, who, with respect to this very passage, has, in the *haste of writing*, committed an error which completely misrepresents the sense of his author. But every *mote* is magnified into a *beam*, if it is seen in the eye of Dr. Priestley.

* Letters, p. 110.

† Letters, p. 112.

lation of his own; I shall make up for this defect, by giving it in the translation of Bishop Horsley*, who will, I suppose, be allowed to be as competent a judge of the construction of Greek, as Dr. Jamieson, and certainly not too partial to the sentiments of Dr. Priestley. It may be proper to premise, that the word *idiots*, should have been rendered *illiterate*†.

“SIMPLE persons,” says Tertullian, “(not to call them ignorant and idiots) who *always make the*

* Letters in Reply to Dr. Priestley, p. 74.

† My worthy correspondent, who, by his numerous quotations from the classical writers, seems desirous of being understood to be *pretty much at home* in classical literature, expresses high gratification that Dr. Priestley, though only a dissenting minister, was able to detect Bishop Horsley's gross mis-translation of the word *idiota*. His words are, (Letters, p. 109,) “It must be gratifying to *me*, to see the mighty Oxonian chastised for this school-boy trick by a dissenting minister.” That dissenting ministers may not, however, be too much elated by the reputation of so transcendent an exploit, performed by one of their number, the author adds the following extraordinary remark: “Yet, I would be exceedingly moderate in my exultation; for I fear there are almost *physical impossibilities* to forbid the hope that, as a body, we shall ever be distinguished for classical learning.” What there is in the physical constitution of dissenting ministers, which renders their brains inaccessible to classical ideas, the ingenious author has not condescended to explain. In the mean time, I would take leave to inform him for his comfort, that in the circle with which I have the happiness to be conversant, classical literature was never in higher repute, either among the dissenting clergy or laity. And that it would not be difficult to mention the names of Protestant dissenting ministers, who yield in extent, copiousness, and accuracy of classical erudition, to none but the Parrs, the Porsons, and the Burneys of the establishment. The name of Mr. Cogan, amongst many others, is well known to scholars, and was highly estimated by that eminently competent judge of talent and learning, the late celebrated Gilbert Wakefield. And while that gentleman, and others in different parts of the kingdom, continue to exert their superior talents and energies in the education of our youth, there is no danger that classical literature will be lost or undervalued among the Dissenters, or that any pretended physical impossibilities will prevent a succession of elegant and accomplished scholars to do honour to a cause, most intimately connected with our dearest civil rights, and religious liberties.

“ *majority of believers* ; because the rule of faith
 “ itself carries us away from the many gods of the
 “ heathen to the one true God, not understanding
 “ that one God is indeed to be believed, but with
 “ an œconomy (or arrangement) of the godhead ;
 “ *startle at the œconomy. They take it for granted,*
 “ *that the number and disposition of the Trinity is a*
 “ *division of the Unity. They pretend that two, and*
 “ *even three are preached by us, and imagine that*
 “ *they themselves are worshippers of one God. We,*
 “ they say, hold the monarchy. Latins have caught
 “ up the word monarchia. Greeks will not under-
 “ stand œconomia.”

I now conclude, in the words of my correspon-
 dent: SUCH THEN IS THE COMPLETE VICTORY OF
 DR. PRIESTLEY,

And am, Sir, &c.

LETTER IV.

Charge of inadvertency and gross misrepresentation repelled.—Progress of error concerning the person of Christ stated.—Misrepresentation of Dr. Priestley's sentiments corrected.

SIR,

“UNDERSTAND first, and then rebuke,” is the advice of a very wise writer*, to which my worthy correspondent would have done well to have attended. It is not necessary that every man should be a consummate scholar, or a profound theologian: but it may reasonably be expected of one who publicly volunteers the office of a critic, and a censor, that he should at least know something of the subject of his remarks.

IN the Discourse upon which this gentleman animadvertst†, is the following passage:

“IN another most valuable work, he (Dr. Priestley) represented at large, with great compass of thought, acuteness of discrimination, and extent of learning, the rise and progress of those enormous errors, which have prevailed from age to age, concerning the person of Christ, who from the

* Ecclus. xi. 7.

† Funeral Discourse for Dr. Priestley, p. 28.

“ condition of a man approved of God by signs and
 “ miracles and gifts of the holy spirit*, which is
 “ the character under which he is represented by
 “ himself and his apostles, has been advanced by
 “ the officious zeal of his mistaken followers, first,
 “ to the state of an angelic or superangelic being ;
 “ a delegated maker and governor of the world and
 “ its inhabitants ; and in the end, to a complete
 “ equality with God himself.”

THIS compendious view of the progress of anti-christian error concerning the person of Christ, as described in the History of Early Opinions, is denounced by my correspondent in the beginning

* Upon this allusion to Acts ii. 22, my correspondent, p. 116, is pleased to make the following singular remark—“How is this *misunderstood* passage *hackneyed* by Unitarians!” The apostle’s words are these: “Jesus of Nazareth, a MAN approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” How this plain passage can possibly be misunderstood, I am at a loss to conceive. The obvious meaning to common apprehensions is, that Jesus of Nazareth was a MAN whose divine mission was publicly and incontrovertibly attested to the Jews, by the miracles which God enabled him to perform. If, indeed, this text contains any other more recondite and important sense, it would surely have been greater clarity to instruct our ignorance, than to taunt our dullness. Perhaps my ingenious correspondent may have some method of interpretation, by which to shew that the apostle’s true meaning is, that the man whose mission was publicly attested by God, was himself the very God who attested his own mission, and who enabled himself to work miracles. At any rate, it would be kind and condescending to enlighten our darkness upon a subject so much *misunderstood*. In the mean time, while notions unscriptural, antichristian, and subversive of true and rational piety, continue to be incessantly *hackneyed* as the doctrines of the gospel, the Unitarians will not fail (in the decent phraseology of my correspondent) to *hackney* the scriptures in opposition to them ; and whether the zealots for popular opinions approve it or no, they will persevere to demonstrate, without fear of refutation, that such doctrines are as repugnant to the explicit language of the New Testament, and to the faith of the primitive church, as they are contradictory to common sense, and to the first principles of natural religion.

of his eighth Letter, as a "singular inaccuracy of statement," originating, is he charitably conceives, in "*perfect inadvertency on my part*.*" And waxing bolder as he advances, he preemtorily affirms that this account "is the precise reverse of acknowledged fact." "In the very work," continues he, "which you are characterising, Dr. Priestley establishes the direct contrary." Proceeding then with great parade to produce his strong reasons, the validity of which will be the subject of immediate inquiry, he triumphantly concludes: "Words could hardly be devised more fully contradictory to your inadvertent, though plausible observation†." In addition to which, not having the fear of Dr. Priestley's book before his eyes, he confidently hazards the extraordinary assertion, that "according to Dr. Priestley, the very first step of deviation from the simple humanity of Christ, was the ascription to him of a nature truly and properly divine‡."

UNFORTUNATELY for this gentleman's theological reputation, he has in this instance, as in most others, sung *Te Deum* before the victory. For in order to convict me of the heavy charge of "perfect inadvertency," and of asserting "the precise reverse of acknowledged facts," my well-meaning correspondent, whose zeal not unfrequently outstrips his information, has assumed principles which are notoriously erroneous, has alleged arguments which are totally irrelevant, and has confounded

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 116.

† Letters, p. 119.

‡ Letters, *Ibid.*

distinctions, which are plain and palpable, to every one who is conversant with ecclesiastical antiquity*.

THE basis of this gentleman's argument, without which the whole pompous superstructure falls to the ground, is the extraordinary assumption, "that the notion of the Logos, or the superior nature of " Jesus Christ, pre-existing as an angelic or super-angelic being, is the *distinguishing feature* of the " Arian hypothesis†."

THIS position being premised, the author further presumes, without the shadow of reason, and contrary to fact, that I could have no hypothesis but Arianism in view: and having produced from Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions a collection of passages to prove, what I am not at all inclined to dispute, that Arianism was a novel doctrine, unknown to the church before the age of Arius, and that it was not "an intermediate stage by which " the common people who were Unitarians were " brought to the Trinitarian doctrine;" he plumes himself upon having established his charge, and with great self-complacency proclaims his triumph.

BUT with this gentleman's good leave, I must demur, both to his premises and to his conclusion. I am as little satisfied with his arbitrary definition of Arianism here, as with his unauthorized detail of Calvinism in a former letter. I deny that the

* My correspondent confounds the tenets of the Gnostics with those of the Arians. Indeed his argument rests upon the strange supposition that no other distinctions subsisted in the primitive ages, but those of Unitarianism, Arianism, and Trinitarianism, a supposition than which nothing can be more remote from truth.

† Letters to Mr. B. p. 118.

notion of the *superior nature* of Christ, pre-existing as an angelic or superangelic being, is the distinguishing feature of the Arian hypothesis*. I affirm that this is a position which would never have been advanced by any one, who was moderately acquainted with the state of theological doctrine in the primitive ages. I contend that this opinion was introduced two hundred years before Arianism was heard of. And after a mature revision of the subject, I persist in asserting the accuracy and fidelity of that statement, which my correspondent has attacked; in confirmation of which, I shall now proceed briefly to represent the progress of erroneous opinions, concerning the person of Christ in the four first centuries of the christian æra.

THAT the founder of the christian faith should be only a crucified Jew, has ever been, still is, and will, I fear, long continue to be, the great stumbling-block of the christian religion. It was eminently such in the earliest periods of the promulgation of the gospel. The philosophers who could not resist the evidence of its divine authority, could not, on the other hand, endure the disgrace of being called עברי תלמי Ebde Tolvi, the followers of the man that was hanged: and to escape the reproach of the cross, they soon began to combine the plain and simple truths of the gospel, with the obscure fic-

* In truth, the notion stated by my correspondent, is no feature of Arianism at all. For the Arian doctrine maintains that the Logos is the soul which animates the body of Christ: nor is this hypothesis enumbered with the unintelligible jargon of two natures in Christ: the one superior, the other inferior; the one a pre-existent superangelic spirit, the other a human soul.

tions of their respective systems ; that so they might impart that dignity and lustre to this new sect, and to its chief, which they thought essentially requisite both to his credit and their own.

OF these, the Gnostics set the first example : a sect which unquestionably existed in the apostolic age, and of which Simon Magus was the reputed founder. The Gnostics were the professors of the oriental philosophy, according to which, the *pleroma*, or place where the Supreme Being resided, was inhabited by *Æons*, or emanations from him* ; some of superior, others of inferior order, according to the degrees of their descent. Matter was regarded by them as intrinsically evil ; and the source of all evil, natural and moral. These philosophers represented Christ as one of the *Æons*, who was sent from the *pleroma*, to deliver mankind from the tyranny of the God of the Jews. All of them maintained, that the Christ was incapable of suffering. Some taught, that the Christ was united to the man Jesus at his baptism, and departed from him at his crucifixion. Others, more consistently with their principles, holding it to be impossible that a substance intrinsically evil, such as matter, should be united to an angelic or superangelic spirit, contended that Jesus was a man only in appearance ; and that he neither felt,

* "The great boast of the Gnostics," says Dr. Priestley, was their profound and intricate doctrine concerning the derivation of various intelligences from the supreme mind, which they thought to be done by emanation or efflux." *Hist. of Opinions*, vol. i. p. 154. Valentinus held, with respect to the superangelic nature of Christ, that he was one of the *Æons* ; and according to his genealogy, Christ and the Holy Spirit were the offspring of *Monogenes*, which came from *Logos* and *Zoe*, as these were the offspring of *Nous* and *Veritas*, and these of *Bythus* and *Sige*. *Ibid.* p. 179.

nor suffered, like other men, but only *seemed* to do so. These were called Docetæ. This was the heresy of the apostolic age*. The apostle Paul alludes to it, when he cautions Timothy against the illusions of science, falsely so called† : for the Gnostics pretended to superior knowledge : and when he warns him not to give heed to endless genealogies ‡, there being great disputes among the Gnostics concerning the pedigrees of the Æons. The apostle John certainly refers to the Docetæ, when he represents those as Antichrists, who deny that Jesus is the Christ||, or that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh¶, or in other words, that he is a real man. The Gnostic heresy appears to have been silenced by the authority of the apostles, till the time of the Emperor Adrian, when it burst out again with increased violence, was embraced by multitudes in Asia and Egypt, and was split into a great variety of subordinate sects**.

PLATONISM was the fashionable philosophy of the West. Plato had obscurely taught the doctrine of three principles††. The Supreme Being, whom

* Jerome says, that while the apostles were still living, and when the blood of Christ was scarcely cold in Judea, there were men who taught that his body was no more than a phantom. Lardner's Works, v. iii. p. 542. Cotelerius says, that a man may as well deny that the sun gives light at noon, as deny that the heresy of the Docetæ broke out in the age of the apostles. Lardner *ibid.* Cotelerius ad Ignat. ep. ad Trall. c. 10.

† 1 Tim. vi. 20.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 3. Tit. iii. 9.

|| 1 John ii. 22.

¶ 1 John iv. 2, 3. 2 John 7.

** See Dr. Priestley's *Hist. of Early Opinions*, vol. i. book i. chap. i.—v. Mosheim's *Ecel. Hist.* cent. i. part ii. chap. v. Cent. ii. part ii. chap. v. Lardner's *Hist. of Heretics*, book i. sect. vi. p. 18. Lardner's Works, vol. ix. p. 233, etc. Vol. iii. p. 541, 542.

†† Dr. Priestley, *ibid.* book i. chap. vi. vol. i. p. 320.

he calls the **GOOD**; the **NOUS**, or intellect of the Supreme; and **MATTER**, or the visible world. The latter Platonists expounded and improved upon the hypothesis of their founder. Porphyry, explaining the doctrine of Plato, extends the divine essence to three hypostases: the first is the Supreme Being or the Good; the second, the Demiurgus, the Maker of the world; and the third, the Soul of the world*. Philo, a platonic Jew of Alexandria, contemporary with the apostles, personifies the Nous, or as he calls it the Logos, the wisdom or energy of God, and represents it as the visible symbol of the divine presence; sometimes appearing in the form of an angel, sometimes in that of a man, acting as the medium of divine communications, but having no permanent separate existence†. This notion was early adopted by some philosophic Christians, in order to abate the odium which was entailed upon the christian religion, in consequence of the mean condition and ignominious sufferings of its founder.

JUSTIN Martyr, a platonic philosopher, a man of great integrity, but of warm feelings, and of slender judgment, who embraced Christianity, and who suffered martyrdom about A. D. 165, is the first ecclesiastical writer, now extant, who represents the Logos, or the wisdom of God, as personally united to the man Christ. Others before him had probably held the same doctrine, but had supposed that the Logos, after the ascension of Christ, had been again absorbed into the substance of the

* Dr. Priestley, *ibid* book i, chap. vii. sect. i. vol. i. p. 356. Vol. ii. p. 41.

† Dr. Priestley, *ibid*, book i. chap. viii. vol. ii. p. 1.

Father. Justin appears to have been the first writer who taught the permanent personality of the divine Logos*, which he asserts that he had learned from the Jewish scriptures; for the understanding of which, he professes to have had a special gift from God†. And his great authority, together with the increasing desire of exalting the person and dignity of Christ, induced the learned Christians who succeeded him to adopt his opinion ‡. Thus the doctrine of the permanent personal union of the divine Logos, with the man Christ, by which he became entitled to divine attributes and honours, gradually made its way among learned Christians in the second and third centuries: and this was the doctrine from which the minds of the great body of unlearned believers so vehemently revolted in the time of Tertullian||, and against which they solemnly protested, as a direct infringement of the divine unity. Nevertheless, as it was an essential part of this system, that the Logos which dwelt in Christ was merely an attribute of the Father, the abettors of it regarded themselves as sufficiently supporting the unity of the godhead, by maintaining that the divine nature of Christ was the same with that of the Father. He was not a God different from the

* Priestley's History of Early Opinions, book ii. chap. ii. sect. ii. vol. ii. p. 53.

† See the venerable Mr. Lindsey's Second Address to the Youth of the two Universities, chap. ii. sect. xiv.—xvii.

‡ Mr. Lindsey, *ibid.* sect. xviii.—xxi. Augustine says, that he regarded Christ only as a man of excellent and incomparable wisdom, till he read the works of Plato. Confess. lib. vi. *Lardner's Works*, vol. iii. p. 541.

|| See p. 48.

Father, and equal to him, but was an emanation from him, and one with him.

THE commencement of the fourth century ushered in a novel doctrine, which astonished and alarmed the whole christian world, and which the pious bishop of Alexandria, in his circular letter to the catholic bishops, declares so far to exceed in impiety, every thing which has been heard of before, that in comparison with it, the most daring extravagancies of all former heresies were perfectly innocent*. This was Arianism†. The *philosophising* prelate to whom I have just alluded, and whose name was Alexander ‡, having upon a certain occasion asserted the doctrine of a Unity in the Trinity in a stricter sense than some of his inferior clergy approved, was accused by Arius, one of his presbyters, a man of learning and subtlety, of favouring the Sabellian heresy. And in the heat of argument, this rebellious priest presumed to advance the hitherto unheard-of position, that the Logos who animated the body of Christ was a mere creature, formed (εξ ουκ οντων) out of nothing: that there was a time when he had no existence: (οτι ην ποτε, οτε ουκ ην) and in fine, “ that he was brought into being for “ no purpose, but to give existence to the world

* Socrates, Hist. Eccl. lib. i. chap. vi. p. 13 lin. 21. Ed. Reading.

† The characteristic distinction of Arianism is the doctrine of a *created* Logos. This was a hypothesis perfectly new, and which excited the utmost alarm. The gnostic Æons, and the platonic Logos, were emanations, not creatures. He that is not apprized of these distinctions, and of the importance attached to them, is totally ignorant of the subject.

‡ Socrates ibid. c. 5. Φιλοσοφων εβρολογει, is the historian's expression concerning the orthodox prelate.

“ and its inhabitants ; so that if God had not chosen
 “ that the world should be made, the Logos him-
 “ self would not have existed*.” Notwithstanding
 the novelty of this doctrine, and its contrariety to
 the orthodox creed, it spread with great rapidity,
 and was embraced by multitudes with great eager-
 ness, till the Emperor Constantine, having in vain
 endeavoured, by prudent mediation to reconcile the
 angry priests, summoned a general council of chris-
 tian bishops at Nice, to settle the controversy ;
 who, after much debate, at length decided, that the
 Son was of the same essence† with the Father, and
 denounced anathema upon all who should presume
 to teach, that his essence was ‡ different from that
 of God.

IN the heat of controversy with the Arians, the
 orthodox by degrees lost sight of their original doc-
 trine of the personification of an attribute, and began
 to represent the Son as a distinct intelligent Being,
 derived indeed from the Father by necessary gene-
 ration, but in all other respects equal with him, and
 only united to him as partaking of the same divine
 nature. To these divine persons, in due time, was
 added a third, called the Holy Ghost, derived by
 procession from the Father only, according to the
 Greek church : but the Latins have decided, that he

* Socrates ibid. c. 6. Δὶ ημᾶς γὰρ πεποίηται, ἵνα ημᾶς δὲ αὐτῶν,
 ὡς δὲ ὄργανα, κτίσῃ ὁ Θεὸς, καὶ οὐκ ἀνὴρ ὑπέστη, εἰ μὴ ημᾶς ὁ
 Θεὸς κήθελεν ποιῆσαι.

† Ομοουσιος.

‡ Εξ ἑτέρας ὑπὸ φαντασίας εἶναι. Socrates ibid. c. 8. p. 22.

Reading.

proceeds from the Father and the Son. At length, about a century after the council of Nice, the orthodox faith was finally settled, and the respective claims of the three supposed divine persons were finally adjusted in that paragon of ingenuity, absurdity, and impiety, the Creed falsely ascribed to St. Athanasius, but which is attributed by many learned men, with more probability, to Vigilius Tapsensis, a notorious writer and forger of ancient writings, and records, in the fifth century*. It is from this symbol, and not from that of the Nicene fathers, who would have been shocked at the novelty and blasphemy of the doctrine, that we learn that “in this Trinity, none is afore or after the other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-EQUAL.”

FROM this brief review of the rise and progress of anti-christian errors, concerning the person of Christ, I conceive that it will appear to every competent and impartial judge, that notwithstanding the late rise of Arianism, the date of what now passes for orthodox Trinitarianism is still later: and that I was perfectly correct in the assertion, that “from the condition of a man approved of God,” which is the doctrine of the New Testament, “our Lord has been advanced by the officious zeal of his mistaken followers, first to the state of an angelic or super-angelic Being,” which was the error of the Gnos-

* He is supposed to have been the interpolater of the notorious text relating to the three heavenly witnesses. 1 John v. 7. See Griesbach on the Text.

tics; “then to that of a delegated Maker and Governor of the world and its inhabitants,” which was the opinion of Platonists and Arians; “and in the end to a complete equality with God himself,” which is the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed, and which was not known till the latter end of the fourth century. I cannot therefore plead guilty to the charge of having affirmed, that which is “the precise reverse of acknowledged fact.” But, on the contrary, if I were disposed to retaliate, it would not be difficult to make good the indictment against the accuser himself.

I SHALL now proceed to shew, from Dr. Priestley’s own words, how very agreeable to “acknowledged fact” is my correspondent’s confident assertion, “that,” according to Dr. Priestley, “the *very first* step of deviation from the simple humanity of Christ, was the ascription to him of a nature truly and properly DIVINE*.”

To this purpose I might transcribe the whole four volumes of Dr. Priestley’s History of Early Opinions concerning Christ. I might add a very fair proportion of his account of the Corruptions of Christianity. I might subjoin no inconsiderable part of his controversy with Dr. Horsley, and might bring up the rear with a volume or two of his Ecclesiastical History. But as all this could not easily be contained in the compass of a Letter, I will limit myself to a few extracts from the conclusion of the first-mentioned work, in which the

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 119.

learned writer professes to give a connected view of all the principal articles in the preceding History.

“ALL that these philosophers could advance at *first*,” says Dr. Priestley, “was, that some great superangelic spirit had been sent down from heaven, and was attached to the man Jesus—this superangelic Being was properly the Christ. This was the doctrine of the earlier Gnostics*.

“BUT as it had been the opinion of many, that angels were only temporary and unsubstantial forms—others of these philosophers thought, that what was called the man Jesus, was nothing more than one of these unsubstantial forms of men; so that the superangelic spirit or the Christ had no proper body or soul at all. These were called Docetæ; and *this progress had been made in the time of the apostles*†.”

“HAVING been taught by the platonic philosophers that there were three great principles in nature, viz. the Supreme Being or the Good, his Mind (Nous), and the Soul of the world: and the Jewish philosophers having already advanced, that the second of these principles, which they denominated Logos, was an emanation from the Supreme Being, and the cause of all the appearances of God, recorded in the Old Testament, some of which were in the form of men; and having also taught that it was this Logos that, by order of the Supreme Being, had made the visible world, that he was the image of God, his only

* Dr. Priestley's Hist. of Early Opinions, vol. iv. p. 276.

† Ibid. p. 276, 277.

“ begotten Son, and that he was even entitled to the
 “ appellation of God in an inferior sense of the
 “ word: these christian philosophers imagined that
 “ it was this Logos that was united to the man Jesus
 “ Christ, and that on this account he might be called
 “ God*.

“ For *some time*, however, the more learned
 “ Christians contented themselves with supposing,
 “ that the union between this divine Logos and the
 “ man Christ Jesus was only temporary. For they
 “ held this divine efflux, which, like a beam of light
 “ from the sun, went out from God, and was attach-
 “ ed to the person of Christ, to enable him to work
 “ miracles while he was on earth, was drawn into
 “ God again when he ascended into heaven, and had
 “ no more occasion to exert a miraculous power†.

“ It was *afterwards* maintained, and Justin Mar-
 “ tyr, who had been a platonic philosopher, was per-
 “ haps the first who suggested the idea, that this
 “ union of the Logos to the person of Christ was
 “ not temporary, but permanent ‡.

“ THE philosophical Christians acknowledged, that
 “ though Christ, on account of the divine Logos
 “ united to him, might be called God, it was in an
 “ inferior sense: also that the divinity, and even the
 “ being of the Son, was derived from the Father||.

“ As it had always been maintained by the pla-
 “ tonizing Christians, that the Logos came out of
 “ God, just before the creation of the world, and
 “ consequently, that there had been a time when

* Dr. Priestley's Hist. of Early Opinions, vol. iv. p. 278.

† Ibid. p. 279.

‡ Ibid. p. 280.

§ Ibid. p. 281.

“ God was alone, and the Son was not; and as they
 “ had always held that when the Son was produced,
 “ he was greatly inferior to the Father, *there arose*
 “ some who said, that he ought to be considered as
 “ a mere creature, not derived from the substance
 “ of God, but created out of nothing, as other crea-
 “ tures were. These, who were the Arians, consi-
 “ dering the Logos as being the intelligent principle
 “ in Christ, thought that there was no occasion to
 “ suppose that he had any other soul. They there-
 “ fore said that Christ was a superangelic Being,
 “ united to a human body; that though he himself
 “ was created, he was the Creator of all things under
 “ God, and the instrument of all the divine com-
 “ munications to the patriarchs*.

“ IN opposition to the Arians, the orthodox main-
 “ tained the Logos must be of the same substance
 “ with the Father, and co-eternal with him†.

“ FROM *this time*, i. e. the time of the council of
 “ Nice, those who had distinguished themselves the
 “ most by their defence of the doctrine of the con-
 “ substantiality of the Son with the Father, did like-
 “ wise maintain both the proper personality of the
 “ Holy Spirit, and also his consubstantiality with
 “ the Father and the Son. This doctrine of the
 “ consubstantiality of the three divine persons, *soon*
 “ led to that of their perfect equality with respect
 “ to all divine perfections; and *this completed the*
 “ *scheme*. According to it, though there is but
 “ one God, there are three divine persons, each of

* Dr. Priestley's *Hist. of Early Opinions*, p. 282, 283.

† *Ibid.* p. 283.

“ which, separately taken, is perfect God, though
 “ all together make no more than one perfect God:
 “ a proposition not only repugnant to the plainest
 “ principles of common sense, but *altogether un-*
 “ *known before the council of Nice*, as is acknow-
 “ ledged by many learned Trinitarians*.”

I SHALL add one paragraph more from Dr. Priest-
 ley’s summary view of the evidence for the primitive
 Christians having held the doctrine of the simple
 humanity of Christ. “ There is a pretty easy gra-
 “ dation (says he) in the progress of the doctrine
 “ of the divinity of Christ; as he was *first* thought
 “ to be a God in some qualified sense of the word,
 “ a distinguished emanation from the supreme
 “ mind; and then the *logos*, or the *wisdom of God*
 “ personified: and this *logos* was *first* thought to
 “ be only occasionally detached from the Deity, and
 “ then drawn into his essence again, before it was
 “ imagined that it had a permanent personality, dis-
 “ tinct from that of the source from whence it
 “ sprung, that it *was not till the fourth century*, that
 “ this *Logos*, or Christ, was thought to be properly
 “ equal to the Father. Whereas, on the other hand,
 “ though it is now pretended, that the apostles
 “ taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; yet
 “ it cannot be denied, that in the very time of the
 “ apostles, the Jewish church, and many of the
 “ gentiles also, held the opinion of his being a mere
 “ man. Here the transition is quite sudden, with-
 “ out any gradation at all. This must naturally have

* Dr. Priestley’s *Hist. of Early Opinions*, vol. iv. p. 285, 286.

“ given the greatest alarm, and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived*.”

FROM these extracts, the reader will be able to form a competent judgment of the reliance which is to be placed upon my correspondent's assertion, that “ according to Dr. Priestley, the very first step of deviation from the simple humanity of Christ, was the ascription to him of a nature truly and properly divinet.”

THIS gentleman has been pleased to affirm, “ that implicit reliance cannot be placed on Dr. Priestley's representations, even in cases of the plainest fact †.” How far this charge is applicable to that truly venerable character, will be the subject of inquiry in my next letter. In the mean time, my advice to my worthy correspondent is, to look well at home. Such indeed is his strange misapprehension, and consequent mis-statement, of the most obvious facts, that without meaning any reflection upon his veracity, I am inclined to think that a cautious reader will, for the future, be *more disposed to believe what he shall prove, than what he shall say.*

It is, I think, the observation of Montaigne, “ Let no man say I will write a little book.” I was far from expecting, when I began to write, that my animadversions would have extended to so great a length. But I found it impossible to repel the point-blank charges of ignorance, of inadvertency, of misrepresentation, and asserting the precise reverse of acknowledged fact, which my zealous cor-

* Dr. Priestley's Hist. of Early Opinions, p. 311, 312.

† Letters to Mr. B. p. 119.

‡ Letters, p. 130.

respondent has accumulated against me, with an unsparing hand, without stating the evidence upon which my convictions were founded. If you will permit me to trouble you with one letter more, I believe I may now explicitly promise, that you shall receive no more last words from,

Dear Sir,

Your humble Servant, &c.

LETTER V.

The charge against Dr. Priestley's character stated and repelled.—Dr. Priestley and his accuser equally mistaken in a passage from Chrysostom.—The nature and conduct of Dr. Priestley's argument represented and vindicated.—Conclusion.

DEAR SIR,

MY redoubted opponent having in imagination given me the *coup de grace*, like a valorous knight sets out again in quest of new adventures; and elated with presumed success, he hesitates not to tilt a lance with the great champion of the theological field: and having, as he thinks, plucked a feather from the crest of his mighty antagonist, he annexes it to his own as a trophy of victory. How far he is entitled to the triumph which he claims, it is our present business to inquire.

THE allegation which my correspondent undertakes to establish*, is indeed of no inconsiderable moment, viz. that “IMPLICIT RELIANCE CANNOT
“BE SAFELY PLACED ON DR. PRIESTLEY'S REPRESENTATIONS, EVEN IN CASES OF THE PLAINEST
“FACTS.”

IT is an old and approved maxim amongst us theological disputants, when we do not find it easy

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 130.

or convenient to reply to our opponent's argument, to do all we can to depreciate his work, and to dissuade our readers from looking into it, or troubling themselves about it. This manœuvre has been played off with great industry, and some effect, against the writings of Dr. Priestley. The learned bishop of St. Asaph, in particular, excelled in this species of controversial tactics: and my worthy correspondent, if not equal in ability, is not at all deficient in good will. But the armour which was proof against the iron mace of the Brobdingnag knight, is not likely to be much injured by the brittle reed of the Lilliputian squire.

“IMPLICIT reliance cannot safely be placed upon “ Dr. Priestley's representations, even in cases of “ the plainest facts.”—To substantiate so grave a charge, it would be natural to expect a considerable induction of very plain facts, which have been misrepresented by Dr. Priestley. Instead of which, the gentleman who brings the accusation presents us with three passages, out of a collection of nearly two thousand from the ancient ecclesiastical writers, in which he apprehends that the learned and indefatigable historian of Early Opinions has, not indeed misquoted, nor mistranslated, but merely misunderstood, his author. And this, forsooth, is the evidence upon which that venerable character is to be dragged forth, and arraigned at the tribunal of the public, as unfit to be trusted in representations even of the plainest facts.

I AM no advocate for the infallibility of Dr. Priestley. His noble and ingenuous spirit pretended to

no exemption from infirmities incident to human nature : and with true magnanimity he eagerly solicited, and gratefully acknowledged, the correction of any mistakes into which he had inadvertently fallen. I freely admit that Dr. Priestley's accuser has, in one instance, detected a singular misapprehension of the connection of an obscure passage, which that learned writer has extracted from the works of Chrysostom ; though I am far from being satisfied that the gentleman, who has with so much parade pointed out the error, is himself at all nearer to the truth, in his own construction of the passage. Dr. Priestley says, that " Chrysostom represents *all the preceding writers of the New Testament* as children who heard but did not understand things, and who were busy about cheesecakes and childish sports ; but John taught, what the angels themselves did not know before he declared it*." My correspondent justly observes, that the clause as it stands in Chrysostom is " all the rest," and that the persons referred to in it, are not " the writers of the New Testament." So far we are obliged to him for correcting an inadvertence of the learned author. But when he adds that " the antecedent is the effeminate and dissipated spectators of athletic games, and the auditors of musicians and oratorical sophists," he errs as widely from the mark as the great man whom he so severely censures. If my worthy correspondent will have the goodness, as he advises me, to take down his Chrysostom

* Hist. of Early Opinions, vol. iii. p. 128, 129.

again, and to revise the context with a little more attention, he will find, that by the exceptive clause "all the rest," the orator intends all men "who not being angels already, nor ambitious of becoming such, do nevertheless occasionally hear the words of the evangelist." This declamatory writer, in his preface to John's gospel, representing the evangelist under the character of one who exhibits himself upon the public stage, amongst other circumstances, describes his situation in these words: "His proscenium, or stage, is the whole heaven, his theatre is the habitable world, his spectators and hearers are all the angels, and of the human race, those who are already angels, or who desire to become such; for they only can rightly understand this harmony, and shew it by their works. As to *all the rest*, like little children, who hear, but understand not what they hear, and are captivated with cakes and childish toys, so *these likewise* being gay, luxurious, and devoted to wealth, to power, and to pleasure, sometimes indeed *hear the words that are spoken*, but exhibit nothing great or sublime in their actions, because they have immured themselves in brick and clay*."

Who were the persons intended by the rhetorical expression "men who are already angels, or

* Θεαται δε και ακροαται, παντες αγγελοι, και ανθρωπων οσοιπερ αγγελοι τυγχανουσιν οντες, η και γενεσθαι επιθυμουσιν ΟΥΤΟΙ ΓΑΡ ΜΟΝΟΙ ταυτης ακριβως επακουσαι δυναιντ' αν της αρμονιας - ως ΟΙΓΕ ΑΛΛΟΙ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ καθηπερ τα παιδια κ. γ. λ. Chrysostom in Joan. Homil. i. Opp. Tom. ii. p. 556. Ed. Eton. 1612.

“ who are desirous of becoming such,” the author has not distinctly explained. Possibly, Chrysostom might allude to the epistles to the seven churches of Asia in the Apocalypse, in which the bishops, or pastors of the churches, are styled *angels*, and might mean the priesthood, and the candidates for holy orders, as opposed to the laity. But, more probably, the eloquent father intends those speculative and philosophising Christians, who were initiated into the mysteries of the orthodox faith, and who passed their lives in these sublime speculations. It is in contradistinction to these *angelic* personages, that unlearned Christians, who contented themselves with plain matters of fact, who understood the scriptures in their literal sense, and who engaged in the usual occupations of life without troubling themselves about unintelligible notions, or aspiring to the character of ascetics, or philosophers, are contemptuously represented as children, amusing themselves with cakes and toys, understanding nothing which they heard, and immersed in worldly pleasures and pursuits. This interpretation will not appear improbable, to those who know in what contempt plain and unlearned Christians were held, by men who fancied that they possessed a deep insight into the mystical sense of the evangelical history. Admitting this to be the true meaning of this obscure passage, it would not be irrelevant to Dr. P.’s purpose, though not exactly in the sense in which he has cited it: the allusion being, not to the preceding writers of the New

Testament, but, to the mass of unlearned Christians*.

THE reverend letter-writer, rightly judging that a single instance of erroneous interpretation, selected from a collection of almost two thousand passages, would hardly be thought sufficient to convict a person of Dr. Priestley's established reputation of the charge alleged, drags in another passage, quoted by Dr. Priestley from the same writer, to bolster up the infirm evidence of the first. "Dr. Priestley proceeds. But John, he (i. e. Chrysostom) says, "taught what the angels themselves did not know before he declared it†: and he represents them "as his most attentive auditors‡." It is not pretended that this sentence is not correctly cited. And, as the gentleman who brings the impeachment, has not condescended to shew, how a correct quotation of an author's words proves that no reliance is to be placed upon the representations of the person who

* In this way it is easy to account for Dr. Priestley's mistake. He had probably noted this as a passage which was much to his purpose of illustrating the difference which subsisted between the learned and unlearned Christians, and the contempt with which the latter were treated by the former for not adopting their mysterious speculations. But forgetting the reference, he understood the expression, *all the rest*, as referring to the preceding evangelists: in which supposition he would be confirmed by the long quotations which immediately succeed, and in which his author really does represent the other evangelists, as having taught little, or nothing, of the doctrine of the Logos, or divine nature of Christ, in comparison with John. At any rate, this passage from Chrysostom has no more connection with the spectators of the games, and the auditors of musicians and sophists, than it has with the inhabitants of China, or the Moon. I should, however, regard it as unpardonable asperity, to charge my correspondent as unfit to be relied upon in his representations of the plainest facts, merely because he has misapplied an obscure passage in Chrysostom.

† Chrysostom Opp. *ibid.* Tom. ii. p. 556. Ed. Eton. 1612.

‡ Letters, p. 125.

makes the quotation, we may safely dismiss this evidence without any further questions. It is true that the accuser puts the question, "Is it possible " that Dr. Priestley could read the above passage " so as ever to dream of the interpretation he has " put upon it?*" But as Dr. Priestley has put no interpretation whatever upon the passage, and has left it to speak for itself, this observation may be passed by, as a *dream* of the ingenious gentleman who produces the charge.

IN a situation precisely similar, stands the next evidence brought forward to confirm the accusation. The passage as cited by Dr. P. is as follows: "Leaving the Father (he says) he (John) discoursed " concerning the Son, because the Father was " known to all, if not as a Father yet as God; but " the only begotten was unknown†." The correctness of the quotation from Chrysostom is not questioned; but it is alleged, that the word *all* is to be understood, "of the *mass of mankind*." This is not probable: but whether it be, or be not, Dr. Priestley is not concerned in it, for he only cites the passage without any comment.

UPON such evidence does this very candid writer found his conclusion, "that implicit reliance cannot " be safely placed on Dr. Priestley's representations, " even in cases of the plainest facts."

HAVING thus produced passages which Dr. Priestley has cited correctly, in order to prove that he is

* Letters, p. 126.

† Chrysostom Opp. Tom. ii. p. 562. Ed. Eton.—History of Early Opinions, vol. iii. p. 129.—Letters, p. 126, 127.

not to be depended upon, to crown his argument, this sagacious critic next brings forward a passage which that learned writer has never cited at all, as a "proof how totally Dr. Priestley has misunderstood Chrysostom's extravagant oratory*." Surely such criticisms must have been imported from the banks of the Shannon.

PERHAPS my correspondent may plead, that he has qualified the charge with the epithet *implicit*. But if he meant no more than that implicit faith is not to be placed in man, what occasion was there for pompous proofs, and solemn professions of candour, to introduce so trite a truism? But if the writer means any thing, he means to insinuate, that Dr. Priestley is not to be depended upon equally with other learned authors; and it cannot be doubted that the expression, "implicit reliance cannot be safely placed on Dr. Priestley," would by superficial readers be understood to signify, that no confidence at all was to be placed in his assertions; an insinuation, which if it was intended, is as unfounded, as it is illiberal.

I SCRUPLE not to declare my firm conviction, that lightly as this reverend gentleman affects to treat Dr. Priestley's testimony, he does not himself give

* Letters, p. 127, 128. The purport of the author's quotations from the third Homily is to shew that Chrysostom teaches, that "John did not so confine himself to the Logos, as entirely to neglect the human nature of Christ, nor did the other evangelists confine themselves so entirely to the human nature, as to be silent concerning his eternal pre-existence." This Dr. Priestley never denied. See Hist. of Opinions, vol. iii. p. 128. But he truly affirms that Chrysostom's notion is, that John taught clearly and explicitly, what they only ventured to hint at. And this is evident from the context of this very passage which my correspondent quotes.

credit to the charge, to the extent in which it will naturally and inevitably be understood, by those who place *implicit* confidence in *him*. If my correspondent has read that learned work, the authority of which he has thought fit to impugn, I will venture to assert, that it is not in his power, if he possesses a capacity to appreciate moral evidence, to withhold his assent from the fact established by Dr. Priestley, upon the testimony of passages which he produces from Chrysostom himself, that this eloquent father means to affirm, that John was the first evangelist, who ventured openly and explicitly to assert the divinity of Jesus Christ, a doctrine which the other evangelists had with great and commendable caution, if not passed over entirely, at most, hinted at very obscurely, that they might not give offence to their readers. But the object of most of Dr. Priestley's opponents is, not to reply to his arguments, but to make their ignorant admirers believe, that his works are not worthy of a perusal, by unjustly stigmatizing his character, as an inattentive and incorrect writer.

DR. PRIESTLEY'S argument for the unitarian doctrine, from the testimony of the ancient ecclesiastical writers, is original and masterly, and in my judgment clear and decisive; but being new, it has been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. Former theologians have appealed to the fathers, as advocates for the doctrines which they themselves espoused; and have endeavoured to support the credit of their respective systems, by the authority of the venerable confessors of the primitive church.

Dr. Priestley has chosen very different ground: he is the first controversial writer who has ventured openly to declare, that his doctrine is in direct opposition to that of the great names to whose authority he appeals, and who have hitherto been generally regarded as the authorized expositors of the christian faith. He allows that very few, if any, of these eminent men were, properly speaking, Unitarians in principle. Nay, that they even held the doctrine of the proper humanity of Christ in contempt and abhorrence, and that they opposed it to the utmost of their power. He nevertheless contends, that the great body of Christians, both Jews and Heathens, for the three first centuries, were strenuous advocates for the proper unity of God, and that they zealously opposed the gnostic, the platonic, and the arian doctrines as they were successively introduced, and all the other wild speculations of the philosophizing Christians which were invented to shelter themselves from the disgrace of being the disciples of a low-born Jew, who had been ignominiously executed as a common malefactor. This alarm of the unlearned Christians was so general, and the dislike of the new doctrines was so deeply rooted, that it was with very great difficulty, and not till after a great length of time, that they were brought quietly to acquiesce in them.

THESE important facts are established by Dr. Priestley upon the testimony of the primitive writers of the christian church. Not indeed upon their direct assertion: this could hardly be expected, and would be liable to suspicion. The evidence which

the learned historian of Early Opinions chiefly produces, and upon which he lays the principal stress, is that of inadvertent concession, of incidental remark, of complaint, of caution, of affected candour, of apology, of inference, which, though indirect, is at the same time, the most satisfactory, to the inquisitive and reflecting mind. It is that species of evidence which judicious readers so much admire in Dr. Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, and similar to that by which the rapid progress, and consequently the truth of the christian religion, is established by the unwilling testimony of heathen writers.

BUT if these facts are established, the conclusion follows immediately. No person of reflection can for a moment maintain, that the apostles believed, and distinctly taught, the pre-existence and divinity of their master, and that the great mass of their converts were unbelievers in their testimony. The primitive Christians to avoid reproach, were under the strongest temptations to exalt the person and dignity of their teacher; but surely they could have no motive to derogate from, and to reduce it. If then the unitarian doctrine was the faith of the primitive church, it must have been the faith of the apostles themselves, and therefore this doctrine must be true.

IN order to establish this important fact, the learned historian of Early Opinions has, with wonderful industry and sagacity, selected upwards of eighteen hundred passages from the early ecclesiastical writers, all of which, in his estimation, tend in one way or another, to illustrate and confirm

the unitarianism of the great body of unlearned Christians in the primitive ages*!

It would indeed be marvellous in the highest degree if, in so great a number of quotations, some passages were not misquoted, misunderstood, or misapplied, and if there should not, here and there, be found some gross and palpable errors. This opens an ample field to peddling criticism: and if in two, or three, or half a dozen instances, an oversight is discovered, however insignificant, the hue and cry is immediately raised, "Dr. Priestley's representations are not to be trusted, even in the plainest facts."

To offer arguments to minds incapable of comprehending them, or indisposed to admit them, would be a waste of time and labour. But the judicious reader will easily perceive that such objections are of no weight. Scores, and hundreds, of passages may be spared, and yet the argument remain valid. It is indeed surprizing that in so great a number of quotations, so few material errors should have been detected by Dr. Priestley's learned and quick-sighted antagonists. But I am convinced that the clear, though unwilling testimony of Justin Martyr, of

* See Mr. Lindsey's *Vindicie Priestleianæ*, p. 335. This excellent writer observes, that in a work of such compass and extent as this *History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*, in which you have the words of the original writers themselves, it was scarcely to be expected that no mistakes would be committed. The author foresaw it to be unavoidable, and desired all allowance to be made, and to be told his faults, and he would gladly correct them. They have, however, turned out much fewer than could have been imagined, and none of them in the least affecting his main propositions and conclusions, though he has been told of them in an unhandsome way. See the Appendix.

Tertullian, of Origen, of Athanasius, and of Chrysostom, to the unitarianism of the primitive church, and to the great caution of the apostles in divulging the doctrine of Christ's divinity, can never be resisted by any fair reasoning. To say that Origen was a liar, and Tertullian in a pet, is a sort of reply which considerate persons well know how to appreciate.

To press the venerable fathers of the church, (to whose authority servile submission has been so often challenged, and so abjectly yielded,) to give evidence against themselves, and to confute them by their own testimony, was an original and happy thought of the learned historian of Ancient Opinions concerning the Person of Christ, and was worthy the great and adventurous genius of Dr. Priestley. And though minute critics may have discovered minute errors in his numerous quotations, yet none of them have in the least degree affected his conclusions; and I will venture to predict that they never will. The more severely the argument is investigated, and the better it is understood, the more luminous, the more satisfactory, and the more decisive, it will appear.

OF the opponents of Dr. Priestley, my correspondent refers to Dr. Williams, "whose objections "to the whole structure" of Dr. Priestley's argument "were, in his opinion, worthy of very serious attention," but were only "noticed in a way of "private compliment*." I have never seen Dr.

* Letters, p. 120.

Williams's work ; but if his objections are correctly stated by his friend, viz. that Dr. Priestley's "mode of argument has long ago been solidly refuted ; that it is plainly reprehended by Jesus Christ ; that it is highly untheological in its consequences," and the like, I confess I do not see what other reply Dr. Priestley could with propriety have made to such objections, than by a civil bow.

BUT it seems the great strength of the cause rests upon Dr. Jamieson's "elaborate and learned work," which, we are told, "is the very performance which Dr. Priestley had so long desired and challenged," which therefore "had a just claim on his particular and public notice.*" This much-extolled work, by the favour of an eminent and respectable calvinistic minister in the metropolist, I had an opportunity of seeing when it was first published, and I perused it with a considerable degree of attention. But I acknowledge, that the arguments and criticisms made very little impression upon my mind. Perhaps I was not disposed to rate very highly the judgment of a writer, who in his zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity, appeals to the testimony of the devil, as an evidence of its truth. This work of Dr. Jamieson's was I believe never seen by Dr. Priestley ; and we have abundant evidence, that the time of that great philosopher and divine, was much better employed during his exile, than in writing an answer to it. And indeed, what answer does it require ? These learned works are both

* Letters to Mr. B. p. 121.

† Rev. Mr. Towle.

before the public; and men of erudition, who are competent to judge, and desirous to learn, may easily compare them, and draw the conclusion for themselves.

HAVING thus finished my animadversions upon the strictures of my correspondent, and established a defence both of my own assertions, and of Dr. Priestley's insulted character, which, I trust, will prove satisfactory to the judicious, unprejudiced, and well-informed reader; I now willingly take leave of the controversy, subscribing myself,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely your's,

T. BELSHAM.

Hackney, April 17, 1805.

APPENDIX,

Containing an Extract from a publication of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, which expresses the judgment of that learned writer, concerning the issue of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley, and concerning the importance of Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ.*

THIS work of Dr. Priestley's, viz. his History of the Corruptions of Christianity, was not suffered to pass without being controverted by several persons, among whom, Dr. Horsley much distinguished himself; though by no means to his credit with learned men and judges of the subject. For, perhaps, there hardly ever was an instance in which a controversial writer was so entirely baffled, and confuted in every thing advanced by him, both from scripture, and early antiquity, to invalidate Dr. Priestley's positions, as has been verified, with respect to Dr. Horsley. And this is the opinion of not a few among the learned, who are far from favouring Dr. Priestley's peculiar sentiments.

IN consequence of this discussion of the subject with Dr. Horsley, yet not with a view to add to his triumphs over him, but for his own satisfaction, and that of others, the learned more especially, Dr. Priestley undertook this his herculean work.† In

* Mr. Lindsey's Address to the Youth of the two Universities, p. 337—343. part i. 1783.

† The History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, compiled from original writers, proving that the christian church was at first Unitarian:

this he has brought to light and displayed a vast accumulation of evidence, unknown before, to “prove the truth and antiquity, as he himself speaks, of the proper unitarian doctrine, in opposition to the trinitarian and arian hypotheses,” deriving his information from the first sources only, having perused all the original authors from the beginning, and produced almost two thousand passages from them, and having many others in reserve, equally important, if needed, to establish the facts for which he pleads.

CONCERNING, however, this large *field*, or more justly to speak, this overgrown *wood* of Christian antiquity, which our author alone has cleared up, and in which he has made such discoveries, I would beg leave to observe to you ;

I. THAT before he led the way, we were all much in confusion, and had no distinct ideas concerning that great corruption of the gospel, and of genuine Christianity, called *Arianism* : I mean the doctrine which makes Jesus Christ to have been a great pre-existent spirit, next to the eternal God, and deriving his being from him ; who condescended to come into this world of our’s, and to animate a human body, shrunk from his original dignity and power, first into the state of an embryo, next into that of a helpless infant, till by degrees he became rational, &c. &c.

in four vols. 1786. This (says Mr. Lindsey, p. 335,) is the most curious and valuable of all Dr. Priestley’s works ; and I risk nothing in adding, that it could only be executed in the manner it has been done, by a superior genius like his own.

THIS doctrine, which has no countenance in the scriptures, but in a very few passages of plainly wrong interpretation, Dr. Priestley has proved not to have been known in the christian church till about the time of Arius*: and has likewise shewn that the doctrine of the platonic fathers concerning Christ, which probably first begun with Justin Martyr, or about his time, and has been mistaken for it, was quite another thing: Christ, according to them, not being a superangelic spirit, animating a human body, but the Logos, the wisdom or reason of the Divine Being, his attribute, which these philosophers made a person of, and which, according to them, bore the same relation to the Father, that the platonic *υς*, which was their second principle, bore to the first principle, usually called *αγαθος*, or rather, were the same with them. This they held to be

* This important fact, which Mr. Lindsey here mentions as proved by Dr. Priestley, viz. that Arianism, or the doctrine of a created Logos animating the body of Christ, had no existence before the age of Arius, a fact which is decisive of the arian controversy, has been brought forward, and pointedly stated, nearly twenty years, and it still remains uncontradicted, and, indeed, cannot be controverted. Learned Arians have abandoned the cause, and seem to give it up as untenable. It would surely better become them to repel arguments which affect the vitals of their system, than to amuse themselves with verbal controversies about the word Unitarian, which, happily, being a term of good repute, is claimed by all parties, and which, according as it is defined, may be made to include the highest Trinitarian, or to exclude even the lowest Arian, excepting those modern theologians who limit themselves to the belief of the simple pre-existence of Christ. This hypothesis, the invention of the eighteenth century, which has never yet had a public advocate, but which is known to be the private opinion of some respectable individuals, falls within the limits of Unitarianism, even according to its most restricted definition: but why its advocates should choose to pass themselves off as Arians is difficult to explain, for this hypothesis is no more Arianism than it is Mahometism.

intimately united to Jesus Christ, who was still a man in their system, with a body and soul like the rest of us.

I MUST own that this wild abstracted perversion of the true scripture doctrine concerning Christ, is to me less exceptionable, and less repugnant to reason, than the arian doctrine concerning him: which is a heap of incongruous staggering improbabilities from beginning to end: whether you suppose the great pre-existent spirit, which was shut up in a human body of flesh and blood for thirty years, to have been the first and principal of created Beings, and the subordinate Creator of all things, or one of an inferior class with inferior powers.

II. THE distinction of the opinion of the early writers from that of the common people, was never before observed by any one: and being a thing wholly unknown to the first Socinians, they were exceedingly embarrassed in defence of their sentiments in point of antiquity. But we here see the seeming gap and chasm filled up; and that the doctrine of the apostles concerning their divine master, being altogether one of the human race, was also the doctrine of all those that were immediately taught by and succeeded them, a few speculative men excepted, who would be wise above what is written.

III. THE variety of curious knowledge of facts and opinions contained in this work; the illustrations of the oriental philosophy; and the doctrine of Platonism in particular, never so well exhibited before; must be pleasing and instructive to all, who

wish to know the history of the human mind, an interesting history assuredly: so that throwing even the question of religion aside, it is a valuable accession to the literary world, but connected with that important object, it is above all price.

IN a work of such compass and extent as this History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, in which you have the words of the original writers themselves, it was scarcely to be expected, that no mistakes would be committed. The author foresaw it to be unavoidable, and desired all allowance to be made, and to be told his faults, and he would gladly correct them. They have, however, turned out much fewer than could have been imagined, and none of them in the least affecting his main propositions and conclusions, though he has been told of them in an unhandsome way.

WITH respect to the unworthy insinuations of some men, all that know any thing of Dr. Priestley believe, and are persuaded, that he would as soon be guilty of robbing on the highway, as of designedly misquoting or misinterpreting any passage in an ancient writer to deceive others, and serve the purpose of a private party or opinion. For he has no interest in view, but that of truth, nor any desires, but to have that in the best way promoted and established.

POSTSCRIPT.

Remarks upon the alterations and concessions in the second edition of the
Letters to Mr. B.

SINCE these sheets were printed off, a second edition of the Letters, which are the subject of animadversion in them, has made its appearance ; upon which, I beg leave to offer a few remarks.

IN the first place, the writer, in his Advertisement to this edition, has fairly and candidly acknowledged, “ that he had egregiously misapprehended “ my meaning in the passage animadverted upon “ in his eighth Letter, the whole of which animad- “ version is now expunged.” This is the passage in which my correspondent had charged me with asserting, “ the reverse of acknowledged facts,” and is the subject of the fourth Letter of the preceding series.

THIS gentleman has likewise omitted in his new edition, the heavy allegation against Dr. Priestley, “ that implicit reliance cannot safely be placed on “ his representations, even in cases of the plainest “ fact.” The reason which he assigns for this omission is, that “ the paragraph had an *appearance* “ of asperity towards Dr. Priestley.” He might

with great propriety have added, that the charge was both unjust, and unproved.

THESE concessions are important, but they are not all which I consider myself as entitled to claim.

THIS gentleman has charged me with misrepresenting, caricaturing, and calumniating Calvinism; which allegation he has attempted to establish, by giving a long detail of his own opinions, which he calls Calvinism, and which he thinks entitled to more honourable mention. My worthy correspondent is at full liberty to believe what he likes, and to call his creed by what name he pleases. But most assuredly, when I spoke of Calvinism, I did not refer either to his particular system, or to that of any other individual. I alluded to the Calvinism which is exhibited in the public symbols of the sect, which is taught to their children, which is blended in their worship. If this gentleman's sentiments do not coincide with those, they were not within my contemplation, nor were they the objects of my censure. What I hold to be Calvinism, or rather what the Calvinists themselves declare to be their own principles, I have stated in my first Letter: and that statement still remains, and I venture to say, that it will remain uncontradicted. Whatever therefore my correspondent may think of the opinion which I entertain of the tendency of Calvinism, he has no right to persist in the charge, that I misrepresent the system.

THE imputation against the character of Origen is not retracted, and nothing further is offered in support of it, but a quotation from Daillé, which

brings a general allegation of insincerity against the fathers in their polemical writings, but does not particularly mention Origen.

I WAS curious to learn how my correspondent, with the help of Dr. Jamieson, would set aside the clear and explicit evidence of Tertullian, to the strong prejudices of the great mass of unlearned Christians, against the then novel and offensive doctrine of the Trinity.* Tertullian's words are these. *Simplices enim QUIQUE, ne dixerim imprudentes, et idiotæ, quæ major semper credentium pars est —expavescent ad œconomiam.* This is rendered by Dr. Horsley, "Simple persons, *not to call them* "ignorant and idiots, who always make the majority "of believers—startle at the œconomy." Plainly meaning, as the bishop has properly represented it, that the same persons whom he calls *simplices*, might have been denoted by the harsher epithets of *imprudentes* and *idiotæ*, and that these persons, who made the majority of believers, startled at the doctrine of the Trinity. This passage, my ingenious correspondent softens down in the following manner, in the new translation with which he has favoured us. "For SOME simple persons, not to "speak of the uninformed and ignorant, who always "constitute the greater part of believers, tremble "at that œconomy." To make the good father speak to his purpose, he has reduced a universal term to a particular one, and has translated a clause which was clearly exegetical, and which would admit of no other sense, as if it were exceptive. Such is

* See Lett. iii. p. 49

this acute polemic's method of pressing recruits into his service ; whether such recruits will pass muster, must be left to the decision of impartial criticism.

I CANNOT avoid expressing extreme surprize, that the worthy letter-writer has not corrected his interpretation of that passage in Chrysostom, in which, though he has detected a misconception of Dr. Priestley, he has himself fallen into a similar mistake. Had he paid the same respect to my advice, which I did to his, and consulted his Chrysostom in the case, he must have discovered his error : for it is too palpable to be overlooked. In the additional note, in which he appeals to the candour of his English reader, in favour of his own interpretation of the clause, he cannot mean to be serious.

THIS gentleman complains heavily of "the extremely illiberal and angry spirit of his opponent's remarks," which, he observes, "that he did not *provoke* ; that he does not fear ; and that he shall not imitate." What the meaning of the word *provocation* may be in this gentleman's vocabulary, I know not. And there may possibly be some tame and gentle souls, who are not in the least degree provoked, or moved, at being taxed with solemnly asserting the precise reverse of acknowledged facts, or by hearing the friend whom they highly revere, and who is no longer able to defend himself, accused as unworthy of credit in his representations, even of the plainest facts ; especially, if these charges are ushered in with solemn professions of candour and personal regard. I confess I am not quite of

so milky a temperament. I felt some indignation at the unfounded and unprovoked attack upon my own character ; and still more, at the illiberal attempt to blast the unsullied reputation of my venerable departed friend ; and not the less, because of the mask of candour, under which the blow was aimed. I am not, however, conscious that I have written under the influence of an improper spirit. But of this, my readers must be better judges than myself. And if in any instance I have been betrayed into unbecoming warmth and asperity of language ; if I have exceeded the limits of true liberality, and of what my learned friend Gilbert Wakefield used jocosely to style *due christian animosity*, I ask forgiveness both of my reverend correspondent, and of my readers.

Hackney, May 16, 1805.

THE END.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT HACKNEY, APRIL 8, 1804.

ON


OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF THE

REV. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY,

LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF THE CONGREGATION.


BY THOMAS BELSHAM.



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.....
1809.

A SERMON.

ACTS XX. 24.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

NOR was this an empty boast : for, if we read the history of this eminent apostle, from his first conversion to the christian religion to his imprisonment at Rome, as it is related by his friend and fellow-labourer Luke, we shall find,

THAT it was the great business of his life to testify, from place to place, the glorious gospel of the grace of God, agreeably to the commission which he had received from Jesus Christ for this purpose ;

THAT he every where met with opposition and persecution, often even to the hazard of his life, according to his own declaration that the holy spirit forewarned him that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him ;

THAT, nevertheless, nothing discouraged him, and no danger deterred him from performing the duties of his office, and executing his commission to the fullest extent ; and finally,

THAT he was animated to all his labours, and supported under all his sufferings, by the ardent desire

and confident expectation of a final and a glorious triumph.

1. THAT doctrine which the apostle taught was the "gospel of the grace of God." Very remote indeed from the system which in modern times has been dignified with the title of gospel-doctrine, a system which teaches that all mankind are doomed to eternal misery for Adam's sin, with the exception of a few who are chosen by mere good pleasure to everlasting life. A tremendous doctrine! which had it really been taught by Jesus and his apostles, their gospel might truly have been denominated, not the doctrine of peace and good will, but a message of wrath and injustice, of terror and despair. The doctrine which Jesus revealed, and which Paul preached, was the reverse of this. It was glad tidings of great and universal joy; for it revealed the equal and impartial love of God to his whole human offspring, unrestrained by any local or ceremonial distinction; the infinite placability of the divine character; the free and unpurchased mercy of God to the truly penitent; the momentous doctrine of a universal resurrection of the dead; the advancement of the righteous to glory, honour, and immortality; and the future condemnation of the wicked to a just and necessary, but not to a vindictive, much less to an everlasting punishment.

THIS was the doctrine which Paul taught; and his authority for teaching it was a commission which he received from Jesus Christ himself, attested and sealed by various extraordinary gifts of the holy spirit, and by miraculous powers with which the apostle was eminently endowed.

WHILE "Saul was yet breathing out threatening
"and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,"
while he was upon the road to Damascus with au-
thority from the high-priest to bring those whom he
should find there in chains to Jerusalem; in the
middle of the day, as he approached the city, when
he was probably enjoying by anticipation the suf-
ferings and groans of his intended victims, on a
sudden, the furious and unrelenting persecutor is
arrested in his way, and, by a miracle of power and
mercy, becomes in an instant the trembling suppliant
of that Jesus whose name he had blasphemed, whose
authority he had defied, whose doctrine he had
scorned, and whose disciples he had imprisoned,
tormented, and put to death. And when, prostrate
on the ground in an agony of terror, he requests to
know the pleasure of the majestic personage who
had condescended to address him in the language
of pathetic expostulation, the merciful Redeemer
embraces the very instant of contrition and remorse
to pronounce forgiveness, and to appoint him to the
office of an apostle and a teacher of the gentiles.
"Rise," said he, "and stand upon thy feet; for I
"have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make
"thee a minister and a witness both of these things
"which thou hast seen, and those in which I will
"appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people,
"and from the gentiles to whom I now send thee, to
"open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness
"to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,
"that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an
"inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith
"which is in me."

NOR was the humbled penitent “disobedient to the heavenly vision.” He arose, and with very different views from those with which he had entered upon his journey, he reached Damascus; and having there been miraculously healed of the blindness with which he had been struck by the dazzling splendour of the vision, he speedily retired into Arabia*, where he resided a considerable time, during which his understanding was enlightened in the doctrine, and his heart disciplined to the spirit, of the gospel. After which returning to Damascus, without any communication with the other apostles, and being fully instructed in the doctrine of the gospel by immediate revelation from Jesus himself, he opened his commission of peace and truth in that very city to which he had been sent upon a purpose of malice and cruelty, and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus by the irresistible evidence with which he demonstrated, that Jesus, who had been crucified, was the true Messiah.

FROM this time it became the business of his life to go from place to place “testifying the gospel of the grace of God.” And for this end he left all. He forsook his family and friends, and all his former honourable and powerful connections; he resigned his prospects of literary reputation, and all his hopes of rising to opulence and power; he even did what is still more difficult, he abandoned all his inveterate prejudices and all his pharisaic pride, and devoted himself wholly and without reserve to the ministry of the gospel, and particularly to the conversion of the heathen; glorying in the character and office of

* Gal. i. 17, 18.

the apostle of those gentiles whom he had formerly regarded with disdain. "I shewed," saith he, "first
 " to the Jews at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and
 " throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the
 " Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God,
 " and do works meet for repentance*." And again,
 " I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Bar-
 " barians, to the wise and to the unwise†."

2. THAT in the course of his apostolic mission and labours he encountered constant and malignant opposition, and often to the hazard of his life, is evident to all who are in the least acquainted with his history. He opened his ministry at Damascus: and there the governor, in concert with the Jews, endeavoured to seize and to put him to death; but with difficulty he made his escape, and returned to Jerusalem ‡. Here he expected the most signal success, and thought it impossible that the enemies of the gospel should be able to resist the arguments of one who, having formerly distinguished himself as a savage persecutor, was now become the zealous advocate of the doctrine which he then blasphemed. But he soon discovered his mistake, and in a few days he found it necessary to flee for his life; and being warned in a vision||, he employed his succeeding labours in the conversion of the gentiles, amongst whom, though his success was great, his persecutions were proportionable. But time would fail me to recount all the sufferings of this eminent apostle which are recorded by his historians, who

* Acts, xxvi. 20.

† Rom. i. 14.

‡ Acts, ix. 23—25. 2 Cor. xi. 32.

|| Acts, xxii. 17—21.

have nevertheless omitted many, and perhaps even the greater part of them. "I go to Jerusalem," says this christian hero, "not knowing what shall befall me there, save that the holy spirit witnesses in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me*." "Thou hast fully known," says he to Timothy, his pupil, companion, and friend, "my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me†."

THE most malignant opposition which the apostle encountered proceeded from those who professed, indeed, to believe in Christ, but who corrupted the simplicity of the gospel by a mixture of Jewish fable and pharisaic tradition, who were the determined enemies to the liberties of the gentile church, and were desirous of bowing the necks of the heathen converts to the yoke of the ceremonial law. These men, to accomplish their sinister purposes, intruded themselves into the churches which the apostle had planted, and scrupled not to foment divisions among them, and to alienate the affections of his converts by the grossest calumnies. They represented him as an uninformed, unauthorised, and inconsistent teacher of christianity, who preached for the sake of gain, and who sacrificed truth to secure popularity‡. And the intemperate zeal of these rash bigots

* Acts, xx. 22.

† 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.

‡ This is evident from the solicitude which the apostle discovers to exculpate himself from these charges in his epistles to the Corinthians and the Galatians. See 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12. 16--18.

was too much countenanced by the equivocal and unmanly conduct of some of the other apostles, or, at least, by that of Peter, to whom Paul was under the necessity of administering a sharp and public reproof at Antioch*. But with the leaders of the opposing factions the apostle kept no terms whatever; but upon every proper occasion he exposed their ignorance, their selfishness, their ambitious views, their vain pretensions, their envy and malice, their ungenerous conduct, their daring corruptions of the christian doctrine, their rancorous opposition to the liberty and the spirit of the gospel. And in reply to their vile insinuations against his character, and their attacks upon his authority, he appeals to the whole tenor of his public life, and particularly rests his defence upon the sufferings which he endured in the cause of truth. "Are they ministers of Christ?" says he, "I am more. In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times have I received forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in

* See Gal. ii. 11-17. The apostle relates this incident to defend himself from the charge of inconsistency. See v. 18. The persons who introduced dissension into the church at Antioch, and who seduced Peter and Barnabas, are said to have come from James, who presided over the church at Jerusalem, and whose prejudices were probably as strong as those of Peter. The address to Peter ends at v. 17. The apostle then resumes his discourse to the Galatians, and argues the folly of such inconsistency of conduct as had been imputed to him.

“the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in
 “the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness
 “and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger
 “and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness,
 “besides those things that are without, that which
 “cometh upon me daily, the care of all the
 “churches*.”

3. It is further observable, that notwithstanding all these persecutions and dangers, nothing discouraged the apostle, nothing deterred him from performing the duties of his office, and executing his commission to its utmost extent. “None of these things,” says he, “move me.” When persecuted in one city, he sought refuge in another: and no sooner was he silenced in one place, than he opened his commission in another. Narrowly escaping from Damascus, he begins to preach at Jerusalem: driven from Jerusalem, he carries the gospel to Cesarea, to Tarsus his native city, and to Antioch, where the disciples first obtained the honourable name of Christians. And such was his conduct through the whole of his life and ministry. He reminds the Thessalonians, that “after having suffered and been
 “shamefully treated at Philippi, he was bold in his
 “God to speak the gospel to them, though amidst
 “much contention†.” And when it was foretold by Agabus, that “he should be bound at Jerusalem
 “and delivered up to the gentiles,” while his friends were earnestly dissuading him from taking the journey, “What mean ye,” says he, “to weep and to
 “break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound

* 2 Cor. xi. 22—28.

† 1 Thess. ii. 2.

‘ only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the “ Lord Jesus*.”

4. FINALLY, the apostle was animated to his labours, and supported under his sufferings, by the ardent desire and confident expectation of ultimate success, and of a final glorious triumph. “ None “ of these things move me, neither count I my life “ dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course “ with joy.”

AMIDST difficulties and dangers he possessed many sources of consolation even while he was fulfilling his ministry. The consciousness of *fidelity*, disinterestedness and zeal in the cause in which he was embarked, was an inexhaustible spring of comfort, and a powerful motive to activity and perseverance. “ Our rejoicing,” saith he, “ is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and “ godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by “ the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world †.” The apostle also felt the warmest emotions of *gratitude* and delight at the recollection of the great mercy that he had experienced, and of the high honour which had been conferred upon him in his conversion to the christian faith, in his call to the apostolic office, and in his mission to the gentiles. “ Unto me,” says he, “ who am less than the “ least of all saints, is this grace given, to preach “ among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ‡.” The extraordinary *success* of his apostolical labours was a continually increasing source of joy and triumph. If many rejected his doctrine

* Acts, xxi, 11--14.

† 2 Cor. i. 12.

‡ Eph. iii. 8.

as folly or blasphemy, many also received it “as the wisdom of God and the power of God.” He seldom resided in a place, even for a short time, without collecting a considerable christian society. And if there were some ignorant or malicious intruders who corrupted the doctrine of Christ, disturbed the harmony of the church, and calumniated the character of the apostle; there were also many who were fully sensible of the value of the gospel, who were zealous for purity of doctrine, and for the preservation of christian liberty; whose conduct was an ornament to their profession, who cheerfully and actively concurred with the apostle in his schemes of usefulness, and who, penetrated with admiration of his character and with gratitude for his instructions, regarded him with veneration and love, “as a messenger of God, or even as Christ Jesus*.” Jesus had himself appeared in person to the apostle, to invest him with the apostolic office, and to qualify him for the honourable and successful discharge of it. He was no doubt generally present with him, though invisibly, and we know that he occasionally appeared to him during the course of his ministry; and, surely, it must have been an exquisite gratification to the apostle to reflect that he lived and laboured and suffered *under his master’s eye*, to whom he might at any time have recourse in a season of difficulty, and of whose protection he was secure. “I can do all things,” says he, “through Christ who strengtheneth me: gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me: for when I am weak, then am I

* Gal. iv. 14.

“strong*.” Nevertheless his chief solicitude was to stand approved in the *sight of God*, and his highest consolation was a hope of the divine favour. “We are not,” says he, “as many who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, as in the presence of God we speak in Jesus Christ†.” It likewise afforded him great satisfaction to observe that his *sufferings*, as well as his labours, tended to promote the cause of truth and virtue. He is desirous that the Philippians “should understand that the things which had happened to him had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, and that many waxing confident by his bonds were much more bold to speak the word without fear‡.” And it was not the least important source of consolation to reflect, that the *cause* in which he laboured and for which he suffered was a living and a growing cause; and that, whatever might happen to himself, christian truth was, like its author immortal, and must ultimately and universally prevail. With what an air of triumph does he assure the evangelist Timothy, “I know in whom I have believed: and I am persuaded that he is able to keep the treasure he has deposited with me until that day||.”

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10. The Lord to whom the apostle prayed, v. 8. and who promised that his strength should be made perfect in him, appears evidently to have been Christ, v. 9. of whose personal presence with him, therefore, at that time, the apostle must have been assured: otherwise he would not have prayed to him. But Jesus had promised to be with his apostles to the end of that age, which authorised those personal addresses to him which in succeeding ages would not be warrantable. See Matt. xxviii. 20. Also bishop Pearee's Commentary, and Mr. Wakefield's excellent note upon the text.

† 2 Cor. ii. 17.

‡ Phil. i. 12—14.

|| 2 Tim. i. 12. *παρθενην*, evangelium mihi commissum. Wakefield's manuscript note upon Wetstein. Compare v. 14. where the same word is

BUT the greatest satisfaction of all was the confident and joyful expectation which the apostle entertained of a *future everlasting recompense*. In comparison with this, all present sufferings were light and momentary in his estimation. "I have fought," says he, "the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day*."

AND yet he makes comparatively light of his own personal reward if it were not to be *shared in common* with his friends and converts. The summit of his bliss, the palm of his ambition, is to meet them with satisfaction at the tribunal of Christ, and to be united with them in glory and happiness. "What," saith he, "is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and our joy†."

SUPPORTED by these consolations, and animated by these views and hopes, what wonder is it that none of the afflictions and persecutions which he endured could move the apostle from his faith and duty, and that life itself was often exposed, and in the end cheerfully sacrificed, "that so he might finish his course with joy, and that ministry which

used in the best manuscripts. See Griesbach: Also Macknight and Benson on the text. Dr. Harwood paraphrastically but justly translates the passage, "I am persuaded that he is able to preserve in the world till his future coming that sacred deposit with which he has entrusted me."

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

“ he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the
“ gospel of the grace of God.”

I AM persuaded, my christian friends, that while I have been thus briefly illustrating the short sketch which the apostle has given of his own character, many of you have been impressed with the striking features of resemblance which it bears to that of a great and venerable man whose decease has just been announced to us,—Dr. Priestley,—a name eminently dear to science, but still dearer to religion, justly celebrated through the world for talents and for learning, and particularly for his numerous original and important discoveries in the philosophy of nature and of man; but still more estimable, more truly renowned, for his zeal and industry, his labours and his sufferings, in the cause of moral truth and of pure unsophisticated christianity: a character dear to every one who is capable of appreciating intellectual excellence and moral worth, but peculiarly endeared to you, my friends, by the relation which he once sustained as the pastor of this christian society; by the extraordinary ability, assiduity and success with which he discharged the duties of his profession, and by the dignity of his character, and the amiable simplicity of his manners in private life.

OF the transcendent talents of this truly great man and enlightened philosopher, of the quickness of his apprehension, of the soundness of his judgment, of the comprehension of his views, of the activity and versatility of his powers, of the ardour of his mind, of his resolute and unwearied applica-

tion, of the diversity and extent of his erudition, of his insatiable thirst after knowledge, of the variety and ingenuity of his contrivances to facilitate investigation, and to diversify experiment; of the originality, the multiplicity, and the unparalleled success of his researches into the phenomena and the laws of nature; of the extent and value of those grand discoveries which constitute a new æra in the progress of experimental philosophy; of the uncommon candour and unexampled generosity with which he communicated those discoveries for the benefit of mankind; and of the high estimation in which he was held by all his contemporaries who were capable of appreciating his merits, and who were willing to do justice to his talents, much might be said and justly, and much will be spoken even by those who during his lifetime were most jealous of his honours, and most niggardly in his praise, and still more by those who knew and honoured him while he was living, and who now cherish his memory with gratitude and veneration.

IN what remains of this discourse I shall limit myself to the humbler task of illustrating Dr. Priestley's character in that view of it which is least attractive to the world, and which is held in little estimation by many who entertain the highest opinion of his literary and philosophical talents and acquisitions, but upon which he himself, and in my apprehension justly, set the highest value, namely, his character as a christian minister, and an enlightened, able, and zealous advocate of christian truth. In this department he was truly exemplary,

and his conduct in many particulars bore an honourable resemblance to that of the great apostle of the gentiles. It was the main object and business of his life "to testify the gospel of the grace of God," and from this purpose he was not to be diverted by any secular consideration whatever.

THE foundation of all the excellencies of this great and good man's private and professional character was laid in early, serious, and unaffected piety. His faith in the existence of God was clear and unhesitating, his views of the divine character and government were rational and sublime, and his practical regards to the Divine Being were habitual and uniform. His piety was not obtrusive and ostentatious, but calm and steady: not obvious to the notice of the world, but evident to all who were honoured with his society and friendship. It was the ruling principle of his conduct, the balm and consolation of his life. This habit was of the earliest growth under the fostering care of a pious and benevolent relative, who took the charge of his education, and of whose kindness he retained an affectionate and grateful sense to the latest hour of life. In maturer years, as he acquired more correct conceptions of the attributes of God, his piety became more confirmed, as a principle of action, while it was at the same time gradually purified from all tincture of irrational and unmanly superstition.

ANOTHER predominant feature in Dr. Priestley's official character was a disinterested love of truth, indefatigable zeal in the pursuit of it, and resolution to adhere to it when found, at all hazards. This

virtuous principle was generated in his mind by the vigor of his intellect, and by an early intercourse with wise and good men of different opinions in religion. Having often heard these opinions discussed with temper and ability, and being himself penetrated with an impressive sense of the importance of christian truth, he soon began to regard it as an imperious duty to take nothing upon trust, but to think and judge for himself concerning the doctrines of christianity, according to the ability and opportunity which divine providence had granted him.

HE was educated in the rigorous and gloomy system of Calvin, and he felt it in all its horrors*. But as his mind gradually expanded, he by degrees acquired courage to examine the prejudices of his education, and to divest himself of some principles which were most glaringly absurd and obnoxious, even before he commenced a regular course of theological studies. He was, when very young, excluded from communion with a church in which he had been accustomed to worship, because he hesitated to acknowledge himself deserving of eternal misery for Adam's sin †. And desirous as he was

* Upon this subject he thus expresses himself: "Believing that a new birth, produced by the immediate agency of the spirit of God, was necessary to salvation, and not being able to satisfy myself that I had experienced any thing of the kind, I had occasionally such distress of mind as it is not in my power to describe; and which I still look back upon with horror. Notwithstanding I had nothing very material to reproach myself with, I often concluded that God had forsaken me, and that my case was that of Francis Spira, to whom, as he imagined, repentance and salvation were denied. In this state of mind I remember reading the account of the man in the iron cage in the Pilgrim's Progress with the greatest perturbation."

† "Not thinking," says he, "that all the human race, supposing them not to have any sin of their own, were liable to the wrath of God, and the pains of hell for ever, for that sin only. For such was the question that was put to me."

to be educated for the christian ministry, he peremptorily refused to enter himself as a pupil in an institution where subscription to articles of faith was an indispensable condition of admission. He resolved even at that early age that he would endure no fetters upon freedom of inquiry.

The christian ministry, as exercised among protestant dissenters, was the profession of his early and favourite choice ; and though for a time the delicate and precarious state of his health seemed likely to prove an insuperable obstacle to the attainment of his wishes, a favourable change in the state of his constitution at length permitted him to enter as a student in a respectable institution for the education of ministers, at Daventry in Northamptonshire. Dr. Priestley has often been heard to acknowledge, with great satisfaction, that, at the period when he became a member of that college, it happened to be in a state peculiarly favourable for the investigation of truth. Theological discussion was conducted with candour and without any restraint, the tutors and students being almost equally divided in opinion upon the most important subjects. In such a situation his love of truth and his thirst after knowledge increased daily : and before he had finished his academical course he had divested himself of many early prejudices, though he was far from having acquired those clear, distinct, and comprehensive views of christian doctrine which he afterwards attained. It was at this period of his life that he first became acquainted with Hartley's Observations on Man, an admirable work, which

attracted, as indeed it merited, his closest attention, which gave him an insight into the true theory of human nature, a subject in the discussion of which he afterwards so greatly excelled. Hartley was his favourite author to the close of life : and he freely owned that he had derived more instruction and more satisfaction from this volume, than from any other book which he had ever read, the scriptures alone excepted.

As a public speaker Dr. Priestley was conscious that he did not possess popular talents ; and early in life he was afflicted with an impediment in his speech, which he with great difficulty subdued. This led him when he first settled in the world to acquiesce in situations which were very private and obscure. But wherever he lived, his chief employment was to study the scriptures, and to investigate their true sense, whether it did or did not accord with his own preconceived opinions. His sole object was truth : the truth as it is in Jesus, the pure uncorrupted doctrine of the christian revelation ; for the attainment of which he thought no labour too great, and no sacrifice too dear.

THE principles of his education were so deeply rooted in Dr. Priestley's mind, that it was by a very slow process, and in consequence of very laborious and persevering inquiry for many years, that he at length disentangled his mind from the web of prejudice, and purified his views of the christian system from those errors which early prepossessions had blended in his mind with the genuine doctrine of Christ. In the course of his preparatory studies

he saw sufficient reason to abandon the unscriptural doctrines of the trinity, of original sin, and of vicarious suffering. He still, however, adhered to the Arian notion concerning the person and offices of Christ, to a qualified sense of the doctrine of atonement, and to other points connected with them. Upon further consideration he soon saw reason to give up the doctrine of atonement in every sense of it, and to hesitate concerning the plenary inspiration of the sacred writers. But it was not till upwards of ten years afterwards, and when he was settled with a respectable congregation at Leeds, that, in consequence of reading with great attention Dr. Lardner's incomparable letter upon the Logos, he became a proper unitarian, and a firm believer in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, of which doctrine he continued ever afterwards a most able and strenuous advocate. It was still later than this that Dr. Priestley adopted and avowed his original and ingenious hypothesis concerning the homogeneity of man, which, though a notion most innocent in itself, and supported by all the appearances of nature, has, in consequence of misapprehension or misrepresentation, given more offence than any other opinion which he was known to maintain*.

* This doctrine, to which Dr. Priestley has unfortunately given the obnoxious name of Materialism, though it might perhaps with greater propriety be called Immaterialism, has by some been grossly misunderstood, and by others wilfully misrepresented. It is commonly believed that Dr. Priestley, as a materialist, held that the soul of man is an extended, solid, and inert substance: a notion which he expressly disclaims. He even denies the existence of solidity and inertia in any substance, and adopts the curious hypothesis first proposed by P. Boscovich, that all that we know of matter itself is active power, and that the only properties which can be proved to belong to matter are attrac-

His courage and integrity in avowing what he believed to be important truth, was a most conspicuous and honourable feature in Dr. Priestley's character. Before he appeared as the fearless advocate of truth, it was regarded by many of his brethren in the ministry as the part, not only of innocence, but of wisdom, to disguise their real sentiments in ambiguous language, and to impose upon their hearers by using terms and phrases in a sense different from that in which they were commonly understood: thus securing a reputation for the orthodoxy which in their hearts they despised. This low and secular wisdom, this "deceitful handling of the word of God," the magnanimous spirit of Dr. Priestley held in just contempt; and discountenanced to the utmost, both by precept and example. Being fully convinced, after mature deliberation, that truth

tions and repulsions of various kinds. Perception in its several modes constitutes mind. That matter, i. e. that attraction and repulsion combined, may exist without perception, many phenomena lead us to conclude, and it is a fact generally allowed; but that perception and its modes ever exist, or can exist, in created beings, unconnected with matter, i. e. with certain systems of attraction and repulsion, is contrary to all the known phenomena of nature, and therefore is not to be admitted into true philosophy. The only remaining question is, whether the vinculum which connects attraction and repulsion is the same with that which connects these properties with perception; and to this no specific answer can be given, because it is a subject of which we are necessarily and totally ignorant. This hypothesis of Dr. Priestley I have ventured to call the doctrine of the *homogeneity* of man; which word seems properly to express the idea that man does not consist, as is generally imagined, of two distinct substances having no common property; and on the other hand it precludes the mistakes and misrepresentations which arise from the use of the word materialism. It is plain that this is not the hypothesis which Collier supported, and which Dr. Clarke opposed: and Dr. Price himself, in his controversy with Dr. Priestley, very nearly yields the point to his able and acute opponent. See the Correspondence between Price and Priestley, p. 85, 86, 236. Priestley on Matter and Spirit, p. 17. This subject is stated more at large in the Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, chap. xi.

must ultimately be favourable to virtue, and that it can only make its way by honest profession and fair argument, he regarded it as an indispensable duty upon every just occasion to avow, and in a manly and honourable manner to defend, what he sincerely believed, after fair and diligent inquiry, to be the christian truth. He concealed no doctrine which he apprehended to be true and important, because it was unpopular, or because the profession of it might be attended with consequences personally disadvantageous : a conduct which in his situation was a proof of uncommon vigour of mind and strength of principle. Persons of popular talents, or in independent circumstances, may without much inconvenience avow opinions obnoxious to vulgar prejudices, or repugnant to the popular creed. But where the public teacher depends for his bread upon the numbers and the liberality of his hearers, and where he is conscious of the want of talents to attract the crowd, the profession of principles which are sure to give offence to many who would otherwise be his zealous friends and supporters, is a duty of uncommon difficulty, and few have fortitude equal to the trial. Such was the situation of Dr. Priestley when he first entered upon the office of the ministry amongst protestant dissenters. But innate strength of mind, confidence in the power of truth, and a commanding sense of duty, triumphed over all.

AND the doctrines which he embraced from conviction, and avowed from principle, he was well prepared to defend with ability and learning, with zeal and charity. In all the most important con-

troversies in which he was engaged, he had studied the subject thoroughly, and was a complete master of the whole question. In reasoning, his language was plain and simple; his state of the question was impartial; his arrangement was lucid; his ideas clear and distinct; his arguments, though often original and curious, and sometimes refined, and derived from the most grand and comprehensive views of things, were nevertheless in general perspicuous and forcible, and bearing directly upon the point in question. There was nothing artificial and ambiguous; no design to slur over difficulties and objections, or to lay greater stress upon a topic than it would well bear. All was candid, fair, and generous; and where his arguments failed to convince, they nevertheless left a strong impression of ingenuousness, of talent, and integrity.

In the present state of things religious controversy is unavoidable, being indispensably requisite to the discovery of christian truth, and to disentangle it from prevailing error; but it has a great tendency to generate malignant passions in the minds of those who enter deeply into it. Nevertheless, of writers who have distinguished themselves so much in controversy as Dr. Priestley, few have preserved their temper better. He desired nothing so earnestly as calm and temperate discussion of important questions; and those controversies which afforded him the most satisfaction, were the few which were conducted on both sides with good temper and good manners. He seldom adopted harsh and sarcastic language till his feelings had been irritated by un-

provoked aggression. I do not, however, mean to contend that his language was always guarded and perfectly correct. It sometimes, perhaps, expressed a greater degree of animosity than he intended, or felt; and sometimes he used expressions which he would wish to have recalled. But who is wise at all times? He has often been charged with making use of harsh language concerning the opinions of his opponents. But this was done not with a design to give offence, but to rouse attention; and he regarded himself as justified in it by the strong testimony which the primitive teachers of christianity bore against the superstitions and errors of the times in which they lived. Yet, while he entered his grave and solemn protest against the popular corruptions of the christian doctrine, he was always tender to the persons of those who conscientiously adhered to them. He viewed Calvinism as the extravagance of error, as a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry: but he regarded the sincere professors of this pernicious system with compassion rather than contempt. With regard to many of them, he knew their integrity; he revered their piety; in that denomination of christians it had been his happiness to meet with some of the wisest and the best characters that he had ever known; and to an early education in that rigid sect he had been indebted for some of his best principles, and his most valuable and permanent durable religious impressions.

IN the discharge of his professional duties Dr. Priestley was eminently assiduous and exemplary.

His delight was to communicate instruction, and, above all, religious instruction. "He fed the lambs of the flock," and condescended to the capacities of little children. His admirable Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion he composed while a student at the academy, and used it as a text-book for the instruction of youth in the great principles of moral and religious truth, in every congregation with which he was connected; and the pains which he took for this purpose are, I doubt not, recollected with gratitude by many who now hear me.

His public discourses were, generally speaking, plain, simple, instructive and practical. Occasionally they contained elaborate vindications of natural and revealed religion; and sometimes they were replete with beautiful and interesting sentiments derived from the principles of a sublime philosophy.

EXPOSITION of the scriptures, or rather annotations upon them to illustrate and explain them, regularly constituted a part of his public services; and in this method he communicated much information in an easy, intelligible, and entertaining manner. Upon this subject he took great pains, and he regarded it as a very useful part of public instruction. There was nothing he more desired than to excite the attention of his hearers to the holy scriptures, and to induce them to read this inestimable volume, not with superstitious awe, but with the spirit of liberal and judicious criticism; not in a careless formal routine, but with a solicitous concern to understand its important contents. Divine Providence spared his life till he had completed his re-

marks upon all the books both of the Old and New Testament. Of these a considerable part are already printed ; and his latest care was to give directions for the proper method of proceeding with the remainder of the work after his decease.

BUT the labours of this truly great and excellent man were by no means confined to the pulpit. He published, as is well known, many important theological treatises both controversial and practical. Of these, some were able vindications of natural and revealed religion, from the attacks of unbelievers of all descriptions ; others were didactic works, in which the doctrines and precepts of true religion were stated and established. Some were expositions of the scripture, accompanied with valuable critical remarks, partly for the use of the learned and partly of the unlearned reader. Some were works of controversy, in which he earnestly contended for the purity of the christian faith, and raised his banner against the corruptions of the evangelical doctrine. In one celebrated work he gave a detailed history of the rise and progress of the principal corruptions of the christian religion, and with fidelity and succinctness traced out the growth of the grand apostacy, from the first deviation from the simplicity of the apostolic creed, till it pervaded the whole professing church, suppressing and almost extinguishing the vital principles of christianity. In another most valuable work, he represented at large, with great compass of thought, acuteness of discrimination, and extent of learning, the rise and progress of those enormous errors which have

prevailed from age to age concerning the person of Christ, who from the condition of "a man approved of God by signs and miracles, and gifts of the holy spirit," which is the character under which he is represented by himself and his apostles, has been advanced by the officious zeal of his mistaken followers, first to the state of an angelic or superangelic being, a delegated maker and governor of the world and its inhabitants, and in the end to a complete equality with God himself.

ANOTHER great work, in the compilation of which he took unwearied pains, is a History of the Christian Church from its commencement to the close of the last century; a work distinguished for the perspicuity, candour, and impartiality of the narration, and still more for the wisdom, the originality, and the importance of the remarks with which it abounds; which tend to reconcile the mind to the conduct of Divine Providence in the permission of the great apostacy; which, from the very existence of the corruptions of christian doctrine, deduce an irrefragable argument in favour of the divine origin and authority of the christian religion; and which, from the slow but irresistible progress of truth, infer the approach of a glorious period, when the empire of genuine christianity and undefiled religion shall triumph over all opposition, and shall become universal and perpetual.

DR. PRIESTLEY, even in his controversial writings, discovers upon all occasions a deep sense of piety, and a supreme desire to render every thing he wrote subservient to the practice of virtue. And

in the practical treatises which he has occasionally published, which are not indeed numerous, he has shown how well qualified he was to improve the heart as well as to enlighten the understanding. His "Considerations for the use of young men and the parents of young men" discover a thorough knowledge of the human mind, as well as a most affectionate regard for the honour and virtue of the rising generation : and in a volume of practical discourses he illustrates the evil and danger of vicious habits, the duty of not living to ourselves, the importance of virtuous superiority to secular considerations, the nature and excellence of habitual devotion, and other similar topics, in a manner equally original and impressive, and which clearly evinces how beautifully and how forcibly the views suggested by true philosophy combine with the principles of rational and pure christianity to form the character to dignity and virtue.

BUT to give an analysis, or even a brief character, of all Dr. Priestley's theological writings, would far exceed the limits of a single discourse : suffice it to say, that they all discover an active, an ardent, and a truly enlightened mind, a supreme regard to truth, an eager thirst after religious knowledge, and a desire equally predominant to communicate instruction and to diffuse christian truth, as the best means of promoting christian virtue. Nor is it the least conspicuous of his merits, that, in order to accomplish this most important end, he was willing to sacrifice that upon which many set the highest value, and to the importance of which he was by no means in-

sensible, literary reputation. He often observed that he wrote too much for literary fame : but his object was to be useful, and to promote the cause of truth and virtue. If this end might be obtained, selfish considerations were in his estimation of little weight.

UPON this ground he regarded the office of a christian minister amongst the protestant dissenters as a situation of great dignity and importance ; not merely as a liberal, and still less as a lucrative profession, but solely as affording the best opportunity of devoting his time to the investigation of christian truth, and to the religious instruction of mankind, unfettered by subscriptions, liturgies, and creeds, and unbiassed by human authority in articles of faith. In this view, it may be truly said of him that “ he “ magnified his office,” esteeming it a most honourable and useful employment. And though endowed with talents to excel in philosophical and literary pursuits ; though strongly attached to the investigation of the phænomena and the laws of nature ; though his numerous, original, and most important discoveries had actually raised him to the first rank of scientific and philosophical renown ; he esteemed all his literary honours as of no account in comparison with the acquisition and promulgation of christian truth ; and was no further solicitous to acquire philosophical distinction, than as it might be the means of attracting greater attention to his theological writings, and thus of rendering them more extensively useful.

THAT in the course of these honourable pursuits he sustained much violent opposition is sufficiently

notorious. Having been, from his first setting out in life, the undaunted champion of christian truth, as far as he apprehended it, when he first became a public teacher he encountered many difficulties and discouragements. He was neglected by the friends of his youth who had assisted in his education for the ministry, and whose expectations he had disappointed: he was vehemently opposed by bigots, and strongly censured by those who preferred dissimulation and quiet, to integrity and persecution. His ministry was deserted; his company was shunned; he was even sometimes treated with rudeness and disrespect; his attempts to acquire a decent competence by literary industry were opposed and thwarted: and notwithstanding the utmost prudence and œconomy, he would have been involved in the inconveniences of extreme indigence, if his great merits had not been discovered and patronized by a few persons of discernment and generosity in the metropolis. Amongst his earliest friends he often mentioned the respectable names of Dr. Lardner, Dr. Benson, and Dr. Kippis, who applauded and encouraged his theological inquiries, and whose kindness to him, when he most needed a friend, he recorded with affectionate gratitude. And when, by the acknowledged superiority of his talents, he had forced himself into public notice, and was raised to a situation of honourable independence, he still encountered the most bitter and malignant opposition from the advocates of popular creeds and of established errors, who not only endeavoured to confute his arguments, to which, if it were in their

power, they had an undoubted right, but with unparalleled baseness, and unblushing falsehood, they traduced his character; they depreciated his talents, and defamed his motives; they represented him as an atheist and an infidel; as an enemy to God; as a traitor to his sovereign; as a foul conspirator against the constitution of his country, and unworthy to enjoy the protection of its laws.

THE sad castastrophe which was the natural result of these atrocious calumnies is too recent and too painful to be insisted upon at large. In characters of indelible infamy are recorded those disgraceful tumults, by which one of the most celebrated of philosophers, of the most learned and exemplary of divines, and of the most mild and benevolent of men, was driven by violence, and in hazard of his life, from his peaceful home, from the scene of his exertions and his enjoyments, and from a station of great reputation and usefulness: and, ultimately, after having obtained an honourable but short asylum in this place, was *compelled*, at least in his own estimation, to seek protection on a foreign shore, and to retire as an exile to the remotest limit of the civilized world. Not indeed to sink into oblivion and inactivity—that was impossible. For, though persecuted with uncommon rancour by the emissaries of bigotry and malice, even into his silent and remote retreat, he lived by the favour of divine providence to rise superior to them all. He there found a peaceful and a convenient home. He lived happy and respected in the bosom of his family. He possessed the means of prosecuting philosophical inquiry and

theological research to a degree beyond what he had ever before enjoyed. He was successful beyond his utmost expectation in promoting the cause of christian truth, and was liberally supplied with the means of composing and publishing works which he justly apprehended to be of the greatest utility to mankind. He lived in habits of friendship, esteem, and correspondence with persons of eminence and respectability, of talent and character, of all denominations in religion and politics. And from being unjustly, and through malignant wilful misrepresentation, regarded and treated as an enemy to the country where he had sought an asylum, and in danger of being banished from it, he lived to enjoy the esteem and friendship of the first magistrate of the American republic, who invited his society, honoured him with his correspondence, solicited his advice, and patronised his pursuits. And that he was not forgotten by the friends of truth, liberty, science, and religion, in his native country, the late munificent exertions for his benefit bear ample testimony*.

His days were shortened by his indefatigable application to various important works, which he was desirous of completing to serve the cause of

* A rumour having been circulated that Dr. Priestley had sustained some losses in his pecuniary concerns, a proposal was suggested to supply the deficiency: and in a very few weeks an annuity was raised for him amounting to four hundred and fifty pounds a year. Unfortunately he did not live to reap the benefit of this exertion, or even to hear that such an affair was in agitation. This testimony of affection and respect would have diffused a ray of consolation over the evening of his days. The majority of the subscribers have, however, as a mark of veneration for Dr. Priestley's memory, and to assist in the publication of his posthumous works, agreed to remit to his son in America the subscription of the first year.

rational christianity, and particularly to fulfil his engagements to those kind friends whose liberality had enabled him to commit to the press two considerable works, upon the publication of which his heart was earnestly set, as his last and most valuable legacy to the christian world.

His health had been for some months in a declining state ; but in the beginning of last November his disorder assumed a very serious aspect, and the accounts which he then wrote of his own case excited in his friends the most alarming apprehensions. These apprehensions in some degree subsided, in consequence of later and more favourable intelligence, which excited a pleasing expectation that the return of spring might in some degree recruit his exhausted powers. But these flattering prospects suddenly vanished by the arrival of the painful intelligence, that this great and venerable man was no more.

DR. PRIESTLEY had long foreseen that his end was approaching ; and he looked forward to the hour of dissolution with the fortitude of a philosopher, and the cheerful hope of a christian. The prospect only animated him to increasing diligence ; and he was desirous of life, only that he might complete some schemes of usefulness which he had begun. The vigour and activity of his mind continued with him to the last, under the decay of his bodily powers. During the three last months of his life he wrote and transcribed for the press a considerable work, comparing the principles of the Grecian philosophy with those of revelation, at the desire

of the President of the United States; and in the same period, in twenty-four hours, he composed and transcribed a defence of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, in reply to an American clergyman who had engaged in a controversy with him upon that subject*.

ON the sixth of February last, this great man ended a life of honourable, persevering, and successful exertion in the cause of truth and virtue, and without pain, without a struggle, and even without a sigh, he gently fell asleep, and entered upon the reward of his labours. It is pleasing to add, that he died content and thankful for all he had enjoyed in life; gratefully acknowledging that his comforts had far exceeded his sufferings†; rejoicing in the conviction that he had not lived in vain; thankful for the calm and easy transition with which he was indulged; and triumphing in the glorious hope of the gospel; the hope of a resurrection to immortal life and happiness. "I am going to sleep," said he to his grand-

* Dr. Linn, a presbyterian minister. This is a sufficient refutation of an idle rumour which has been industriously circulated, and by uninformed persons readily believed; that Dr. Priestley, after his removal to America, had changed his opinions concerning the person of Christ.

† In a letter to a friend, dated Nov. 4, 1803, in which he gives an account of the very alarming state of his health, and of his expectation of a speedy dissolution, he thus expresses himself:—"But I have abundant reason to be satisfied with life, and with the goodness of God in it. Few have had so happy a lot as I have had, and I now see reason to be thankful for events which at the time were the most afflicting." After mentioning a severe affliction, the intelligence of which had lately arrived, he adds: "My only source of satisfaction, and it is a never-failing one, is my firm persuasion that every thing, and our oversights among the rest, are parts of the great plan in which every thing will in time appear to have been ordered and conducted in the best manner. When I hear my own children crying, I consider that we who are advanced in life are but children ourselves, and as little judges what is good for ourselves or others."

children, when brought to his bed-side to take leave of him the evening before he expired; "I am going to sleep as well as you; for death is only a long and a sound sleep in the grave; but we shall meet again in another and a better world."

Thus "he finished his course with joy, and filled the ministry," which from the purest motives, and with the best dispositions, he had undertaken. "Blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them." Happy they who being stimulated to emulate this great example, shall be admitted to share with him in his final triumph!

THE END.









